

Foundations Bible Study – Sermon on the Mount
Lesson 1

Scripture Readings:

- **Matthew 5:1-12**
- **Luke 6:17-26**

Lesson

Here at the beginning of the Great Sermon are blessings and curses. Christ starts by trying to make a good impression on the listeners, “You will be blessed.” And not just one or two times, but here we find eight phrases that are often referred to as the Beatitudes. Books have been written on the group of phrases so we will move quickly through them and hopefully you will do a little more research on your own to discover even more of the meaning Christ has for you in the text.

First we must address what it means to be blessed. To most folks this phrase will mean rich, rich in money and possessions. At the very least it is how the world in general may understand being blessed. It may be true that money and things are blessings; it is a Jewish concept of God that we are blessed by material things. In the Christian Church of the past 10-15 years this has become an accepted concept. TV preachers and others have told us how God will bless you and yours with all you need and more. I would call this ‘health and wealth’ theology or ‘prosperity’ theology. I do not believe this is what Christ was speaking of or leading these followers to be a part of. I believe Christ is talking about being happy. A book from the 1970’s was titled *The Be Happy Attitudes*, and in the language that Christ was using the word could be defined as: the highest form of happiness. Also I think that blessings come not only to the ‘Happy’, but to us all. In fact some blessings may bring happiness and also sadness.

I guess the important point I want to make is; blessed is not money and things, oh no, it is the gifts from God given in grace to all people.

First Beatitude

“Blessed are the poor in spirit.....”

It seems in the time of Christ, as in today’s religion, folks believed they had/have arrived. These religious persons think, live, and believe as if they are rich in the faith. To me the fact is... most all of us, including me, have not even come close to arriving. I am very much interested in the reason this Beatitude was voiced first by Christ. Why did Christ pick this to be the first beatitude? What do you think?

To these who realize they have not arrived, who know, I am poor in the ways of God and Christ...

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You are given The Kingdom.

Second Beatitude

“Blessed are the mourners.....”

Why are the mourners blessed? I do not understand this one at all, but then we can see into the window of God here in this phase. God loves and cares for us all. When I mourn, when you mourn, when we are saddened by death, defeat, loss, wrongs, defeat, God is there and we are blessed by having God to help us through the tough times in life. When life is bad, very bad, very sad, very hurtful, very frustrating, very painful, very confusing, very lonely...

You will be comforted.

Third Beatitude

“Blessed are the meek....”

The meek, the humble are the ones that have it figured out. They don't think so highly of themselves or others. They are not proud, not mouthy, not harsh, not violent, and not jealous, they are just nice persons lost in the blessings they have and not wanting any of the things others have. The amazing thing is what Jesus says is their inheritance in the Kingdom... the entire earth. Go figure, I can't.

You will inherit the Kingdom of God.

Fourth Beatitude

“Blessed are the hungry...”

This may be the most important truth of Christian spirituality, the more you search and seek and long for God the more you get of God. In the book of James he writes the truth like this: “Draw near to God and God will draw near to you”. (James 4:8) We live in a busy rushed world, where often time is not given to God until a crisis happens. Oh what might be if we only would hunger and thirst for that connection to the Almighty and Christ...

You/I will be filled. Wow....

Fifth Beatitude

“Blessed are the merciful...”

Mercy in our world of terrorists, illegals, crime, frustrations, and disappointments seems in short supply. We are not by nature merciful persons, especially here in the USA. You get what you work hard for, and you get what you deserve. These mantras seem to permeate our society. But, it is not always the case, and even if it is, mercy is one of God's greatest gifts to us. If we got what we deserved, oh

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my.... I would be in big trouble. God pour out your grace and mercy on me, and I am commanded to share them.

For they will receive mercy.

Sixth Beatitude

“Blessed are the pure....”

The entire world is full of things, groups, enterprises, systems, and individuals that have as their only purpose of Well... promoting and being impure, disgusting, vile, and evil, in about a trillion ways. We have at our disposal many kinds and varieties of bad stuff. That is not to mention the desires of the human heart, when bent towards selfishness or greed. To have a pure heart is a real tough, very hard, disciplined way to live. It may not be possible, but it should be the thing we strive for always. (Philippians 4:8&9) You and I must always be on guard and always work intentionally to have the purity of Christ in our lives, minds, hearts, and souls.

For you will see God.

Seventh Beatitude

“Blessed are the peacemakers.....”

I have to say loudly, “We need peacemakers and we need you now!” I am very concerned about the world we live in. It seems violence has become an answer given for any conflict or problem we face. My friends, fellow believers, and spiritual pilgrims, violence is not the way of God. God is and always will be peace. We can debate it and study it all you want, but as for me, I only see one way to live... In the peace of God.

They are the children of God.

Eighth Beatitude

“Blessed are the persecuted.....”

I do not like this last one at all. I never want to be the persecuted. Christ speaks of this now at the beginning of his ministry, and often throughout the entire time he shared with us. The fact is the world will hate you Jesus said, and that hatred should impact the ways we as believers are treated. Maybe the reason we don't feel persecuted is because we don't live as Christ intended. It seems to me the entire Sermon on the Mount is counter cultural, against the same ol' ways of living and being. If we followed Christ more closely I wonder what would happen?

Thy Kingdom Come..... You are the Kingdom.

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Questions for Thought and Discussion

1. If someone asked you, “What does it mean to you, to be blessed by God?” how would you answer them?
2. What is your favorite Beatitude and why?
3. What do you think it might mean for you, the church, and the world, to be hungry for God?
4. Which beatitude moves you the most for change in your life? Why?
5. Have you ever felt persecuted? Do you think that Christians will be persecuted in your lifetime in the US? How about in other places around the world?