



# First Baptist Church Selmer

SERMON ON THE MOUNT • BEATITUDES • MATTHEW 5:1-12 • 9/7/2025

## MAIN POINT

The Sermon on the Mount outlines the life of a believer who is in right relationship with God, as displayed in their inner attitudes, not just outward actions.

## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**What are some of the most memorable or significant blessings you have experienced in your life thus far? What makes those blessings stand out from others?**

**In what ways did any of these blessings alter your life's course or significantly change your way of thinking?**

Typically, within one or two sentences, you can get a feel for one's attitude toward life. Optimistic? Pessimistic? Realistic? Which are you? If you're unsure, try this. Take out a journal or a piece of paper, and jot down things in your life that are blessings from God. Then, in another column, write down things that you are frustrated with or mad about, that may elicit attitudes of negativity. (In counseling, this is called a Gratitude Journal)

**Which is greater? The blessings or the frustrations?**

John Gottman, American relationship psychologist and founder of the Gottman Institute, estimates, "one negative interaction can wipe out the effect of five and even up to twenty positive exchanges." It is true, we often focus more on the negatives and frustrations in life, as compared to the positives and blessings that we receive.

Being a Christ-follower isn't just a matter of thinking and doing the right things while avoiding the wrong things. Foundational to being a Christian is a personal relationship

with Jesus that empowers you to live for God. That relationship is the result of God's blessing in your life, and it changes you from the inside out. God's power at work in you, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, enables you to reflect the characteristics of the good and mighty King in the way you live.

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

The Sermon on the Mount is a sermon delivered by Jesus, and you guessed it, on a mountain. Just outside the area of Galilee, Jesus, as customary in the Jewish tradition, sat down to teach those who had gathered around. Rightly applied, this sermon was to show how a person who, in a right relationship with God, should conduct his life.

To start the sermon, Jesus begins in Matthew 5:3-10 with what is often referred to as the Beatitudes. They're a set of blessings stated in Hebrew poetical form. "*Blessed*" means 'happy' or 'fortunate'. The Pharisees during this time were mostly concerned about outward, external qualities that would reflect their religious superiority to others, but Jesus was far more concerned with one's inward attitudes and motivations. When one is genuine in their faith, both internal attitudes and external actions align to bring glory to the name of Jesus.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 5:1-6.

*1 "Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. 2 And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:*

*3 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. 5 Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. 6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.'" (ESV)*

**How do the Beatitudes in verses 3-6 relate to the promises that follow them?  
(Poor in spirit = kingdom of heaven, etc.)**

**What kind of mourning do you feel Jesus is talking about in verse 4? What does mourning over your sin look like?**

**When you think of someone who is a good example of meekness (v. 5), what is that person like?**

"*Poor in spirit*" are those who consciously depend on God, not themselves. "*Those who mourn*" are those who recognize their spiritual bankruptcy and cry out to the only One who can pay back their debt. "*Those who are meek*" are those who are truly humble and overwhelmed by the grace of God, willing to extend that same grace back to others in their lives who are undeserving just like themselves. "*Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness*" are those who strive for the eternal things of God, not the temporal things of this world.

Daniel Akin, in *Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary*, states, "The world is hungry for happiness, and it is starving. The Bible tells us to hunger for holiness and be satisfied."

**In what do you most often seek in your own life, Happiness or Holiness?**

**How does a constant pursuit of happiness always seem to come up short?**

The clear theme in verses 3-6 is that God approves of people who recognize they're broken, but not just broken in a worldly sense. True brokenness that Jesus is describing is a brokenness and mourning over our sinfulness. This then leads believers to a place of meekness (humility) as well as a genuine hunger for the things of God. We don't earn the kingdom of heaven by being poor in spirit. We're poor in spirit because we know that we could never earn a place in God's kingdom, but through His grace, He provides a way to let us in.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 5:7-12.

*7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. 8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. 9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. 10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*11 Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you." (ESV)*

**How is the focus different from the previous section? What do the four attitudes in verses 7-12 (merciful, pure in heart, peacemaker, righteousness) have in common?**

**How do the Beatitudes in these verses relate to the promises that follow them?**

These verses highlight the attitudes God's people should display both internally and externally. Think of it like this: People who know they need mercy will, in turn, show mercy. People who mourn their sins before God will be covered in His righteousness and made pure in their hearts. People who have spirits of gentleness won't fight for their best interests, but will seek to make peace with others. And people who "*hunger and thirst for righteousness*" will face persecution because becoming like Christ includes joining Him in His suffering.

**While grace is the act of giving a gift that is not deserved, mercy is the withholding or preventing of a negative consequence rightly deserved. What are some opportunities you have to show mercy?**

**In what ways are you actively seeking to be a "*peacemaker*" in your life?**

**Do the blessings described in these verses line up with an "ideal" life by cultural standards? Why or why not? If not, what are some of the noticeable differences?**

"The Pharisees were not '*poor in spirit*'; did not '*mourn*' in recognition of their needs; were proud and harsh, not humble and gentle; they felt they had attained righteousness and therefore did not have a continual appetite or desire for it; they were more concerned with 'legalities' of God's and their own laws than with showing mercy; were pure ceremonially but not inwardly; created a rift, not peace in Judaism; and certainly did not possess true righteousness." - Louis A. Barbieri, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*.

Through these statements, Jesus both encouraged and warned His disciples that as they pursued God, they would meet persecution. Although persecution is not something anyone wants to endure, it's a definite marker of a faithful life.

**Have you ever been persecuted in some way because of your faith in Christ? How did you respond?**

To encourage the disciples in the face of future persecutions, Jesus compared them to the prophets who came before Him. The Old Testament prophets faithfully followed God and shared His message with the world, regardless of the world's response. By comparing Christ-followers to Old Testament prophets, Jesus encouraged His disciples to remain faithful because their reward in heaven would be great—just as it was for the prophets.

**Consider the prophets in the Old Testament. Would you consider their lives and ministries successful? What was persecution like for them? (example:**

**Moses, Daniel, Elijah, etc.)**

**What does this idea communicate about the kingdom of God?**

Jesus understood that persecution would be a part of the lives of His people because of Him and His message. They would be reviled “on his account”, not their own. He wanted them to rejoice in suffering because it was evidence that they would receive an award far greater than anything the world could offer them.

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**What causes us to forget about the kingdom of God and our need for Him?**

**How can we remind ourselves daily that we’re first and foremost citizens of God’s kingdom?**

**Think about our fears of persecution in light of verses 10-12. What does this mean for Christians when it comes to defining “success”? How do you define success as a citizen of God’s kingdom, and how does that compare with the culture’s definition?**

## PRAYER

Pray for guidance of Jesus’ expectations, so our lives daily display God’s mercy and love to the world as He changes us from the inside out.

## COMMENTARY

| MATTHEW 5:1-12

5:1-2. People from all over Galilee and surrounding areas flocked to see and hear Him as well as to seek healing. On a particular day, when He saw the crowds, He went up to a place on a nearby mountain. Although His disciples and the crowd could hear Jesus (7:28), His message seems targeted mainly to those He had singled out to follow Him.

5:3. Jesus declared people who exhibit particular characteristics to be divinely blessed. He was not saying that people should strive to attain those characteristics so they could earn the right to tap into God’s blessings. Rather, those characteristics identify people who, by

God's grace, are citizens of the kingdom of heaven. This designation does not imply they are perfect, fully mature believers. It does indicate they have begun to follow the Lord.

The first four Beatitudes (vv. 3-6) reflect inner attitudes, the first of which is poor in spirit. This is the opposite of the attitude of being arrogant and self-sufficient, a trait prized and admired by the world. No one can earn God's blessing. People who think they can please God on their own are blind to their sins and ignorant of God's high standards. Poverty of spirit is the prelude to the riches of salvation. Jesus pronounced the poor in spirit to be blessed because, as followers of Jesus, the kingdom of heaven is theirs ("kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of God" are used interchangeably in the Gospels). While this citizenship is a present possession of believers, the full benefit of kingdom citizenship awaits Christ's return.

5:4. Those who mourn are blessed, for they will be comforted. Jesus did not specify what sort of mourning He had in mind, so it could include all mourning. In the context of the other Beatitudes, mourning over our sins of commission and omission probably should receive emphasis. When we honestly repent of our lapses into sin, we are comforted anew with the assurance our sins all have been atoned in Christ. Mourning over sin can also include the sinful attitudes and actions in cultures throughout the world and around us.

5:5. The next attitude is gentleness. The word translated gentle conveys the notion of being meek, humble, sensitive, considerate, and courteous. Gentleness puts the focus on others rather than self. Being gentle does not mean being a pushover. This inner attitude stems from a spiritually educated awareness of our own spiritual poverty. Scripture indicates Jesus' followers will reign with Him (2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 5:10). That promise will be fulfilled when He establishes His kingdom in the new heavens and earth. Ruling with Him implies our attitudes will parallel His. The blessing Jesus pronounced won't be centered in ownership but in serving Him (in ways not yet revealed).

5:6. The fourth attitude is a hunger and thirst for righteousness. This righteousness is not the righteousness of Christ through which God views us believers (justification). Rather, this is the inner desire to make right choices, say right words, and do right actions, which is part of God's work to make us more like Christ. We who seek to follow Christ know we don't measure up to His standards, but we want to do so. As we walk faithfully with Him over time, He instills in us more and more the purpose and the power to please Him (Phil. 2:13). Admittedly, though we grow in right living, in this life we will never be righteous. So we are called blessed as we long for righteousness in the sense that we have the sure hope that we will be filled with righteousness (Matt. 5:6). The process has begun, and our

limited progress brings encouragement. That process won't be completed, however, until Christ's second coming (1 John 3:2).

5:7. While the first four Beatitudes focus on inward attitudes, the last four concern outward relationships. Being merciful involves forgiving, but it also includes a loving response to the miserable and helpless. As God's children, we have received mercy, and this equips us to extend mercy to others. The merciful will be shown mercy. Showing mercy to others demonstrates we have received God's mercy.

5:8. Jesus then described as blessed those who are pure in heart. The Pharisees were scrupulous about performing washing rituals that made them ceremonially clean. Jesus stripped away their pretense, saying that they were as beautiful tombs on the outside but filled with impurities within (23:27). Heart indicates the core of our being—our thoughts, our feelings, our intentions, our values, our longings. The word pure includes sexual purity, but much more. It describes those whose hearts are cleansed by Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Such hearts lead us away from acting with any kind of deceit, meanness, or selfish motives.

5:9. Peacemakers are blessed, for they will be called sons of God. Sons of God is a way of saying "like father, like son." God is the supreme Peacemaker, making peace between sinners and Himself through Christ. He also leads redeemed sinners to help others be reconciled to God as well as to one another.

5:10-12. The final Beatitude seems paradoxical. Mixing persecution and blessing seems akin to mixing oil and water. Perhaps this is the reason Jesus added comments in verses 11-12. He shifted to the second person, you, apparently addressing His chosen disciples in particular. Notice first that the persecution is for righteousness, and in verse 11, Jesus defined that as because of Me. People who willfully reject Christ are prone to reject those who live for Christ. This can include insults, false accusations, slanderous gossip, and, in extreme cases, death.