

Introduction to the Beatitudes

- Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount at a time when his popularity was soaring.
 - It represented a “philosophy of life.”
 - Like a candidate unveiling a political platform (Kingdom Politics).

The Beatitudes (“Supreme blessedness” — “Oh, you lucky person!”)

Matthew 5:1-11

When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. ² He opened His mouth and *began* to teach 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 gentle**, for **they shall inherit the earth**.”

⁶ “Blessed are **those who hunger and thirst** for righteousness, for **they shall be satisfied**.”

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 have been persecuted** for the sake of righteousness, for **theirs is the kingdom of heaven**.”

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

Juxtaposition

“to place different things side by side to compare them or contrast them or to create an interesting effect.”

- In describing new platform of the new Kingdom, Jesus’ words had to be unexpected, startling, and unwelcome.
 - His audience was an oppressed, downtrodden people desperately anticipating emancipation from their coming hero, the Messiah...
 - His opening was hardly the rousing, strong, victorious speech of a conqueror/emancipator they were expecting...
 - If a Roman soldier slaps you, turn the other cheek...?
 - Get excited and be grateful about being persecuted...?
 - Appreciate the good fortune of your poverty and loss...?

The spirit of self-sacrifice which permeates Christianity, and is so highly prized in the Christian religious life, is masochism moderately indulged. A much stronger expression of it is to be found in Christ's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. This blesses the poor, the meek, the persecuted; exhorts us not to resist evil but to offer the second cheek to the smiter; and to do good to them that hate you and forgive men their trespasses. ***All this breathes masochism.***

- Royal Society of Medicine & Psychology

"If I had been sitting in the original audience when Jesus first delivered the Beatitudes, I believe I would have left the event feeling confused or outraged, not comforted.

– Philip Yancey, *The Jesus I Never Knew*

In the Beatitudes, Jesus juxtaposes this world and what it values and rewards with the Kingdom of Heaven, and what God values and rewards.

Future & Eternal Rewards for the Broken, Hurting, & Losers in This World

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

We never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day. For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.

- In the United States, at least, Christians have grown so comfortable that we no longer identify with the humble conditions Jesus addressed in the Beatitudes. This explains in part why they sound so strange to our ears.
- Not just the poor, but also the poor in spirit...
(See **Isaiah 61:1-7**)

Turning the World On Its Head

"These that have turned the world upside down..." - Acts 17:6

The World's Beatitudes

- Happy are the successful; for theirs is the "American Dream."
- Happy are the those whose privilege and opportunities spare them from discomfort; they shall be comfortable.
- Happy are the ambitious, for they get what they want.
- Happy are the online self-proclaimed political experts, accusers, and blamers; for they are safe from ever having to look at their own culpability.
- Happy are the sarcastic and those who ridicule, mock, and disrespect others, for they will be feared.
- Happy are the self-absorbed, social media addicts, for they escape any genuine concern for others.
- Happy are the vain and beautiful, for theirs is the praise and envy of their peers as long as it lasts.
- Happy are the intellectually and technologically elite, for they have no need of God.
- Happy are you when you are successful, gorgeous, strong, athletic, and brilliant, and everyone wants to be near you and like you – Rejoice and be glad, because you're "living the life!" – for in the same way the celebrities live.

Matthew 20:25-28

Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers in this world lord it over their people, and officials flaunt their authority over those under them. ²⁶ **But among you it will be different.** Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever wants to be first among you must become your slave. ²⁸ For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

See **John 4:1-29; 8:1-11; Luke 7:36-48; 5:12-13; 8:26-39; 19:1-9;**

- The Samaritan Woman – **Worth**
- The Adulteress – **Forgiveness**
- The Town Whore – **Dignity**
- The Leper – **Fellowship**
- The Outcast -- **Purpose**
- The Tax Collector – **Acceptance**

Various scenes in the Gospels give a good picture of the kind of people who impressed Jesus. A widow who placed her last two cents in the offering. A dishonest tax collector so riddled with anxiety that he climbed a tree to get a better view of Jesus. A nameless, nondescript child. A woman with a string of five unhappy marriages. A blind beggar, An adulteress. A man with leprosy. Strength, good looks, connections, and the competitive instinct may bring a person success in a society like ours, but those very qualities may block entrance to the kingdom of heaven. Dependence, sorrow, repentance, a longing to change—these are the gates to God’s kingdom.

- Philip Yancey, *The Jesus I Never Knew*

Kingdom Secrets to Peace-Filled, Authentic Living Now

John 10:10 “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”

Homework:

Are the Beatitudes True?

Pick three of the Beatitudes and be prepared to share how the characteristic Jesus highlights leads to abundant life.