



7: Blessed (Matthew 5:1-12)

Today we start studying the greatest sermon ever - **the Sermon on the Mount** - where Jesus explains what He expects of those who follow Him. We begin by discovering what it really means to be **BLESSED**, which is *much more* than having health, wealth, friends, and family.

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teachingnotes

Matthew 5-7 is typically referred to as "**The Sermon on the Mount**", and the speeches of our presidents pale in comparison to the words of Jesus that have rung through the ages, across cultures & continents.

- ☛ **Kent Hughes** "*Like it or not, everyone in western civilization has been touched in some way by the Sermon on the Mount. No one can legitimately minimize its influence...No other section of Scripture makes us face ourselves like the Sermon on the Mount.*"

Crowds loved to hear Jesus teach

Matthew 7:28-29 (NIV) When Jesus had finished saying these things, **the crowds were amazed at his teaching**, because **he taught as one who had authority**, and not as their teachers of the law.

Jesus was full of grace and truth. Jesus didn't dilute the truth. Jesus called people to turn from sin, but He also extended grace, offering forgiveness to anyone who would simply trust in Him.

- ✓ **Homework:** Read the words of Jesus from **Matthew 5-7** over and over again in your own quiet time.

A couple of things about **the Greatest Sermon Ever**.

1. It's unlikely that this is ALL Jesus had to say. One time the people came to hear Jesus teach and He needed to feed them because they had been with Him for 3 days (Matt.15:32). It's unlikely that this was a 15-20 minute sermon.
2. This sermon is more than just *HOW we should live*; it's about *WHO we should live for*.

BLESSED That's a word that many Christians use, *but what does it mean?*

- Blessed is more than being healthy or being wealthy.
- Blessed is more than having friends and family who love you.

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Catch the Context

Matthew 4:23-25 (NIV) Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, **proclaiming the good news of the kingdom**, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. **News about Him spread** all over Syria, and people brought to Him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed; and **He healed them**. Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed Him.

Matthew 5:1-2 (NIV) Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and **he began to teach them**.

- Today we will consider **8 characteristics** that Jesus expects from His followers. The **first 4** focus on **our relationship with God**; the **next 4** focus on **our relationship with people**.

Relationship With God

Matthew 5:3-6 (NIV) He said: "**Blessed are the poor in spirit**, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. **Blessed are those who mourn**, for they will be comforted. **Blessed are the meek**, for they will inherit the earth. **Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness**, for they will be filled.

BLESSED obviously doesn't refer to immediate health, wealth, & happiness, but those who have received God's favor. In other words, being BLESSED isn't about how you feel, but about how God feels about you!

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>These folks **KNOW** that they have the favor of God - they are **RIGHT** with Him, not because of their good works, but because **they recognize and respond to God's grace extended to them**.

Poor in Spirit who Mourn

Matthew 5:3-4 (NIV) **Blessed** are **the poor in spirit**, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. **Blessed** are **those who mourn**, for they will be comforted.

The **poor in spirit** are those who recognize they are spiritually bankrupt before God. The **PROUD in spirit** come looking to make a deal. Those who are **POOR in spirit** approach God in humility, pounding on the door, begging Him to let them in. And the good news is...He will! **Theirs is the kingdom of heaven!** They are in the family!

Blessed are those who mourn over sin & during tough times, because they find their comfort in God Himself. Followers of Jesus experience the current comfort of God's Presence and God's people, yet there is a future when **they will be comforted** by God Himself!

Poor or Proud in Spirit?

Luke 18:10-13 (NIV) Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a **Pharisee** and the other a tax collector. The **Pharisee** stood by himself and prayed this prayer: 'I thank you, God, that I am not like other people—cheaters, sinners, adulterers. I'm certainly not like that tax collector! I fast twice a week, and I give You a tenth of my income.' But **the tax collector** stood at a distance and dared not even lift his eyes to heaven as he prayed. Instead, he beat his chest in sorrow, saying, 'O God, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner.'

- A **Pharisee** was a keeper of God's law, who taught and showed others how to keep God's law. Most people in Jesus' day thought the pharisees were the examples to follow.
- But a **tax collector** was someone a good Jew avoided. Tax collectors were professional thieves who cheated their own people and pocketed the proceeds.
- If you were to ask any Jew which prayer God would hear, it would have been unanimous - *the Pharisee*.

✗ But, the pharisee was **PROUD in spirit**.

✓ The tax collector was **POOR in spirit**.

Luke 18:14 (NLT) I tell you, **this sinner, not the Pharisee, returned home justified before God**. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

To the **poor in spirit & those who mourn**, Jesus gives these encouraging words, "**the kingdom of heaven belongs to them**" and "**they will be comforted**."

- ② Are you **poor in spirit**, humbly asking & trusting God for forgiveness? If so, you are part of **the kingdom of heaven! You're Blessed!**
- ② Have you been through a moment of **mourning**, yet **you sense the Presence of God...comfort in the midst of hurt**. Now imagine the ultimate day when God himself will embrace those who mourn! **You're Blessed!**

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Meek & Hungry

Matthew 5:5-6 (NIV) **Blessed** are **the meek**, for they will inherit the earth. **Blessed** are **those who hunger and thirst for righteousness**, for they will be filled.

Meek does not mean *weak*. Meekness: strength under control. JESUS is the greatest example of meekness. The **meek** are humble before God & also choose to be humble before man.

- ② Is your life marked by *HUMILITY* or *PRIDE*? The **meek** look forward to the day that **they inherit the earth** as the sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father, which includes ownership and access to the re-created **earth! You're blessed!**

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. What vivid imagery! Wanting to be RIGHT with God so badly it's like longing for the basic needs of life - food & water! When a person is really hungry; when a person is really thirsty, nothing else matters! It is the ONE FOCUS of their attention, a **righteousness** we can't find in ourselves. We know where that righteousness comes from, **the One who makes us righteous**. One of the Psalmists writes it this way.

Psalms 42:1-2 (NIV) As the deer pants for streams of water, so **my soul pants for You, my God. My soul thirsts for God**, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?

- ② When's the last time you woke up looking forward to meeting with the Lord in prayer, opening the Scripture, and being with His people to talk about and sing about His goodness?

Does that look like how you approach to your relationship with God? Poor in Spirit, Mourning, Meek, Hungering & Thirsting for Righteousness? If so, then you are...

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- ✓ The next 4 characteristics focus on our relationship with people when we have a right relationship with God. Again, these characteristics are all true of Jesus.

Merciful & Pure in Heart

Matthew 5:7-8 (NIV) **Blessed** are **the merciful**, for they will be shown mercy. **Blessed** are **the pure in heart**, for they will see God.

The **merciful** person remembers his/her own sin, how God showed them mercy, and **extends that same mercy to others**. That mercy is seen in compassion, forgiveness, and kindness.

❓ If your life were to end today, would you be considered someone who received mercy from God & extended mercy to others?

The **pure in heart** are only that way for 2 reasons:

1. God gives purity. No one is pure before God on our own, as all have sinned against him (Rom 3:23), but...God forgives us of sin when we repent.
2. That person lives purity - livin' forgiven, doing what's right instead of doing what's wrong. Psalm 24 asks and answers a most important question:

Psalm 24:3-5 (NIV) Who may ascend the mountain of the LORD? Who may stand in His holy place? The one who has **clean hands** and a **pure heart**, who does not trust in an idol or swear by a false god. They will receive blessing from the LORD and vindication from God their Savior.

Blessed are **the pure in heart**, for they will see God.

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Peacemakers

Matthew 5:9 (NIV) **Blessed** are the **peacemakers**, for they will be called children of God.

Jesus, the ultimate **peacemaker**, the One who brings His enemies back to God, is speaking these words. And those who follow the example of Jesus **will be called children** [literally **sons**] **of God**. These people are part of God's family! **BLESSED!**

Paul later writes:

Colossians 1:19-20 (NET) For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in **the Son** and through him to reconcile all things to himself by **making peace through the blood of his cross**—through him, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

- ✓ Jesus expects His followers to FOLLOW His example, to be **peacemakers** who want to be **at PEACE with God and with people**. Further, **they want OTHER PEOPLE to be at peace with God**, and they will take the message of the cross to share how OTHERS can have peace with God.

Many will listen to this GOOD NEWS of God's demonstration of love that offers them PEACE with Him. Sadly, **many will NOT listen**, and will even make war against those who bring the message of peace. So Jesus prepares His disciples for this.

Persecuted for Righteousness

Matthew 5:10-12 (NIV) **Blessed** are **those who are persecuted because of righteousness**, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. **Blessed** are you when people **insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you** because of Me. **Rejoice** and be **glad**, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Following Jesus is not easy. If we do it well, it doesn't guarantee us that everyone will like us. We can expect to see some lives radically transformed forever, but we can also expect to be **persecuted**, not for something we have done wrong, but for **righteousness**, because you follow Jesus. When persecutions, insults, and false accusations come your way because you are following Jesus and encouraging others to do the same, then you are **BLESSED!** *Right living convicts* those who are *living wrong*.

Persecution is nothing new for followers of the One True God. Jesus reminded that ancient audience and us, that even in the middle of persecution, we should remember that **they persecuted the prophets** before you in same way. **Jeremiah** was thrown waist deep into a well full of mud. **Isaiah** was sawn in half. **Stephen** would have his head bashed in with stones.

Yet in the middle of the persecution, we should **rejoice and be glad**...not because everyone is responding to the gospel, but because there is a **reward in heaven** awaiting us! **We are blessed!**

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The Scripture declares a future day is coming when the *poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger & thirst for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, & the peacemakers* who are *persecuted for their righteousness and faith in Jesus, will fully know what it means that **the kingdom of heaven belongs to them.***

A Picture of What Awaits Us

Revelation 21:1-4 (NIV) Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! **God's dwelling place is now among the people, and He will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.**"

Oh what THAT day will be like! We hug our loved ones who believed in Jesus and crossed over to the other side of eternity before us. **No more tears!** No more sickness. No more death. No more burials. No more sin! And we SEE our **KING** face to face! The Presence of God the Father, Son, & Spirit will permeate our whole world! Oh what a day that will be...and the day after that...and the day after that!!!!

Until then, followers of Jesus need to pause and be reminded. **We are BLESSED!**

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? **Are you BLESSED?** Would you like to talk more about what it means to truly follow Jesus? Please contact us.

heretoserveyou

Have questions and need some help? ...real soon...how about now? Please **call** or **text** us soon!

- * Contact **Jackie** (850-673-1582), **Christy** (850-673-9764), **Caleb** (864-315-8015), or another follower of Jesus soon!
- * Or call our **deacons & wives**: Alan & Christy Androski (850-464-1428), Steve & Debbie Bass (850-673-7952), Freddy & Joyce Howard (850-973-0047), Tim & Joni Hughey (850-464-1156), Mark & Dot Mancil (850-253-5405), Boss & Amelia Mulkey (850-464-6717), or Tom & Martha Waddail (850-973-0011).

discussionquestions

Take some time to discuss these questions with your family, friends, or group.

1. What are some ways people typically try to find happiness or fulfillment in life? How does this teaching from Jesus change our perspective on lasting fulfillment?
2. The **BIG TRUTH** from this passage defines *what BLESSED means, according to Jesus*. **Read back through Matthew 5:1-12** and make sure to compare and contrast our society's admirable virtues versus these kingdom virtues.
3. Which of these promises means the most to you today? Why?
4. How do these characteristics (e.g. meek, merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers) point us back to the character of Jesus?
5. What is the most common type of **persecution** that *you* face? **Read Romans 12:14**. If Christians are to be peacemakers (Mt 5:9), then how should we respond to being insulted, slandered, or worse? Why is that so difficult?
6. How might God use our righteous response to persecution in the future? Remember, Paul - while persecuting Christians - once watched and approved of Stephen (a Christian) being killed for following Jesus. How do you think that memory impacted Paul after He surrendered to Jesus?
7. We all have times that we need an attitude adjustment. Which of these 8 virtues do YOU need to focus on to better follow Jesus?
8. Share prayer needs and pray for one another.