

## **Sermon On the Mount Pt 2 The Beatitudes**

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Sermon On the Mount / The Beatitudes / Matthew 5:3–16

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# I: Introduction

### **Matthew 5:3–16 BSB**

<sup>3</sup> “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>4</sup> Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

<sup>5</sup> Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

<sup>6</sup> Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

<sup>7</sup> Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

<sup>8</sup> Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

<sup>9</sup> Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

<sup>10</sup> Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>11</sup> Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.

<sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets before you.

<sup>13</sup> You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its savor, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.

<sup>14</sup> You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden.

<sup>15</sup> Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a basket. Instead, they set it on a stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.

<sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

Last time we walked through the announcement. Jesus climbed a hill and started describing what happens when God's kingdom shows up in a person's life, and we spent the whole night establishing one thing before he ever said a word of it. The kingdom of heaven had already arrived, and it arrived first for people who had nothing to offer it. Not the

comfortable, not the successful, not the people who already had themselves figured out. The sick, the poor, the occupied, the tired. Everything Jesus says for the next three chapters is not a list of requirements for getting into that kingdom. It is a description of what that kingdom actually looks like on people who are already living inside it. Tonight we start finding out what that description says.

I have stood in a lot of hospital rooms. Enough to have watched the same moment happen many times. A baby is born, given a name, and that child is now a son. A daughter. Somebody's child, completely, all the way, right then. Nobody in that room is waiting to see if the baby earns the name first. Nobody treats the relationship like a probationary period. The moment the child arrives, the identity is already complete.

There is something backwards about that, if you think about it. That baby cannot do a single thing yet. Cannot walk. Cannot talk. Cannot carry one responsibility that belongs to being part of a family. All of that gets learned, slowly, over years. The name comes first, complete. The living out of what that name means comes after, and it takes a lifetime to catch up to what was already true from the very first day.

That is exactly the move Jesus is about to make on this hillside. Last time we watched him announce that the kingdom had arrived. Tonight he opens his mouth and starts

naming the family. Notice what he does not do. He does not walk up to a crowd of sick, poor, occupied people and hand them a list of requirements to meet before they qualify to belong. He looks at them and tells them who they already are. Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are those who mourn. He is naming a family before he has asked a single thing of it.

That is what we are doing tonight. Eight statements Jesus makes about the people who belong to him, one after another, describing them before he has made a single demand. This is the character of kingdom people, laid out in full, before performance ever enters the conversation.

## II: How These Eight Statements Are Built

Before we walk through these one at a time, I want you to notice how they are built, because it changes how you hear them.

### **Matthew 5:3 BSB**

<sup>3</sup> “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

### **Matthew 5:10 BSB**

<sup>10</sup> Blessed are those who are persecuted because of

righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Look at how the first one ends and how the eighth one ends. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Same phrase, word for word, opening the list and closing it. Everything in between, the mourning, the meekness, the mercy, all of it sits inside a frame that starts and ends with the same promise. That is the same kind of literary bracket we already found holding together the whole middle section of this sermon. Matthew likes building this way. He wants you to read everything inside the frame as one connected thought, not eight separate ideas that happen to be sitting next to each other.

Notice something else. For all eight statements, Jesus is describing a category of people. Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are those who mourn. Third person, at arm's length, like he is describing a type of person to the crowd rather than speaking to any one of them directly. Then watch what happens right after verse ten.

**Matthew 5:11 BSB**

<sup>11</sup> Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.

Blessed are you. He drops the description and points straight at the room. We will get there tonight, but I want

you watching for that shift as we go, because it matters. Jesus does not stay at a comfortable distance for long.

These eight statements are not just a random list. The first four are mostly about a person's posture toward God, toward their own emptiness and their own need. The second four turn outward, toward how that posture starts to show up in how a person treats everybody else.

Let's start where Jesus starts.

## III: Poor in Spirit

### **Matthew 5:3 BSB**

<sup>3</sup> “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

We already did the hard work on this one last week. Poor in spirit does not mean sad, and it does not mean timid. It means knowing you have nothing to offer God that would earn you a seat at his table. That is not new information tonight. What is new is what we do with it.

Go back to the birth illustration for a second. A child does not become a son once, on the day they are born, and then move on to something else. Being a son is not a box a person checks and then leaves behind. It is the ground everything else stands on for the rest of that child's life.

Every year that passes, the sonship is still the foundation, even while the living of it keeps changing.

Poor in spirit works the same way. This is not a posture a person adopts once, at the start of following Jesus, and then graduates out of as they mature. Coming to God with empty hands, knowing you have nothing to offer him that would earn your place, is not the entry fee you pay before the real Christian life starts. It's the ground the whole thing stands on, every single day, for as long as a person is walking with God. The most mature believer in this room tonight and the newest one in this room tonight are standing on the exact same ground. Neither of them ever graduates out of coming to God empty handed.

And notice the reward Jesus attaches to it. For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Present tense. Not theirs will be the kingdom, someday, once they have proven something.

## IV: Mourning

### **Matthew 5:4 BSB**

<sup>4</sup> Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

I want to slow down here, because this is a place where it would be easy to hear this word and turn it into something safer than what Jesus actually said. It would be easy to hear mourning and immediately translate it into something like

feeling bad about my sin in general, a kind of low grade spiritual guilt that never gets specific and never actually costs anything. That is not what this word is asking you to picture.

Jesus is not describing a vague inner mood. He is describing people who have buried someone. People whose bodies are sick and are not getting better. People living under an occupying army who watched their family's land taken by a tax system built to take it. Remember who is sitting on that hillside. These are not people who need to manufacture sorrow to qualify for this blessing. They already have it. And Jesus looks at their actual grief, their actual loss, and tells them that they are exactly the kind of people this kingdom belongs to.

That has to mean something for us too, and not just as a history lesson about a crowd two thousand years ago. If there is real grief sitting in this room tonight, grief over a marriage that did not survive, a diagnosis nobody wanted, a child who walked away from everything you raised them to believe, Jesus is not asking you to spiritualize that grief into something smaller and safer before it counts. He is telling you it already counts. The mourning itself, the real thing, is not a barrier standing between you and blessing.

And they shall be comforted. Future tense, and worth noticing, it is not a comfort they produce for themselves. It



is done to them, from outside, by somebody else. It is worth pointing out that the word Jesus uses for comforted shares its root with a name used later in the New Testament for the Holy Spirit himself, the Paraclete, the one called alongside to comfort. I wouldn't build a doctrine on a shared word root. But it is a fitting echo. The comfort promised here is not a feeling a grieving person eventually talks themselves into. It is a person, sent to stand with them.

Blessed are those who mourn. Not blessed are those who successfully move past their grief quickly. Not blessed are those who grieve quietly enough not to make anyone uncomfortable. Blessed are those who mourn, full stop, because the kingdom of heaven does not ask anyone to pretend the losses in this life are smaller than they are.

## V: Meek

### **Matthew 5:5 BSB**

<sup>5</sup> Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Meek is a word that has been ruined a little by how we use it now. Say meek out loud and most people picture somebody who gets stepped on. Somebody with no backbone. Somebody who lets other people make every decision because they are too timid to make one themselves. If that is what Jesus meant, this is a strange thing to call a blessing.

The word Jesus uses here shows up elsewhere in Greek writing from that period describing a horse. Not a wild horse. A horse that has been trained, broken to the bit, powerful strength now fully under control and put to use by someone else's hand.

That lines up with what the rest of Scripture already says about meekness. Moses was called the meekest man on earth, and Moses was not a doormat. Moses stood in front of Pharaoh and refused to move. Meekness is not the absence of strength. It is strength that has stopped insisting on its own way. A meek person still has power, still has opinions, still has the capacity to fight for what they want. What they have given up is the need to force it.

And notice what is promised to them. Not that they will seize the earth. That they will inherit it. An inheritance is not something you take by force. It is something given to you because of whose family you belong to. Psalm 37 already made this connection long before Jesus stood on this hillside, the meek inheriting the land while everyone grasping for it by force ends up with nothing that lasts. Jesus is not inventing a new idea here. He is telling this crowd that the promise their own Scriptures already made is about to be kept, in them.

# VI: Hungering and Thirsting for Righteousness

## **Matthew 5:6 BSB**

<sup>6</sup> Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Something shifts here, and I want you to feel it. The first three of these statements have all described a state. Poor in spirit, a condition of having nothing to offer. Mourning, a condition of loss. Meek, a condition of strength that has laid down its insistence on its own way. All three are things a person is. None of them, by themselves, move toward anything. And now, at the fourth statement, Jesus reaches for a completely different kind of word.

Hunger and thirst are not states. They are drives. Hunger interrupts you. It gets louder the longer it goes unanswered. A hungry body does not sit still and wait to see what happens. It goes looking for food. Jesus could have kept the same shape he used for the first three beatitudes and said something like blessed are those who desire righteousness, or blessed are those who value righteousness, and the sentence would still have made sense. He does not. He reaches for the two most urgent, most physically demanding words available to him. This is not a preference.

It is not a value a person holds quietly alongside other values. It is an appetite that will not leave a person alone until it gets fed.

That matters, because of what comes right before it. Poverty of spirit, mourning, and meekness could all, if a person is not careful, get mistaken for a kind of passive resignation. Simply enduring one's own emptiness. Jesus will not let that stand. The proper response to seeing your own emptiness clearly is not to sit in it. It is to want, with everything in you, the one thing that actually fills it.

This is also the first time that word, righteousness, appears anywhere in this sermon, and I want you to remember this moment, because we are going to spend the rest of this series watching that single word carry the entire weight of what Jesus is teaching. Everything from here through the end of chapter seven runs on this word. What true righteousness looks like in how you treat people. What it looks like in how you deal with God. Whether it is real or only performed. All of it grows out of the seed Jesus just planted in one verse, right here, in the middle of a list of blessings.

Now hold that word next to a promise Jesus makes two chapters from now, because I think you need to hear it early. Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. That

is coming. It is not a small demand. The scribes and Pharisees were serious, disciplined, religious people, and Jesus is about to tell this same hungry crowd that what is required of them goes further than that. Not less far. Further. If all a person had to meet that demand was their own appetite and their own effort, that hunger would eventually turn to despair instead of blessing. Wanting righteousness badly enough does not, by itself, produce it.

That is exactly why Jesus does not end this verse with the hunger. He ends it with a promise. For they shall be filled. Not partially satisfied. Not given a fighting chance to earn their own fullness if they work hard enough. Filled. The hunger Jesus is naming here is real, and it is going to get tested hard by everything coming in the next two chapters. But the filling was never going to come from the hunger working harder at itself. Keep that promise in your pocket. We are going to need it before this series is over, especially when we get to the end of it and start asking what it looks like when that hunger has actually been met.

Now I want to stop and be plain with you about something, because it would be easy to walk away from these first four blessings and hear something softer than what Jesus actually said.

It would be easy to hear poor in spirit and quietly turn it into a general feeling of humility available to anyone, regardless

of what their life actually looks like. It would be easy to hear those who mourn and turn it into a vague, low grade sadness about sin in general that never gets specific and never costs anyone anything. It would be easy to hear this hunger for righteousness and turn it into a mild preference for being a decent person. All of that would be comfortable. None of it is what Jesus said.

## VII: Merciful

Something changes here. The first four blessings all described a person's posture toward God and toward their own lack. Empty handed. Grieving. Strength laid down. Hungry for something only God can supply. Starting with this one, the direction turns outward. These next four describe what that inward posture starts to look like once it shows up in how a person treats everybody else.

### **Matthew 5:7 BSB**

<sup>7</sup> Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Read quickly, that sentence can sound like a trade. Be merciful, and God will be merciful back to you. Earn the mercy by handing some out first. If that is what this verse means, it puts us right back in the very thing this whole series exists to correct, righteousness as a fee paid in installments, mercy as a transaction instead of a gift.

That is not what Jesus is saying. Mercy given is not the price of mercy received. It is the proof of it. A person who has actually stood in front of God with nothing to offer and been shown mercy anyway does not stay the same kind of person. That mercy works its way into them and starts coming back out, toward the people around them who have not earned anything from them either. The giving is not how the receiving gets earned. The giving is what the receiving looks like once it has had time to take root in somebody's life.

You will hear this same logic again in a few weeks, when we get to the Lord's Prayer. Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors. Same shape. A person who has genuinely received what they did not deserve becomes a person who extends what they do not owe.

And they shall receive mercy. Future tense, same as the promises before it. Not mercy paid out on a schedule to match what was given. Mercy that keeps flowing toward the same kind of person this whole list has been describing from the start, the one who came to God with nothing and is still, all these blessings later, standing on that same empty handed ground.

## VIII: Pure in Heart

### **Matthew 5:8 BSB**

<sup>8</sup> Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

We have narrowed this word down over the years until it mostly means one thing. Sexual purity, and not much else. That is not wrong exactly, it belongs somewhere in this word, but it is a much smaller room than the one Jesus is actually describing. Purity of heart is bigger than what a person does or does not do with their body. It is about what a person's heart is actually aimed at, underneath everything else.

Think about what makes something pure in any other context. Pure water has nothing else mixed into it. Pure metal has nothing else alloyed into it. Purity is not about being good in a general sense. It is about being undivided. One thing, all the way through, with nothing else quietly mixed in alongside it. A pure heart is a heart that has stopped running two agendas at once, the one it shows in public and the one it actually serves underneath. It is a heart that has quit negotiating between loving God and loving whatever else it has been unwilling to let go of.

And they shall see God. That is not a small promise. In the Old Testament, seeing God's face and living was not something anyone could count on. Purity of heart is what makes that kind of nearness to God possible instead of dangerous. An undivided heart is a heart that finally has



nothing left in it that would need to hide from him.

## IX: Peacemakers

### **Matthew 5:9 BSB**

<sup>9</sup> Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

Peacemaking gets confused with peacekeeping more often than not, and the two are not the same thing. Peacekeeping avoids conflict. It smooths things over, changes the subject, keeps quiet so the room stays comfortable. Peacemaking goes the other direction entirely. It walks toward the conflict instead of around it. It does the actual work of reconciling two people who are genuinely at odds, which almost always costs something before it produces anything.

It is worth noticing the word Jesus reaches for here. Peacemakers is one word in the Greek, built from peace and a verb that means to make or to do. It is a rare word. This is the only place it shows up anywhere in the New Testament. Jesus is not describing someone who happens to enjoy calm surroundings. He used a word for someone who does the work of producing peace where it did not exist before. Peace, in this sentence, is not a mood a person maintains. It is something a person makes, the same way a builder makes a house, through effort, on purpose, at a cost.

Making peace between two people who are genuinely at odds usually means stepping into a conflict that was not yours to begin with. It usually means telling both sides something true that neither one wants to hear. It often means absorbing blame that does not belong to you, simply because someone has to go first if the two sides are ever going to move toward each other instead of away. None of that is comfortable. All of it is what the word actually asks for.

Called sons of God. The same family language we already heard with mercy, a person who has been shown mercy becomes a person who shows it, and here a person who makes peace gets called a child of the God who does the same. But look at where that family resemblance actually points. Paul later writes that God, in Christ, was reconciling the world to himself, making peace through the blood of his cross. The Father did not send peace from a safe distance. He sent his Son to absorb what stood between himself and the people at odds with him, at the highest possible cost, so that peace could actually be made rather than simply announced. A peacemaker is not inventing a new kind of behavior. They are doing, in whatever small conflict is in front of them, the same costly work the Son already did at the center of everything. Hold onto that phrase, sons of God. We are going to hear it again in a few weeks, when Jesus tells this same crowd to love their enemies so that they may

be sons of their Father in heaven.

## X: Persecuted

### **Matthew 5:10 BSB**

<sup>10</sup> Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Listen to how that ends. For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. The exact same words that closed out verse three. We opened this list with the poor in spirit standing inside the kingdom, and we close it with the persecuted standing inside that same kingdom, on the same present tense terms. Everything Jesus has said tonight, all eight of these statements, sits inside that frame. Persecution is not treated here as an unfortunate exception to kingdom life. It is placed inside the exact same blessing as poverty of spirit and mercy and purity of heart. It belongs to the same list.

### **Matthew 5:11–12 BSB**

<sup>11</sup> Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.

<sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets before you.

And here is the shift we flagged at the start of the night.

Blessed are you. Jesus stops describing a category and looks straight at the people in front of him. This is not a hypothetical about someone else, somewhere else, at some other time. He is telling this crowd, directly, that they should expect this, and that when it comes, it does not mean something has gone wrong. It means they are standing exactly where the prophets stood before them. Persecution is not evidence that God has abandoned a person. It is evidence they are in good company.

I am not going to spend the rest of the night here, but I am not going to soften it either. Rejoice and be glad is a strange command to give someone who is being reviled. Jesus does not say endure it, or survive it, or wait it out. He says rejoice. That only makes sense if the reward he names right after it is actually real, and actually worth more than the comfort persecution costs. Your reward is great in heaven. Jesus is asking this crowd to believe that trade is worth making. We are going to come back to what it costs to actually love the people doing the persecuting when we get to session three. Tonight, just let the blessing stand where Jesus put it, right alongside everything else on this list.

## XI: Salt and Light

**Matthew 5:13–16 BSB**

<sup>13</sup> You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its savor,

how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.

<sup>14</sup> You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden.

<sup>15</sup> Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a basket. Instead, they set it on a stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.

<sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

Something changes in how Jesus is speaking. For eight statements straight, he has said blessed are, followed by a description. Now the sentence changes shape entirely. You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world. Not blessed are you if you manage to become salt. Not try harder to be light. You are. Present tense, stated as a fact already true, not a goal still waiting to be reached.

That is the whole night in one sentence, if you think about it. Everything Jesus has described up to this point, the poverty of spirit, the mourning, the hunger for righteousness, the mercy, all of it was building an identity before it asked for anything. Now that identity gets named directly. You are salt. You are light. Not because of anything you have done. Because of who you already are, standing inside what Jesus

just described.

But do not miss what comes right after that. Salt that has lost its flavor is good for nothing, thrown out, trampled under people's feet. That line sits inside an otherwise encouraging passage, and it would be easy to rush past it to get to the more comfortable part about shining a light on a hill. I do not want to rush past it. Jesus is not only stating an identity here. He is also naming what happens when that identity stops doing what it was made to do. A city on a hill that goes dark is still called a city. Salt that has gone flat is still called salt. But Jesus is telling this crowd that the name alone is not the point. We are going to come back to this question, whether the name and the fruit always match, when we get to the very end of this sermon in a few weeks.

The positive side of this is just as strong. A lamp does not get lit and then hidden under a basket. Nobody does that on purpose. It gets set on a stand so it can do the one thing it exists to do. Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. Notice where the glory lands. Not on the light itself. On the Father who put it there. The good works are not performed to be noticed. They are performed so that whoever notices them ends up looking past the light and toward the source of it.

## XII: Closing

Think back to where we started tonight. A child does not earn a name at birth. The name comes first, complete, and everything after that is the slow work of growing into what was already true. That is exactly what we have watched Jesus do tonight. Poor in spirit. Mourning. Meek. Hungering for righteousness. Merciful. Pure in heart. Peacemakers. Persecuted. Salt and light. Eight statements and two identities, every one of them describing who these people already are, before Jesus has asked a single thing of them.

One more time, because we are going to keep coming back to this sentence for the rest of this series.

*Righteousness is not the price of the ticket in. It is the shape of a life once it actually belongs to the kingdom Jesus is announcing.*

Tonight was the clearest picture we will get of that shape all series long. Not a list of requirements. A description of a family, spoken over people who had nothing to offer, before they had done anything at all.

Next week, the sermon changes gears. Jesus stops describing who these people are and starts showing us what that character looks like when it runs into real life. Six

specific areas, one after another. Murder and anger. Adultery and lust. Divorce. Oaths. Retaliation. Love for people who do not deserve it. This is where the character we just spent tonight describing gets tested against actual commands, actual situations, actual people who are hard to love. It is the largest single block of material in the whole sermon, and we are going to need every bit of the ground we laid tonight to make sense of it.

Here is what I want you to carry out of this room this week, and I want it specific enough that you can actually do something with it. Look back over these eight statements. Poor in spirit. Mourning. Meek. Hungering for righteousness. Merciful. Pure in heart. Peacemakers. Persecuted. Pick one, just one, that does not currently describe you, and ask yourself honestly why not. Not in a way that beats you up over it. In a way that actually names it. Where is the gap between the family Jesus just described and the life you are actually living. Don't rush past that question this week. We built the foundation for everything else in this series on the ground we covered tonight, and next week we start building on top of it.