

The Sermon on the Mount: Beatitudes 1-3

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Text: Matthew 5:1-5

Gospel of Matthew: [Bibliography](#) or [Manuscripts and Greek Exegesis](#)

UBS 4th Edition Paragraph Topic: The Sermon on the Mount

Central Idea of Message: Christians should reflect godly character in all aspects of life.

Introduction: Jesus wanted to make it perfectly clear that following him demanded far more than superficial infatuation (cf. Tolar 4). Herein, therefore, are found practical expressions of the Christian life as exhibited in character qualities as articulated in the very first sermon of Jesus on record.

Moreover, Jesus is not teaching salvation by works, but rather, he is illustrating the ethical nature which springs forth from salvation by faith in him. **The Sermon on the Mount does not tell people how to be saved, but how saved people should live (cf. Greenfield 17).**

These beatitudes [condition of blessedness or happiness and comes from the Latin word for blessed, which is *beatus*], or qualities of kingdom character which are regarded as *approved* by God, are traits all Christians should exhibit.

Thus, the beatitudes portray an ideal ethic [perfect goal], a descriptive ethic [describing what authentic Christianity looks like], a prescriptive ethic [prescribing how Christians should live, look, and act], an inward ethic [internal source], an eschatological ethic [future Millennial and heavenly time], an all-inclusive ethic, and, in a word, a Christian ethic lived in this present, evil age.

The points of Jesus are that (1) the values held dear by the world do not lead to happiness, expressed here in the "blessed are" formula, and (2) this "blessedness" is what a truly repentant, kingdom-inheriting person looks like.

I. The Sermon on the Mount: The Setting (vv. 1-2)

- A. Jesus saw the multitudes, went up on the mountain, sat down, and his disciples came to him (v. 1)
 - 1. Jesus saw the multitudes

- a) The people came to him eager to hear about the coming kingdom of the Messiah
 - b) The people were especially interested in how to get into the kingdom, that is to say "who is eligible to enter?"
 - c) What does an eligible candidate for the Messiah's kingdom look like?
2. Jesus went up on a mountain
- a) Not to withdraw from the people
 - b) To see better in order to position himself to broaden the scope of his vision
 - c) To be seen better by more people
3. Jesus sat down
- a) A posture common to rabbinic teachers
 - b) A posture more conducive to lengthy lectures
 - c) A posture expressing authoritative teaching (cf. France 157-8)
 - d) **In sitting down to teach and preach, Jesus "planted" himself as if to invite others to settle in and lend an ear**
 - e) Here, we find him ministering while sitting on a mountain, later, we find him ministering while hanging on a mountain - Mount Calvary, the Place of the Skull, Golgotha
4. His disciples came to him
- a) The crowds?
 - b) More than merely the twelve
 - c) Probably "the narrower circle of his committed disciples" (France 153)
 - d) Attracted by his miracles (see Matt. 4:23-25)
 - (1) Matthew seems to have been inspired by the Holy Spirit to record the Sermon on the Mount and its details and not the details of the miracles
 - (2) Is this because he saw the teachings as more important than the miracles (cf. Plummer 53; see also John 10:38; 14:11)?
- B. Opening his mouth, he began to teach (v. 2)
- 1. Matthew, our human author, describes this detail of the event to signal that something all-important was about to be taught by Jesus
 - 2. **The spoken word has long been God's medium for communicating truths about himself**
 - a) When God spoke, he did so in the language of his listeners, with no interpreter necessary

- b) When Jesus spoke, he did so in a language his listeners could understand
- c) **There is no record of God or Christ ever speaking in a language his listeners could not understand**
- 3. **The written word of God [Bible] stands as the record for the spoken word of God throughout the ages, in that it has been preserved for all to review, even beyond the lifetimes of the writing prophets, apostles, and other biblical authors**

II. **Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit (v. 3)**

- A. Blessed: fortunate, approved by the Lord, divine joy, perfect happiness pointing toward the promise of "eschatological blessing" (Carson, *Expositor's*, 130)
 - 1. **Macarisms: from the Greek word μακάριος**
 - 2. Description of an inward frame of mind
 - 3. Not necessarily a reference to outward circumstances
 - a) But most people would agree that wealth alone does not bring lasting happiness and certainly doesn't bring eternal blessing
 - b) **"Though poverty is neither a blessing nor a guarantee of spiritual rewards, it can be turned to advantage if it fosters humility before God" (Carson, *Expositor's*, 131)**
- B. Poor in spirit
 - 1. Echoes Ps. 37:11, Isa. 57:15 and 61:1-2
 - a) Please note how the spoken word of Jesus here expounds upon the written word of God from centuries earlier
 - b) The Old Testament is just as inspired and valuable as the New Testament!
 - 2. Present tense verb [are] indicating an ongoing attribute
 - 3. **"Poor in spirit" means not confident in our own skills, talents, wealth, or abilities to meet the challenges of life**
 - 4. **"Poor in spirit" suggests being broken by recognition of personal sin to the point of being desperate for rescue, renewal, and restoration by God's Messiah [Christ]**
 - 5. **"Poor in spirit" is the opposite of the pride, egotism, self-reliance, self-praise, self-**

- assertion, and vanity of the world which causes one to regard God as irrelevant
6. **"Poor in spirit" describes abandoning self-righteousness, embracing genuine humility, and engaging in total reliance upon Christ rather than self**
 7. **We are never too weak for God to use, only too strong!**
- C. This quality is compatible with inhabitants of the kingdom of heaven
1. But clearly the present tense "is" indicates that they are already experiencing the kingdom of heaven to a degree
 2. These beatitudes describe those who have made Christ their king
 3. To be aware of our "poorness" in spirit is to have begun our heaven-bound walk with Christ

III. **Blessed Are Those Who Mourn (v. 4)**

- A. Mourn
1. **"Mourning" suggests grieving and having feelings too deep for concealment, not being hard-nosed or unfeeling like a sociopath**
 2. Charles Spurgeon once said, "I have learned to kiss the wave that throws me against the Rock of Ages" (Spurgeon in Hébert 64)
 3. **"Mourning" indicates grieving over failure not to have lived up to the expectations and examples of Christ regarding recognizing our spiritual poverty [poorness] and inability to meet our own needs**
 - a) Humble enough to petition God to meet their needs
 - b) The opposite of hedonism [living solely for personal pleasure and fulfillment of lusts]
 - c) Robert Browning Hamilton wrote a poem entitled *Along the Road* that helps capture v. 4: **"I walked a mile with Pleasure, She chattered all the way, But left me none the wiser For all she had to say, I walked a mile with Sorrow, And ne'er a word said she, But, oh, the things I learned from her When Sorrow walked with me!"** (Hamilton in Barclay 1:108)
 - d) If you do not mourn over your sin, you might need to check your salvation

- e) **Thomas Watson is credited with saying, "Till sin be bitter, Christ will not be sweet" (Watson in Hébert 69)**
- 4. This also suggests caring intensely for the sufferings and needs of others (cf. Barclay 1:108)
- B. These will be comforted: passive voice
 - 1. By God
 - 2. By others
 - 3. The grief will be eased
 - 4. The load will be lightened
 - 5. The promise is made to those who mourn, not to those who, in their hard-heartedness, do not recognize their own inabilities and the pains of others and mourn them

IV. **Blessed Are the Meek (v. 5)**

- A. **"Gentle" suggests being meek, humble, tame [strong but docile], full of energy but disciplined, teachable, submissive to proper authority, and neither defensive nor self-important (cf. Nelson 29)**
- B. **"Meek" indicates the opposite of acting proudly, powerfully, or importantly but is power under control and is the essence of what it means to be "heroic"**
 - 1. Not spineless
 - 2. Not of a high-minded, quarrelsome, revengeful spirit but allows the self to be swindled, wronged, or injured (1 Cor. 6:7)
 - 3. Certainly not a loud-mouthed complainer of injustices incurred and rights violated
 - 4. Does not try to avenge wrongs but, instead, leaves vengeance up to God (Rom. 12:19)
 - 5. Does not retaliate by reviling or threatening when reviled or threatened (1 Pet. 2:19-22)
 - 6. Do not seek gain for themselves, but instead, place their hope in the Lord
 - a) Not about developing our own image
 - b) Not about enhancing our own "brand"
 - c) Not about heightening our own influence
 - d) Not about promoting our own renown
 - e) Where pride enters, God exits
 - f) There is a little tom turkey in most of us!
 - 7. Paraphrases
 - a) **Blessed are those who are angry at the right time in the right way and never angry at the wrong time in the wrong way!**

- b) **Blessed are those who are always more than entirely under self-control, which is impossible, but who are under God's control!**
 - c) **Blessed are those who recognize their own weaknesses, ignorance, failures, and needs!**
- C. These will inherit the earth
1. **To say that the meek inherit the earth is to say that the ungodly are weeded out and have no part in either the earthly [Messianic] or the heavenly Kingdom of Christ**
 2. Reference to Ps. 37:11 which foretells the destruction of evil doers
 3. **It is not the ambitious "dog-eat-dog" tycoons who inherit the earth!**
 4. Inheritance to be given by the Father
 5. Suggests restoration of Edenic paradise throughout the earth and this new "land of promise" will be inherited by those who trust in the greatness of God, not in the greatness of themselves
 6. Implies treatment as princes and princesses inheriting a place in God's kingdom
 7. **"The words are a prophecy that meekness will prove a greater power in the world than pride. This was a revolutionary doctrine" (Dummelow 640)**
 8. **This statement stands on its head pride of race, gender, privilege, education, sexual orientation, athletic prowess, intellect, ancestry, wealth and everything else such hubris [sinful pride] instigates!**

Conclusion: For which of these statements was Jesus arrested and condemned? For all of them, because he dared to establish the parameters of genuine righteousness as defined by his Father, and, in so doing, he exposed the hypocrisy of the religiosity of the day which was masquerading around as righteousness.

A Christian is one who has trusted Christ Jesus as savior and Lord by repenting of sin and placing faith in him alone to save. Those who have done so are inhabited by his Holy Spirit, and this indwelling unmistakably shows itself.

Christians should reflect godly character in all aspects of life. Blessed are these, for their reward in heaven is great.

Do these verses describe you?