

## THE BEATITUDES

### MATTHEW 4:23-5:3



#### OPENING

- Begin by reading Matthew 4:23-5:12 together. Use two different translations!

#### SERMON REVIEW

- Jesus had been traveling throughout Galilee, proclaiming the kingdom and healing the people. This attracted large crowds, which he led aside to teach more about his kingdom.
- Beatitude = an affirmation of blessing or happiness. The first four beatitudes address our relationship with God, the second our relationship with people. Each has a present and a future, a now and not yet. Together they address what is expected of the new citizens of the kingdom.
- Matthew 5:3 reads, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."
- No one looks at poverty as a blessing. Jesus challenges common thought, and contrasts human values with his own.
- The original Greek word, *ptōchos*, which is translated as "poor," was derived from the verb "to crouch, or to cower." In this context, we get the idea of bowing in humility, recognizing one's inability to save themselves (from sin and death).
- We need to realize that we have nothing, and that all we are is in Christ and because of Christ. Be bankrupt in your spirit by assuming a posture of reliance on God!
- The truth is that God doesn't need us. However, we need him desperately, and he allows us to rely on him - to put our burdens on him.
- He's looking for us to humble ourselves before him, so that he can respond by carrying us (Isaiah 66:2b). He opposes the proud, and favors the humble (James 4:6). So poorness of spirit is saying, "More of Jesus, less of me." (John 3:30)
- Unless we surrender to the Father and become poor in spirit, we cannot be citizens of his kingdom. There can only be one king in a kingdom, and we must realize that it's not us. The poor in spirit live in humility, surrender, reliance, weakness, trust, awareness, and intentionality.

#### DISCUSSION

- Both the disciples and the crowd followed Jesus to the mountainside. Remembering that he was teaching about the kingdom of God, what's the significance of both groups listening in?
- "Blessed" could also be translated as "happy." Compare and contrast the two terms.

- How does this first beatitude deal with the present and the future at the same time?
- We've all heard someone claim that Christianity is a crutch for the weak. The question is why that's negative (to admit weakness and lean on Jesus). How are we "blessed" when depending on him? How can we help others understand this principle?
- Read Isaiah 57:15 and Isaiah 66:2. What do these verses tell us about God's response to the humble and poor in spirit?
- William Carey, a British missionary and Bible translator in nineteenth-century India, commissioned his epitaph to read, "A wretched, poor, and helpless worm, on thy kind arms I fall." How does this statement reveal an attitude of spiritual bankruptcy? Does it remind you of any Bible verses?
- Is there a difference between humility and self-humiliation? What is the ideal that Jesus is teaching in this beatitude? What does it mean to be poor in spirit?

### CHALLENGE

- Be poor in spirit! Crouch in humility, knowing that only Jesus can provide what you need.
- Let the Lord demonstrate his strength in your weakness this week!

### PLAN AHEAD

- We'll be studying the second beatitude next week: "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted."