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The Beatitudes! Key verses: Matthew 5-7; Luke 6:1-22

"Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them." Matthew 5:1-2

Key personalities: God, Jesus, and the Disciples

Timeline: The God of Eternity walked and taught being fully God and fully Man, about 26-28 A.D.

The quintessential Sermon from the Master Teacher Himself is the "Sermon on the Mount." The Christian Manifesto contains the core essentials of character, thought and attitude of the Christian life. This is presented after Jesus reveals Himself as the ministry of the Kingdom of God begins. Jesus was not just sharing wisdom and facts; He reveals and shares Himself. He is the model for the perfection of Christian living and the mirror to show our fallen state and need for grace. This Sermon tells us how we are to behave and live; it tells what we are to do and be in the world. It is ethics at its apex and a manual for our lives. It is the display case for the Gospel for us to emulate in servant-hood and commitment so as to stay on God's path in our personal lives as well as collectively as the Body of Christ.

Key Happenings: The Sermon on the Mount!

The Sermon on the Mount is the primary pathway for our purpose and meaning in life once we are saved. Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promise! The theme of His discourse was the "Kingdom of Heaven" and deals with internal motivations and attitudes that create outward actions. A righteous person is controlled by Biblical spiritual principles that give direction versus carnal or selfish motives. This was the principle phrase Jesus kept repeating as His main point (Isa. 40; Matt. 4:17; 23; 5:3; 10; 19; 20; 6:10; 33; 7:21).

- The content centered upon us as citizens of the Kingdom.
- Jesus' purpose was not to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it!
- Jesus' sermon was the application of the Law over the various interpretations--our relation to God, Prayer, Materialism, Worry, and man's relation to our fellow man (Matt. 6:1-33; 7:1-12).
- Righteousness is the central aspect of inward obedience creating outward character.
- Depiction of a real righteous person: Character, and being blessed because of it, is central (Matt. 5:3-12).
- The believers/citizens relation to the world as salt and light to be influencers and involved without becoming corrupted (Matt. 5:13-16).
- Righteousness versus sin and hypocrisy: Jesus contrasted the Law of Moses and traditions from the teachers to what is in our hearts as being the motivations for our behaviors (Matt. 5:17-48).
- How we treat each other. Not judging others. Hypocrisy is evil sin! "The Golden Rule." God's Kingdom will be narrow and difficult (Matt. 7:13-14)!

What we do in our lifetime with the relationships, gifts, and opportunities we are given will echo throughout eternity! The goal is what is laid for us in eternity and is achieved by what we do along the way. Being real is doing *good* from a heart transformed, not just saying it with no inward or outward backing (Matt. 7:15-27).

The title *beatitude* means "supreme blessedness or happiness," a deep joy, not superficial happiness from material things. They are precise proclamations full of prime meaning and purpose for Christian living. The point is that real character qualities come from the inward love we have for our Lord that we desire to spill upon others. The world sees character as being strength in personality, wealth, power, and looks. The Christian must never see others with the world's counterfeit guidelines!

The word *blessed* or *Happy* refers to an emotional state of satisfaction, well-being and contentment that results from being approved by God, by our fulfilling of our duty. It is a future promise and enjoying God's special favor and His Grace working in us. What would be the reasons and benefits? Only in Christ can we succeed in pleasing God!

- Psalm 1 gives us a template of how to please God, which Jesus clearly had in mind (because of language use, style, and syntax) as He gave this discourse. It seems Jesus was answering the main questions people would have about the Kingdom of Heaven.
- Who would qualify and live there? We cannot enter on our own strength, works, or merits! We have to be paupers in spirit and will, which means our will must be yielded to His!
- Grace is obvious, as this is our fuel, power, and motivation, and the Holy Spirit is our guide!
- The inner attitude that produces character is the main ingredient that spills to others from our receiving of grace. In addition, this is our purpose on earth (John 7:38; 1 Cor. 13: 4-8; Gal 5: 22-23; 2 Pet. 1:5-11), where attitude and grace all work together synergistically!
- Being content in life can only happen by being right in God!

Who will be the citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven? We who are saved by grace (Eph. 2:8-9)! Because of our salvation, we are producing inward qualities such as the Fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23; 2 Pet. 1:2-11). Because of our gratitude for our precious gift.

These include the eight characters from this *beatitude*: Being poor in spirit, mourning for our sins, being meek, hungering for righteousness, being merciful, having a pure heart, and, because of those, being willing to be peacemakers and even to suffer persecution!

Why should we endure this? Are the benefits greater than the hardships? Is it worth whatever persecution we might under go? YES! We are blessed for these! In addition, our blessing far outweighs our suffering or inconvenience (Psalm 1; Rev. 1:3)! We have received the Kingdom (Matt. 4:17)!

Poor in Spirit, may conjure up ideas of physical and social poverty, but it actually means total dependence on God, realizing our sinfulness (Psalm. 9:18; 40:17; 86:1; 109:22; Jer. 22:15-16; Rom. 9:30-31)!

- Physical poverty and spiritual poverty are tied together. The greater our physical needs, the greater we as humans tend to look to God. Being rich in material goods has an extremely negative chokehold, preventing us from seeking spiritual things! We do not see or admit to our need, depending on ourselves rather than upon God!
- Being poor in Spirit is to be humble and surrendered, where we do not look to ourselves, but to God. It is the realization that we are sinners, having no righteousness of our own. We are saved by the grace and mercy of God alone (Isa. 57: 15; 66:1-2; Luke 18:13; Gal. 2:20-21; Eph. 2:8-9)!
- The cure to physical and spiritual poverty is the realization of what really is important--who we are in Christ!
- The opposite is being prideful and self-reliant, to the exclusion of allowing Christ to work in you or allowing Him to use you to help others. In so doing, you are keeping yourself and others in spiritual and physical poverty and oppression (Luke 18:9-14; Rev. 3:17-19)!
- The leaders in power (civic and church) have the responsibility to ease harshness and provide for the physical needs of the poor!

Mourn: Most people assume it means those of us who have lost a loved one, but it actually means that we realize that we are sinful and fallen before God and need a Savior! Thus, we mourn, grieve, and lament for our sin and evil and our lost state!

- When we see sin, it must cause us to mourn for the loss of righteousness, and seek grace. Sin is our failure to seek Christ and what He has for us, which is the best for us!
- David gives us a prime example of this after his adultery with Bathsheba (Psalm 51:3-4).
- *Mourn and poor in Spirit* go together as we mourn for our depravity, which we will not realize without the Holy Spirit moving in us powerfully.
- *They shall be comforted*" means we are comforted now and in the future (2 Col. 1:3; Rev. 21:1-4)! Our great comfort is the grace we have received!

Meek is not weakness, or a lack of strength; rather, our humbleness because of the first two beatitudes. Thus, we are gentle toward God and others (Psalm 37:11). It can also be translated as gentle (Matt. 11:29).

- Meekness causes us to seek to please God and submit our will and aspirations to His will and what is best.
- Jesus is the ultimate model for meekness--strength under control!
- Moses is a good example of meekness (Ex. 32:19-20; 30-34; Num 12:1-3).
- Meekness will enable us to endure being personally attacked while keeping our focus on Christ and humility.

- "*They shall inherit the earth*" refers to the Abrahamic promise (Gen. 12:1-3; Rom. 4:13; Heb. 11:16). We will also inherit it now, in a future sense, and as a result of putting the kingdom of God first. So enjoy your time here! In addition, you will enjoy the future with a new earth (Ecc. 5:19-6:2; Psalms 37:1-11; 16-29; Matt. 6:33; Mark 10:29-30; 2 Pet. 3:10-13).

Hunger and thirst for righteousness is seeking the depths of God's love and righteousness, and in so doing, be committed to continuing to allow yourselves to grow in maturity, being transformed and renewed (Rom. 12:1-3).

- "*For they shall be filled*" is our receiving God's blessing and approval for our faith and yearning to grow in Him. It is the righteousness that Christ has given us that we so greatly need (Rom. 5:9; Ph 3:8-16; Rev. 19:5-9).
- The Psalms are filled with many examples (Psalm 42:1-2; 19:12-14; Phil. 3:7-15).

Merciful is the love, respect, honor and action to help those in need. It is placing ourselves in someone else's shoes because we see our own need for mercy (Matt. 18:21-35).

- Jesus exemplified this by caring for those who were crucifying Him, as did Stephen (Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60).
- It is putting help and forgiveness into action, even to those who hurt us.
- "*For they shall obtain mercy*" is the joy and honor of receiving the forgiveness for our sins through the blood of Jesus, appeasing the wrath of God for us. God was more merciful with us than we could ever be with anyone else, or could ever deserve. No matter what we go through from persecution or loss, we could never glimpse what Christ gave to us with grace (Rom. 5:9; Rev. 1:5-6)!

Pure in Heart is not innocence; rather, it is to have a disposition that has no room for selfishness, or hidden motives, so our path is in harmony with Christ. We do this with a concern to please God--PERIOD--because our will has been yielded to His.

- Christ has done at makes us pure! This character will produce an attitude of being sincere, which is genuine honesty.
- The character of the Pharisees was hypocrisy--the direct opposite of being pure in heart!
- "*They will see God,*" for us to see God we have to be pure. Because we are sinful and because God is pure holiness, this would be impossible. But, Christ is in plain sight because He covered our sins in His atonement through Grace, and we exercise faith in receiving it (Psalm 24:3-4; John 14:9; Col. 1:15; 1 Tim. 1:17; 6:16; 1 John 3:2).
- Since we are currently citizens of the kingdom, we can see God through the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the future, we shall see Him face to face (John 14:6-7; Rev. 21:3; 22:3-4).

Peacemakers. This is not the peace of the hippie movement, or between nations, but the peace we have with God because His wrath is appeased by Christ's atonement on our behalf. We are willing to make peace with others because we have found peace with God.

- Since Christ is the *Prince of Peace*, the application we make is because we have peace and God's example of it, we now should live at peace with our neighbors, proclaiming peace and rekindling it when it goes down or is lost (Isa. 9:6; John 10:27-28; 14:27; Rom. 5:1,10; 12:18-21; Eph. 6:15)!
- We are at peace with God, so we need to be at peace with ourselves, emotionally, and others, relationally.
- *They shall be called sons of God.* Even now, we are called the sons of God because peace has been made so we can be called His children (1 John 3:1-2; Rev. 21:5-7)!

Persecuted for righteousness sake is having endured undeserving, harsh environments, torn relationships, loss, and abuse because of taking a stand for knowing and proclaiming Christ.

- Persecution comes from those who are proud and arrogant because they are still in their sins!
- It is not just being forced into persecution, such as imprisonment for your faith in a hostile country, but it is allowing suffering and persecution to happen even when we have a way out of it, because of our faith in taking a righteous stand.
- It is living for God, regardless of our circumstances or pressure from society. This is submission to God, not to things that are not of God.
- It could be anything from extreme persecution or losing our physical life, to exclusion from what we may want from society because of our faith--such as losing a job, enduring gossip, slander, hypocrites, and such for Jesus' sake.

- *For theirs is the Kingdom of God.* Being citizens of the Kingdom is our primary concern, not the society in which we are living (Acts 14:21-22; Phil. 1:29-30; 2 Tim. 3:12). Thus, we need to focus on how this can produce character in us!

Key Takeaway: For us today, we must realize that this sermon is relevant and for us. It shows us God's requirements and models how we should be to God, to one another, and to others in the world. As Jesus clearly pointed out, our inward thoughts will affect our outward conduct (5:21-22; 27-28)!

Beloved, we will be unable to completely adhere to it. This is precisely why we have a savior, why we need Our Lord, Jesus Christ and His grace, and the Holy Spirit working in us. However, our imperfection does not mean we give up and close the door on it! We are to keep it going. When we fall down, we get back up, and persevere to live this sermon in all aspect of our lives. If not, why bother being a Christian, as we would be saved for nothing! Remember, following this sermon does not save us, because it is only by what Christ has done for us on the cross by grace that saves us! However, this sermon is the fruit from the tree of our salvation, just as the Fruits of the Spirit are (Gal. 5:21-23)! They are the proof text that Christ has been made real in us (Rom. 8:1-11)!

The Call to the Church? This "Sermon on the Mount" is the primary pathway for how the church must be in community to one another and the world to give God the glory. As the Gospel shows our Lord's commitment to us through being Himself a Suffering Servant, perhaps we can be the Church triumphant that proclaims the Cross and the blood as we exercise the hearts of true servants in our response to the hurts and cries of those around us.

Questions to Ponder

1. Do you have a set of rules or a creed or manifesto by which you live or are inspired?
2. Do you have the qualities described in "The Beatitudes"?
3. What do you think are the core essential behaviors of the Christian faith?
4. As a Christian, your life, actions, attitudes, and interpersonal relations in the world is a display case for the Gospel. What is in your display case?
5. How important are internal motivations and attitudes in creating our outward actions?
6. How does the fact that you, as a Christian, are a citizen of the Kingdom of God, over any other citizenship, such as being an American, affect your attitude and daily life?
7. What we do in our lifetime determines what the relationships, gifts, and opportunities we are given will echo throughout eternity! So, what aspects of your life do you need to change in light of this call?
8. Visualize yourself as a *blessing factory*. What would you produce, and what raw materials would you need? How would you help others to build their own *blessing factories*?
9. How do these *Beatitudes* relate to the promises connected to them?
10. Which of these eight qualities do you desire to have more of, and which do you want others to show you?
11. Do the blessings described in "The Beatitudes" encourage you to develop such qualities?
12. What can you do or remove so that you can embrace discipleship with vigor and faith, so that nothing can come before Him? (Keep in mind God will never call you to do something that contradicts His Word, such as you cannot neglect or leave your family to serve Him more. You must find the balance and build the time to do both. Prayer, and having a good person to disciple you, will allow it to happen!) Can you see what you need to give up and what you need to keep in order to become His committed child?