DIVING DEEPER DISCUSSION GUIDE

TEXT SUMMARY

In today's text, Matt 5:7-10, we see the next four of the Beatitudes, the opening words of Jesus' most famous sermon, the "Sermon on the Mount." Taken at face value, these sayings are baffling. Some of them seem to be simple observations of cause-and-effect, but some seem to describe an almost superhuman level of godliness and virtue. As simple as they seem to be, the Beatitudes defy easy explanation.

INTRODUCTION (OBSERVATION):

One way to consider the Beatitudes is to look at them backward:

1. What is likely to be the experience of those who refuse to show mercy to others when they themselves need mercy?

2. Use this method to examine other sayings in our text.

DISCUSSION (INTERPRETATION):

1. Should we think of the Beatitudes the way we think of proverbs, observations about how life usually works out? Or should we think of them as promises? Or are they ethical mandates? In v. 7, was Jesus merely making an observation about psychological tendencies: that people who demonstrate mercy earn a good reputation with others, who are more likely to show mercy to them? Or is He hinting at something more, something deeper?

2. What does it mean to be "pure in heart"? (Or, to consider it backward, what does it mean to be impure in heart?)

3. Verse 10 was especially counter intuitive in the Greco-Roman world, where strength was measured in terms of violence and conquest. How can Jesus suggest that His Kingdom would belong to those who "persecuted for righteousness' sake"?

SO WHAT? (APPLICATION):

1. **Have you ever seen v. 7 illustrated in a real-life situation?**
    - Did it happen to you or to someone else?
    - What is that story?
2. **Do you know someone who fits the description in v. 8: a pure-hearted man or woman who seems to have an intimate relationship with God?** What makes that person different (life habits, outlook and demeanor, etc.)?
3. **Have you ever known someone who had a strong inclination to make peace?**
    - How have you seen that person approach interpersonal conflict in his/her own life?
    - How has that person worked to make peace between others who are in conflict?
4. **We in the West don't know persecution the way our brothers and sisters in other countries have experienced it (e.g., Nigeria, China, many nations in the Middle East).** The closest we usually come to persecution is negative portrayals of Christians in popular media or the occasional snub or snide remark in a social setting.
    - Have you seen (in your own experience or in the experience of someone else) an example of actual persecution for his/her faith? What is that story?
    - Most of us don't have stories of actual persecution, so how can we interpret and apply this saying in our relatively benign cultural environment?