

The Gospel of the Kingdom, Pt 8

Intro

When Pastor Jay started teaching on Matthew, God shared I should preach on the Beatitudes. I grew up in the Methodist Church. I was active in the youth group and choir. Our Choir put on a musical Call *Celebrate Life*. It was the story of Jesus' life as told by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. It ran for a few weekends at our church. Then we performed it a second time, traveling to several churches in the Bay area. One of my favorite parts was the reciting of the Beatitudes. So, it seemed like a good fit.

The real funny part of this, is Pastor Jay thought we would reach this point in late November. Each week as I helped to put together the slides, I could see how far we were into Matthew. A couple of weeks ago, based on how each sermon was going, it looked like it would be several more weeks. Late last week when Jay gave me the outline, that sermon consisted of three sections, not just a single one as previous sermons. So that meant Chapter 5 was this week! I had started gathering notes, but had not actually started on it. So, I had to truly rely on God to get through this one as He wanted it presented.

Sermon on the Mount

The Sermon on the Mount is the first, longest, and probably the most influential of Jesus' teaching. It is a series of moral and ethical teachings as laid out in Matthew 5 – 7. The central theme of the teachings is probably best summarized in Matthew 5:48

You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

In this case, **Perfect** doesn't refer to being sinless or having moral perfection. Moreso, it means completeness, wholeness, maturity—in other words, being all that God wants us to be. This is a goal we will never attain in our earthly life, but it challenges us to greater achievements for the Lord.

In addition to the Beatitudes, the first of the sermons. The other teachings include:

- Influence
- Righteousness
- Giving, Praying, & Fasting
- Material Resources
- Anxiety
- Judgement: Right & Wrong
- Persistence
- Choosing
- Performance
- Life's Foundation

The Sermon on the Mount was brought on by Jesus' growing popularity (Matt 4:25). People were attracted to Him, at first, because of His healing ministry. When Jesus began to teach, people remained to hear what He said. They were also impressed by the authority in which He taught.

Matthew 5:1-2

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:

There were great numbers that had come to hear His ministry. The mountain, or hill, was chosen to have a greater advantage of speaking, for all that were following Him could hear.

What are the Beatitudes

Beatitude means "Blessings". They describe the character the Holy Spirit instills in those that follow Christ. Other definitions of this word include references to divine joy or happiness. A Blessing is God's favor extended to an individual, resulting in positive emotion or reward.

In the Beatitudes, Jesus shares the characteristics that make up His followers. These blessings are the nature and aspirations of citizens of heaven. No Christian will master these traits, but they should be evident in the lives of any follower of Christ.

There are two groups of Beatitudes. The first four deal with personal qualities. The second group deals with social qualities; mercifulness toward others, purity of heart or reverence for personality, peacemaking or solicitude for others, self-sacrificing loyalty to righteousness. These are the sources of social rest. The blessings of the kingdom are social as well as individual.

The Beatitudes – Personal Qualities

This group of Beatitudes deals with personal qualities: Humility, Penitence, Self-Control, and Desires for Righteousness. These are the sources of inner peace.

³ "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

We are sinful and without moral virtues we need to please God. This is the opposite of arrogance. In its deepest form, it acknowledges our desperate need for God.

Blessed are those who realize they are spiritually bankrupt, by realizing this it is what turns them to God, without God they cannot fulfill what they are created to do and be.

The Poor in Spirit not only *shall* have – they already have – the Kingdom. They are enriched with the fullness of Christ, which is the Kingdom in substance.

I was raised in the church and stayed active in the church through High School. As I went off to college, I strayed from church, but never stopped believing. After a failed marriage a friend invited me to church, the Clearwater Vineyard, and I realized what was missing from my life. I'm not saying things were bad, but there was something missing in my and my kids lives. Once I returned to church, going through life became more tolerable and "easier" in that I had God to turn to, as well as my church family.

4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

This is the type of mourning one would experience when a loved one passes away. When we face the sorrow in our lives, it saddens us; when we face the troubles, or evil, in the world that, too, touches our emotions with grief.

While mourning is not typically considered a blessing, it is a sorrow. But, because the Kingdom is coming, because we trust in Jesus, we know we will be comforted.

God sees our sorrow and comforts us with the knowledge that it will not always be this way.

I believe each of us here has experienced some loss, be it a family member, a dear friend, a relationship. I know I have. I've lost both sets of grandparents, and my parents. I was present when my mom passed away just over 9 years ago, and again when my dad passed away just 11 months ago. Both were difficult times, it was hard to see them take their last breath. But even though I cried and mourned, I knew God was with me. And God made sure my family was around to provide comfort and He sent my friends, as well, to bring comfort.

5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Many assume that meek means weak, tame, or deficient in courage. But the biblical understanding of meekness is power under control. In the Old Testament, Moses was described as the meekest man on earth.

Meek people see themselves as servants of God, not thinking more highly of themselves than they ought to think. To be meek is to accept our strengths and limitations for what they truly are, instead of constantly trying to portray ourselves in the best possible light. But it does not mean that we should deny our strengths and abilities.

Those who submit their power to God will inherit the perfect kingdom coming to earth. In this kingdom, we receive by God's grace the good things the arrogant fruitlessly strive for in the present earth, and more.

I was in corporate America for nearly 40 years, 30 with one company. I had a good job, great pay, and I was well respected in my organization. However, when God called me to the ministry in 2018, I took the leap and now I'm an assistant Pastor. I am loving this new season of my life, doing my best to use the gifts God has given me to serve Him and spread His message.

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

The righteous are those who maintain right relationships – with God and with the people around them.

As humans we hunger for many things in our lives – food, comfort, companionship, happiness, finances, etc. Hunger and thirst for righteousness is more of a desire for a righteous nature, a desire to be sanctified into the character and nature of God, a desire to continue our lives to represent God's righteousness, and a desire to see this promoted in the world.

Those who are perishing for a want of righteousness; those who feel they are lost sinners and strongly desire to be holy, shall be satisfied. God will satisfy those desires to be holy.

Today's world is falling, it seems faster and faster each day. But as Christians, we want to see things turn around. We don't believe in all the "wokeness" that is going on and we are standing our ground. We want to see prayer back in school, we want to see parents more involved in teaching their children right from wrong. As a parent and grandparent, I want them to know Christ and live the life He has for them.

Conclusion

These first 4 Beatitudes are a roadmap to our inner self. They provide a means for us to take a hard, close look deep in ourselves for any changes we need. The promises are truly rewarding for us, when we realize we are sinners and strive to not be, we are promised the kingdom of Heaven. When we mourn, we are promised comfort. When we operate under God's

authority, we will inherit the earth. And when we hunger and thirst for righteousness we will be filled by God!

So which blessings do you want? Are there areas you need to address to receive all the blessings God has for you?

BEGINNING OF PART 2

The Beatitudes – Social Qualities

This group deals with social qualities; mercifulness toward others, purity of heart or reverence for personality, peacemaking or solicitude for others, self-sacrificing loyalty to righteousness. These are the sources of social rest. The blessings of the kingdom are social as well as individual.

7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

If you are blessed with sorrow for your own failings (the second beatitude) and with right relationships (the fourth beatitude), you will not find it difficult to show mercy to others.

Mercy consists of treating people better than they deserve from us. Forgiveness is a type of mercy. After all, Mercy is what was behind Christ coming to earth – His life, death, and resurrection.

Nowhere do we imitate God more than when we show mercy. There is probably nothing more that God delights in than we show mercy. So, it is very obvious we don't deserve the mercy God shows us, but that is the whole point, giving mercy when it is not deserved.

8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

The pure heart can be described as honesty and clarity. Jesus' description can have two meanings: Inner moral purity and a heart solely devoted to God.

Purity of heart arises not from perfection of our will, but from reception of God's Grace.

Our blessing for a pure heart is our ability to see God. Those that are blinded by sin (2 Corinthians 4:4) cannot see God. Those with a pure heart can see God in Nature, Scripture, and in their Church Family.

9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Peacemakers receive this honor because they participate in the same mission as Christ, by sharing the Gospel with the lost.

The beatitude takes every Christian into the task of conflict resolution. Conflicts arise whenever people have differences of opinion. In a fallen

world, the tendency is to ignore conflict or suppress it by using force, threat, or intimidation. In God's kingdom, it is a blessing to bring people together who are in conflict. Only then is it possible to resolve the conflict and restore the relationships.

The result of conflict resolution is peace, and peacemakers will be called "children of God." They will reflect the divine character in their actions. God is the God of peace (1 Thessalonians 5:16) and we show ourselves to be his children when we seek to make peace in the workplace, in the community, in our homes, and in the whole world.

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

This beatitude can seem negative. The previous ones focused on positive traits.

Jesus is talking about the blessing of being persecuted for doing what is right. The reality is, in a fallen world if we demonstrate genuine righteousness, we will find many will reject us.

But if, in the honest effort to be Christians, and to live the life of Christians, others persecute and revile us, we are to consider this as a blessing. It is evidence that we are the children of God, and that He will defend us.

***"All that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution,"
2 Tim 3:12.***

This is further illustrated in the following:

¹¹ "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

As a Christian who is in pursuit of Christ and the righteousness, He calls us to live out, suffering is imminent.

Paul explains this in 2 Timothy 3:12:

"Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."

Jesus reminds us here that while we may suffer persecution in our pursuit of Him and righteousness, the reward, in the end, is the Kingdom of Heaven (Rev. 7:16-17). Those around us may mock us, hurl insults at us, or make false accusations against us, but as v12 clearly states:

12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

We aren't the first to have this happen, and we surely won't be the last.

Conclusion

The Beatitudes provide a great roadmap to help us live the life we are called to live. It also shows us just how far we are from God. But, with the grace of God and as followers of Christ, it makes it possible for us to live these out to the best of our ability.

Be encouraged that in Christ we are blessed, and He reminds us in these verses that living a blessed life in Christ is quite different from what the world defines as being blessed.