

# The Character of Kingdom Citizens

**Preached by:** Matthew S. Black

**Text:** Matthew 5:1-12

**Series:** King of Kings

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**Living Hope Bible Church of Roselle, IL**

**Introduction:** I invite you to turn in your Bibles to **Matthew 5:1-12**. We are in a series through the book of Matthew entitled: “King of kings!” Today’s we are looking at: “The Character of Kingdom Citizens”.

## A Call to True Discipleship

The idea of discipleship is that we would be imitators of the one we are following. We are called to be “conformed into the image of Christ” (Rom. 8:29-30). After Jesus makes His clarion call to “repent” because the King has arrived, and the kingdom has come near – He delivers His longest and most extensive message on Kingdom citizenship. What does a true follower of the King look like? How do we identify a true disciple? Here it is. We are going to see the “character of Kingdom citizens” in what we call “the Beatitudes”. It’s what a truly converted person is like.

## The Sermon on the Mount

The message Jesus delivers has been called the “Sermon on the Mount”. Though Jesus repeated many of these truths on other occasions, chapters 5–7 record one continuous message of the Lord, delivered at one specific time. As we will see, these were revolutionary truths to the minds of those Jewish religionists who heard them, and have continued to explode with great impact on the minds of readers for nearly two thousand years.

Here is the manifesto of the new Monarch, who ushers in a new era of the Kingdom with a new message.<sup>1</sup> You can read the entire message of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7) in about ten minutes. It is not all that Jesus said, but it is the largest recorded portion of the Lord’s teaching. This morning we are going to read just Matthew 5:1-12.

## Reading of Scripture

**Matthew 5:1–12**, “Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. 2 And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

3 “Blessed are the **poor in spirit**, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 “Blessed are those who **mourn**, for they shall be comforted.

5 “Blessed are the **meek**, for they shall inherit the earth.

6 “Blessed are those who **hunger and thirst for righteousness**, for they shall be satisfied.

7 “Blessed are the **merciful**, for they shall receive mercy.

8 “Blessed are the **pure in heart**, for they shall see God.

9 “Blessed are the **peacemakers**, for they shall be called sons of God.

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<sup>1</sup> MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1985). *Matthew*. MacArthur New Testament Commentary (131). Chicago: Moody Press.

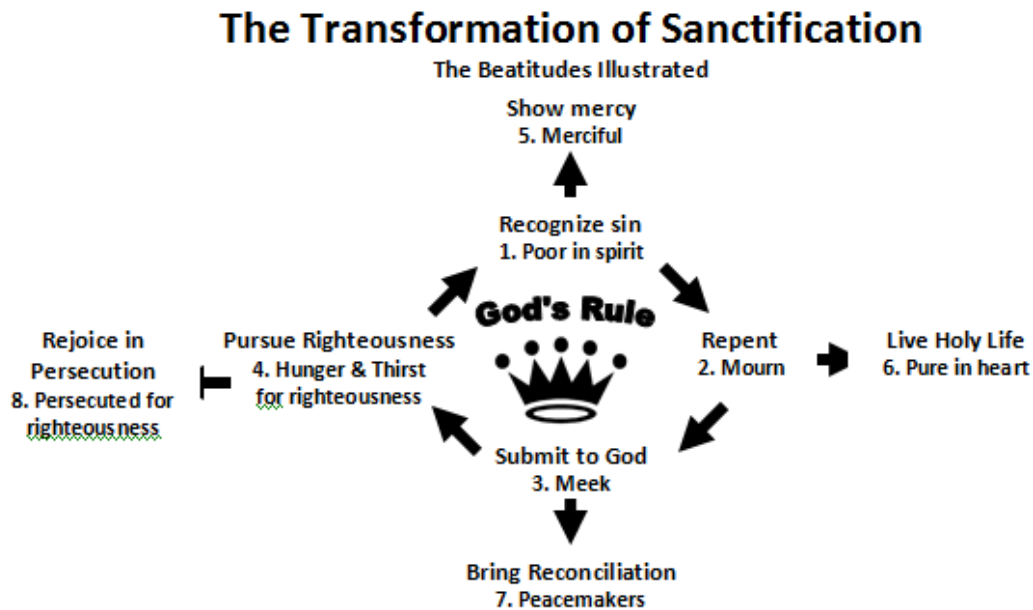
10 “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

There are four things that ought to hold our attention in this passage:

- The Inward Character of Kingdom Citizens (vs 1-6).
- The Outward Actions of Kingdom Citizens (vs. 7-12).
- The Blessings of Kingdom Citizens (vs. 1-12).

### A Portrait of Jesus

I have included a handout for you today with a diagram of where we are going. What we have here is a portrait of Jesus. When we look at the Beatitudes they are divided into two parts. The first four deal with character and the last four with actions. It is a portrait of Jesus. Christ calls us to be His disciples, and so this is a portrait of what we are to be like. We are to repent of being self confident, ignoring sin, doing our own thing, and hungry for the flesh and the world. And we are to be poor in spirit, repenting of sin, submitting in meekness to God, and hungry for righteousness and doing God’s will. Christ was poor in spirit, without sin, submitting to God and doing His will. These attributes are a picture of Christ’s character.



### What are beatitudes and their significance?

Those under the Lordship of Christ model the beatitudes. These are marks of Kingdom citizens. These qualities set for the character of true disciples.. These qualities are not natural but supernatural in source. They are meant for *all* Christians. All Christians are to possess all of these attributes. They are the defining factor of Christlikeness.

## I. The **Inward** Character of Kingdom Citizens (5:3-6)

### The Blessed Ones

The idea of blessed (*makarios*) is “fully-satisfied, made whole, happy”. Our use of the word *happy* has to do with how we feel about something, based on the old Anglo Saxon word *hap*, which means chance, as in “whatever happens” or “happenstance.” Man-centered happiness is circumstantial; therefore, it is uncertain, temporary, and insecure. This is NOT what Jesus is talking about. The blessedness of the Christian is not temporary or uncertain. It is unshakable.<sup>2</sup>

Christ is not speaking of happiness in the sense of being entertained or jovial. Christ’s “happy” disciples are poor and hungry. They mourn and they suffer persecution.

The happiness Jesus promises is the restored image of God and being conformed to the image of Christ. It is a wholeness that comes from coming under the King’s rule and reign in our lives. Those who are under Jesus’ authority—who bow their knee and call Him King and Lord are the truly happy ones!

### Blessedness a Picture of God and Christ

The word **blessed** is often used of God Himself.

- In the Old Testament we hear David’s declaration “Blessed be God!” (Ps. 68:35).
- His son Solomon sang, “Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who alone works wonders” (Ps. 72:18).
- Paul spoke of “the glorious gospel of the blessed God” (1 Tim. 1:11)
- and of Jesus Christ “who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords” (6:15).

Blessedness is a characteristic of God, and it can be a characteristic of men only as they share in the nature of God.<sup>3</sup> We are “partakers of the divine nature” according to Peter. So let us look at four inward characteristics of Kingdom Citizens.

We will wait till the end of the message to see how each has a blessing attached to them!

#### 1. **Poor in Spirit – Recognize Sin (vs. 3)**

**Matthew 5:3**, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

This beatitude repudiates all the world holds dear! It is foundational to the other beatitudes.

#### Spiritual Poverty

Jesus emphasizes ‘spiritual’ poverty. “Blessed are the spiritual bankrupts and beggars.” Blessed are those who know they desperately need God. It is the opposite of pride and self-sufficiency (cf. Prov. 6:16-17; Zeph. 3:11-13). “God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble” (1 Pet. 5:5).

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<sup>2</sup> Boice, J. M. (2001). *The Gospel of Matthew* (74). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

<sup>3</sup> MacArthur, 142.

## Language of Isaiah 61

It is worth noting that these first two beatitudes echo the language of Isaiah 61:1–2, “The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the **poor**; he has sent me to **bind up the brokenhearted**, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; 2 to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to **comfort all who mourn**.”

This is the passage Jesus read in the synagogue in Nazareth, after which he said He was the one sent to do these things, and they attempted to put Jesus to death by stoning. But see the full picture here. Now Jesus is fulfilling Isaiah’s prophecy.

## Recognizing Sin

Spiritual poverty brings the awareness of what we are before God. **Isaiah 6:5**, “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!”

## Recognizing Worthlessness

We recognize our sin. We realize all outside of Christ is worthless.

Paul said in **Philippians 3:8**, “For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as **rubbish**, in order that I may gain Christ.” Paul says the only thing that brings him riches is “that I may know Him!” and “The excellency of knowing Christ”.

Are you one who says, “Life outside of Christ was a total waste”. “My life before Christ was total vanity. It was utterly worthless until I came to know Him.”

- And can you say **Romans 7:18**, “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwells **no good thing**.”
- **John 6:63**, “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits **nothing**.”

Without the power of Christ, all is lost and vain and worthless and nothing. Without Christ I am spiritually bankrupt.

## 2. They that Mourn over Sin – Repent (vs. 4)

**Matthew 5:4**, “Blessed are those who **mourn**, for they shall be comforted.” Blessed are those who mourn over their sin! It’s a paradox! “Happy are the Sad” says the Lord!

Spiritual poverty leads to godly sorrow; the poor in spirit become **those who mourn**. After his great sin involving Bathsheba and Uriah, David repented and expressed his godly sorrow in.

**Psalms 51:3-4**, “For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. 4 Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.”

“For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what punishment! At every point you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter” (2 Corinthians 7:10–11).

## What God Desires: Those Who Mourn / God-Centered Grief

The word “grief” is *lupeo* (to cause pain, to make sorry). Godly sorrow is God-centered. The motive is always a need for God’s grace and a deep desire for the glory of God. “God is right to send me to hell, but He is so amazing to forgive a wretch like me!” Consider the following people.

- **King David** – 2 Sam. 12; Ps. 32, 51, His heart cry was: “Be gracious to me O God” “Against you and you [God] only have I sinned”. David said, “My sin is ever before me” (Ps. 51:3).
- **Peter** – Luke 5:8, Peter saw Jesus high and lifted up through the miracle of the fishes, and, “he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.”
- **Isaiah** cried out, “Woe is me, for I am undone! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips” (Isa. 6:5).
- **The Prodigal Son** (Luke 15:11-32). His heart cry was: “I have sinned against heaven and against you”
- **Paul** called himself the “foremost of sinners” (1 Tim. 1:15).

These men shared a common awareness of their own sinfulness and it drove them to God for forgiveness and cleansing.

## Affected to the Core of Your Being

Consider Jesus’ words in **Matthew 11:21**, “Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.”

The phrase, “repent in sackcloth and ashes,” is often repeated in the OT and clearly reveals the concept that repentance went beyond a change of ideas or facts, but affected man internally in the core of his being.

## There is a Hatred for the Sin Nature that Dwells within Us

**James 4:8–10**, “Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.”

This world is not our home. This sinful flesh is not our home. We are afflicted that we live in such a sinful cursed and wretched world. We are not at home in this body of sinful flesh or in this world of rebellion.

## Qualities of Worldly Sorrow

Don’t be deceived by superficial sorrow. Grief is not always godly grief. We must not confuse true godly grief with worldly sorrow as Paul says in 2 Cor. 7:10-11. Worldly sorry has many attributes...

- Self-centered
- Consequence focused
- The person with merely worldly sorrow regrets giving up sin... He is..
- Laziness, careless with sin,
- There is a lack of concern for sin
- Excuses, rationalizations, defending accusations

- Angry at the mess, angry at others, angry at self (not sin)
- Fears consequences and others the most
- No longing for true restoration
- No real effort to correct the real heart problem, instead there is “hoop jumping”
- Creates various false refuges to counter the guilt

### **Misconceptions (counterfeits) of godly sorrow...**

- Not just an activity of the mind
- Not just an intention to do right (remember Saul)
- Not just a sense of wrongdoing and guilt (remember Judas)
- Not just a feeling of anguish or terror over sin
- Not just shedding tears over sin (remember Esau)
- Not just admitting sin (most people admit sin)
- Not just a resolve against sin or even stopping a particular sin
- Not just trying to do the right thing

### **Let Go of Your Sin!**

All of the above can be very *man-centered* filled with selfish motives. *Love of sin* is the primary hindrance to mourning. Holding on to sin will freeze and petrify a heart. *Despair* hinders mourning because despair is giving up on God, refusing to believe that He can save and help.<sup>4</sup> Mourn over your sin and you will be set free.

### **What Do Mourners Do?**

The repentant see sin as ugly, like a leach. What if I were to roll my sleeve down and reveal a leach on my arm? I would do whatever it takes to get that blood sucker off my arm! If you knew leaches were in the area and you swimming in a creek, you would get out of the creek and do what? Start examining yourself.

Come clean with a full admittance of sin. **“Woe is me for I am undone!” Proverbs 28:13, “He that covers his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy.”**

Be restored by the reception of God’s grace and forgiveness. **“Your iniquities are taken away, and your sins purged.”** There is always forgiveness that follows all godly sorrow. Faith and repentance cannot be separated. If you think God cannot forgive you, then you have a heart full of pride. You will not believe God’s promises.

- **“As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us”** (Psalm 103:12).
- **“For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground”** (Isaiah 44:3).
- **“I, even I, am he that blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and will not remember your sins”** (Isaiah 43:25).
- **“I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more”** (Jeremiah 31:34).

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<sup>4</sup> MacArthur, 162.

- “Come now, and let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18).
- “Who is a God like unto You, Who pardons iniquity...?” (Micah 7:18).

### 3. The Meek – Submit to God (vs. 5)

**Matthew 5:5**, “Blessed are the **meek**, for they shall inherit the earth.”

To most people today, *meek* means weak or lacking spirit, perhaps even cowardly. But that is not what Jesus is commending. Moses was the meekest man of his day (Num. 12:3), but he was anything but cowardly.

A better word for *meek* would be *gentle*, but even this has to be explained. Actually, it is more defined by high spirits, courage, and great strength.<sup>5</sup> It is the idea of *strength under control*. The idea of meekness is submitting all my strength, all my heart and soul, to God.

#### Under the Control of Another

Another sense of the word comes from the fact that *praus* also was used of animals to designate those that had been domesticated. These were animals who had learned to accept control by their masters and who were therefore properly behaved.<sup>6</sup>

Have you come under the control of Christ’s Lordship? Does Christ command you? This is meekness. It is the spirit of not chafing at Christ’s commands, but meekly obeying them immediately, completely, and happily!

In the Bible, meekness is used most often to indicate a subservient and trusting attitude before God, and this makes meekness generally a **vertical** virtue rather than a **horizontal** one. James Montgomery Boice described Meekness this way:

*Meekness is the characteristic that makes a man bow low before God in order that he may stand high before other men; it makes him bold because he knows that his life has been touched by God and that he comes as God’s messenger.*<sup>7</sup>

So the idea of meekness is to give up your control, your expectations, and your rights in order to be controlled by another. One is not moved by circumstances because He accepts that God is controlling all things. He meekly accepts all things at the hand of His Almighty Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

### 4. Hunger / Thirst for Righteousness – Pursue Righteousness (vs. 6)

**Matthew 5:6**, “Blessed are those who **hunger and thirst for righteousness**, for they shall be satisfied.”

#### Defined

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<sup>5</sup> Boice, 32.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

We are called to be rightly related to God not only through Christ's imputed righteousness, but here, Christ is referring to the application of His will to our lives. We are to hunger to be under His Lordship and His authority in a right relationship with Him.

### **Partaking of Christ**

This beatitude speaks of strong desire, of driving pursuit, of a passionate force inside the soul. It has to do with ambition-ambition of the right sort-whose object is to honor, obey, and glorify God by partaking of His righteousness. This holy ambition is in great contrast to the common ambitions of men to gratify their own lusts, accomplish their own goals, and satisfy their own egos.<sup>8</sup>

The one holy ambition of Kingdom citizens is to please God, and to partake of Him. Jesus said it this way in **John 6:54-58**, "Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. 55 For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. 56 Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. 57 As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. 58 This is the bread that came down from heaven, not as the fathers ate and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever."

### **Food We Cannot Live Without**

Jesus is the food we cannot live without. **Righteousness** is not an optional spiritual supplement but a spiritual necessity. We can no more live spiritually without righteousness than we can live physically without food and water.<sup>9</sup>

**Job** said, "I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth More than my necessary food" (**Job 23:12**).

We are told in **Matthew 6:33** to "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you".

### **Righteousness: Applying God's Word to our Lives**

We are called to be rightly related to God not only through justification but through sanctification – by applying God's Holy Word by His Holy Spirit to our lives on a moment by moment basis.

### **Summary**

1. Poor in Spirit – **Recognize Sin** (vs. 3)
2. They that Mourn over sin – **Repent** (vs. 4)
3. The Meek – **Submit** to God (vs. 5)
4. Hunger / **Thirst for Righteousness** (vs. 6)

## **II. The Outward Actions of Kingdom Citizens (5:7-12)**

What we find now in verses 7-12, is the outward actions of kingdom citizens. Our character that we have through regeneration bears fruit in a godly life that:

- Shows **mercy** (vs. 7)

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<sup>8</sup> MacArthur, 177.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 178.



- Is **pure in heart** and life (vs. 8)
- Brings **reconciliation** (vs. 9)
- Is **persecuted** for living righteously (vs. 10-12).

## 1. Poor in Spirit See Their Sin and Show Mercy (vs. 7)

**Matthew 5:7**, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”

Mercy is first, because it is what we experience first when we are saved by Jesus Christ.

Grace is God giving us what we don’t deserve – eternal life! Mercy is God **NOT** giving us what deserve.

Mercy has the additional quality of being given to who are miserable and to be pitied. There is no hope for them in themselves.

Christ had mercy on us and saved us. Therefore, we are to be merciful in our dealings with others. Jesus promises that if we do, we will receive mercy upon mercy, constant mercy. We certainly need it!<sup>10</sup>

### The Elevation of Mercy as a Supernatural Attribute

Christ later elevates this mercy in verses 43-47. It is a supernatural action that takes the grace of God to display in your life.

Matthew 5:43–47, “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ 44 But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. 46 For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 47 And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?”

### Those Poor in Spirit Show Mercy!

So you see how those who have poverty of spirit are glad to give the mercy out that was shown to them? Mercy comes out of the forgiven life like a fountain. Pure mercy is a gift of God. It is not a natural attribute of man but is a gift that comes with the new birth.

Mercy does not hold a grudge, harbor resentment, capitalize on another’s failure or weakness, or publicize another’s sin. On a great table at which he fed countless hundreds of people, Augustine inscribed,

Whoever thinks that he is able,  
To nibble at the life of absent friends,  
Must know that he’s unworthy of this table.

The vindictive, heartless, indifferent are not subjects of Christ’s kingdom. <sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Boice, 76.

<sup>11</sup> MacArthur, 195–196.

Those who practice a life of bitterness will not be shown mercy by God. Those who gossip and refuse to show mercy will not be shown mercy.

### **The Cross of Christ**

We cannot understand the depth of mercy God has shown us, however, without thinking at once of the cross of Jesus Christ. For it was here that God acted out of grace in mercy to fallen, sinful man. In fact, God's act was so complete at the cross that there is a sense in which mercy can be seen by a sinful man there only. In his sinful, fallen state man could do nothing to save himself, so God stepped forward to do everything that needed to be done.<sup>12</sup>

We sing with the joy:

**Mercy** there was great, and grace was free,  
Pardon there was multiplied to me,  
There my burdened soul found liberty—  
At Calvary.

### **Are you Merciful?**

Those who have found mercy with Christ love to show mercy to others. How about you? Are you merciful? Are you quick to forgive? Are you willing to repent today of grudge-holding?

### **How Can I Be Merciful?**

Do you want to know how you can be merciful? It's going to take the grace of God!

- ***Always return good for evil.*** **1 Peter 3:9**, "Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing."
- ***Always think the best of people.*** **1 Cor. 13:7**, "Love believes all things". Always put people in the best light and fill in the blanks with love.
- ***Forgive quickly and completely.*** **1 Cor. 13:7**, "Love bears all things". Love covers a multitude of sins.
- ***Always speak of people as if they were there.***
- ***Do Good when Violated.*** **Matthew 5:39–42**, "Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. 40 And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. 41 And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. 42 Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you."
- ***Leave Vengeance to God.*** **Romans 12:19**, "Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.""

## **2. The Mourners Repent and Live Pure in Heart (vs. 8)**

**Matthew 5:8**, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

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<sup>12</sup> Boice, 45.

Again, we remember that the word **blessed** implies the condition of well-being that results from salvation, the status of one who has a right relation to God. Being accepted by Him is a matter of internal transformation.

### **The Wicked Heart of Man Needs Transformation**

The unredeemed heart needs transformation! The verse says that we are to be “pure in heart” and this gets quickly to the core of the problem, because the heart of man is impure. We need a work of grace in our heart because **Jeremiah 17:9**, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can understand it?” The unconverted heart is evil to the core! The flesh is also evil. The unredeemed part of you and me must be crucified and restrained.

Jesus said, “Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks” (Matt. 12:34). And he added, “Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander” (Matt. 15:19).

### **The Heart**

**Heart** translates *kardia*, from which we get cardiac and similar terms. Throughout Scripture, the heart is used metaphorically to represent the inner person, the seat of motives and attitudes, the center of personality. In Proverbs we are told, “As a man thinks in his heart, so is he” (Prov. 23:7).

**Proverbs 4:23**, “Keep your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the fountains of life.”

In total contrast to the outward, superficial, and hypocritical religion of the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus said that it is in the inner man, in the core of his very being, that God requires purity.

### **Create in Me a Clean Heart**

David acknowledged before the Lord, “Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being, and in the hidden part You wilt make me know wisdom”; and then he prayed “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me” (Ps. 51:6, 10).

### **Serving God from the Heart**

The person submitted to the Lordship of Christ desires above all to have a pure heart – a heart for God’s holiness. God has always been concerned above all else with the inside of man, with the condition of his heart. **1 Samuel 16:7**, “man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.”

### **The Conversion of the Heart**

At conversion we are all given the Spirit of holiness. **Ezekiel 36:26–27**, God says, “I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my judgments.” The converted heart is pure and seeks after God!

## Maintaining Spiritual Purity

How can we maintain spiritual purity?

1. **Remember You are Weak!** First, we must realize that we are unable to live a single holy moment without the Lord's guidance and power. "Who can say, 'I have cleansed my heart, I am pure from my sin'?" (Prov. 20:9), the obvious answer to which is "No one." The Ethiopian cannot change his skin or the leopard its spots (Jer. 13:23). Cleansing begins with a recognition of weakness. Weakness then reaches out for the strength of God.

2. **Read the Word!** Second, we must stay in God's Word. It is impossible to stay in God's will apart from His Word. Jesus said, "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you" (John 15:3).

3. **Walk in the Spirit. Obey God immediately!** Third, it is essential to be controlled by and walking in the will and way of the Holy Spirit. Galatians 5:16 says it clearly: "Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh."

4. **"Pray without ceasing"**. Fourth, we must pray. We cannot stay in God's will or understand and obey His Word unless we stay near Him. "With all prayer and petition" we are to "pray at all times in the Spirit" (Eph. 6:18; cf. Luke 18:1; 1 Thess. 5:17). With David we cry, "Create in me a clean heart, O God" (Ps. 51:10).<sup>13</sup>

5. **Structure Your Life Around the Brethren.** There are over 35 commands in the NT that tell us to care for one another in various ways. "Exhort, encourage, teach, love, bear with, have hospitality... one to another". We are to live a holy life together! Be involved in the lives of those around you.

## Kingdom Citizens Shine the Light of Jesus

Why is this so important? The mourners have mourned for their sin and now live a holy life!

**Matthew 5:14-16**, "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

As Kingdom citizens, we are to bring light to people in darkness, not just by telling them about Jesus, but by living the life of Jesus before them!

### 3. The Meek Give Up Their Rights and Bring Reconciliation (vs.9)

**Matthew 5:9**, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."

How beautiful this is! This beatitude seems to correspond with God giving us meekness inwardly. But outwardly, after giving up our rights and our expectations of others and submitting to God for ourselves, we are ready to be peacemakers. What does that mean?

## The Ministry of Reconciliation

To be a peacemaker is to work actively in the ministry of reconciliation. 2 Corinthians 5:17-21, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. 18 All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 that is, in Christ

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<sup>13</sup> MacArthur, 207.

God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. 20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

We are called to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.

### **Maintaining the Unity of the Spirit**

But peacemakers also maintain peace in the Body.

Ephesians 4:1–3, “I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

### **Biblical Reconciliation**

Peacemakers also practice biblical reconciliation. **Matthew 18:15-17**, “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. 16 But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. 17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.”

1. We are not to gossip. We are to go to our brother alone. If someone comes to you with gossip, do not hear them. Tell them to go to their brother alone. If they want to continue to speak, then tell them to bring the brother with them.
2. We are to have due process. If a person refuses to repent if rebuked, then bring one or two witnesses to bring forth the evidence.
3. If he refuses to listen, then the practice was to bring it to the church leadership. In the days of Jesus, where two or three were gathered as the elders of the synagogue, there was God in the midst judging. And so it is with us today.

### **4. Those Pursing Righteousness Rejoice When they are Persecuted for Righteousness (vs. 10-12)**

**Matthew 5:10-12**, “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

It obvious from Jesus ' portrayal of the characteristics of the Christian life that the true disciple is not as R.T France puts it “a hermit engaged in the solitary pursuit of holiness but as one engaged in society.”

The pursuit of 'righteousness ' can arouse opposition from those whose interest and self respect may be threatened by it. Regardless of how hard we pursue peace and work for reconciliation there will be those who simply don't want it and will not have it.

## **Persecution an Essential Mark of Discipleship**

Why are these blessed? Because it is an essential mark of authentic discipleship. When Jesus says that to these belong the kingdom, this is a way of saying that this is the test of all the other beatitudes.

It is interesting that Luther was willing to go so far as to consider this a mark of the true church. Jesus emphasizes the importance by repetition and expansion.

1. He broadens the scope of persecution “all kinds of evil”

**Verse 11**, “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.”

2. He broadens the depth of rejoicing – Leap for joy! **Verse 12**, “Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

3. He puts you in the company of those who stood against the false kingdom of this world and paid a price for it. Verse 12b, “for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

**John 15:18**, “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.”

## **III. The Blessings of Kingdom Citizens (5:1-12).**

Notice that the blessings given in verses 3 and 10 begin and end with the kingdom!

1. Poor in spirit receive the Kingdom. – Having recognized our spiritual poverty, we receive the Lordship of Christ in our lives. He becomes our King and Shepherd.
2. Mourners are comforted by God. Our King comforts us!
3. The meek give up their rights and inherit the earth. We become heirs of God and joint-heirs with our King, Jesus Christ! We inherit the entire universe. This is covenantal. Abraham was told he would be given the Promised Land. We receive the ultimate promised land by being joint heirs with Christ.
4. Those hungry for God are satisfied. Having realized our own poverty we have hungered for God, and He satisfies us – regardless of our circumstances, we are always filled to the uttermost with His joy and love!
5. The merciful receive mercy. Oh, the mercy of God. We who have been shown mercy offer mercy to those who hurt us.
6. The pure in heart see God. Our eyes have seen the King! And we will never be the same!
7. The peacemakers are called the children of God, like their Father. Again, this is covenantal. Those who have the ministry of reconciliation are just like their Father in heaven. We resemble the very nature of our loving, reconciling God.
8. The persecuted receive the Kingdom (full circle, cf. vs. 3). Those who lose all for Christ have really lost nothing.

**Conclusion:** Are we truly born again? These marks are those who are truly blessed! We have forsaken the world, and all we have is Christ. He is our vision!