

The King's Expectations  
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Matthew 5:1-16 (The Beatitudes and Salt and Light)

**How did life change for you when that first baby arrived on the scene?  
What other life experiences cause significant changes in the way we live?**

As we celebrate the start of a New Year change is on our minds. Almost everyone attempts to make some positive changes in the coming months. This morning's lesson is all about "life-change"; the life-change that only comes supernaturally, through a true encounter with Christ.

The big idea: Following Jesus will change your world forever. It's not a "bed of roses" but, even when times are hard, a Christ-follower is always blessed.

Matthew 5:1–16 (ESV)

**The Sermon on the Mount**

**5** Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him.

**The Beatitudes**

**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.

**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.

- Verses three through ten are the opening to Jesus' sermon. It's obvious he knew how to grab the attention of his audience: *"Who would like to be blessed, show of hands?" "What if I told you that living and thinking a certain way results in blessing?" "Anyone want to hear how that works?"*
- These familiar first twelve verses are known as the "beatitudes."
- That word beatitude or "blessed sayings," comes from the Latin word *beatus* and is generally rendered "happy," however, sources say that may not be the best rendering since it has been spiritually devalued in modern usage. The idea is that of a fortunate, blissful state based not on worldly

circumstances but on divine conditions. These conditional blessings are frequent in OT wisdom literature, especially the Psalms<sup>1</sup>

Psalm 1:1 (ESV)

**1** Blessed is the man  
who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,  
nor stands in the way of sinners,  
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;

Psalm 33:12 (ESV)

<sup>12</sup> Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord,  
the people whom he has chosen as his heritage!

- As we look at Matthew 5, based on verse one, **whom is Jesus addressing with this sermon on the mount?**
- "...his disciples came to Him..." **How does this scene mirror something Pastor Johnny has made a recent "mantra" for all of us?**
- Jesus taught unbelievers in large crowds, but His special focus was training and equipping His small team of disciples for the work they were to do. Jesus' disciples could have only founded the first century church, because of how much they "soaked up" from Him.
- You and I need that same "discipleship" experience!
- Let's go verse by verse and understand these "blessings."

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

- **What does "poor in spirit mean?**
- The Message paraphrase: <sup>3</sup> "You're blessed when you're at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule.
- My thought: The end of our rope is the beginning of trusting God for survival. We can only access the riches of God, when we become so spiritually poor that Jesus is our only solution.
- **What is the "kingdom of heaven?"**

<sup>4</sup> "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

- We naturally think of comfort in time of the death of a loved one...true.
- This also applies to a different kind of grief. Grief over personal sin.
- One of the wonderful benefits of a life with Christ is the comfort of knowing our past sins and mistakes are totally forgiven.

Psalm 32:1-2 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven,  
whose sin is covered.

<sup>2</sup> Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity,  
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

<sup>5</sup> "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

- **What does it mean to be meek? What does it NOT mean?**

- This word translated “meek” was used by the Greeks to describe a horse that had been broken. It refers to power under control.<sup>2</sup>
- Not a “doormat!” New AP translation: “I could be an overbearing jerk... however, because Jesus lives in me I choose NOT to be ‘that guy.’”
- Re: Inherit the earth: Christian hope does not look forward to inhabiting a particular country but to ruling with Christ over all the globe and ultimately to enjoying an entirely re-created earth and heavens (Rev 20-22).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>6</sup> “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. **What does that mean?**

- Most of these people were “dirt poor.” They understood hunger and thirst. This is why Jesus used it as an illustration.
- When we yearn for righteousness like we’d hunger for basic needs, we’ll find it in following Christ. He is the only source for righteousness.
- As the old saying goes, followers of Christ are just “beggars who found bread telling other beggars where to find it.”
- The next few verses are about dealing with other people.

<sup>7</sup> “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

- [God] forgives wrongdoing and shows kindness to the downtrodden. Believers practice mercy in the same manner. Mercy is active in that it does more than feel sorry for someone. The merciful stay sensitive to the disadvantaged and take action to do something about their plight.<sup>4</sup>
- Question: Do I cut others the same amount of “slack” that I would like them to “cut” me if I were in their shoes? Am I harsh or merciful?

<sup>8</sup> “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

- What Jesus requires of his disciples is a life-style characterized by pleasing God. The “pure in heart” exhibit a single-minded devotion to God that stems from the internal cleansing created by following Jesus.<sup>5</sup>
- A simple “pure in heart” test: Was that thought or act pleasing to God?

<sup>9</sup> “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

- **How are church members often viewed when it comes to this?**
- God help us NOT to be seen more as trouble-makers than peacemakers!
- Christians are not only given the ministry of helping people be reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:18); Jesus said help them reconcile with each other.

<sup>10</sup> “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

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

- Christ-like people attract insults and criticism. We get what Jesus got when we seek to be like Him.<sup>6</sup>

- **When we read the beatitudes, what jumps out to you about the differences from the Christian life and the natural life?**

The Life Application Bible states:

*"...God's way of living usually contradicts the world's. If you want to live for God you must be ready to say and do what seems strange to the world. You must be willing to give when others take, to love when others hate, to help when others abuse. By giving up your own rights in order to serve others, you will one day receive everything God has in store for you."*<sup>7</sup>

- **How was this teaching from Jesus different than what the "rule-keeping" Pharisees had taught?**

Warren Wiersbe writes:

*"The Pharisees taught that righteousness was an external thing, a matter of obeying rules and regulations. Righteousness could be measured by praying, giving, fasting, etc. In the Beatitudes and the pictures of the believer, Jesus described Christian character that flowed from within."*<sup>8</sup>

- Conversion through Christ is an "inside job." But Jesus didn't want his audience (or us) to keep it inside.

### **Salt and Light**

<sup>13</sup> "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.

<sup>14</sup> "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup> Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. <sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

- **Salt wasn't just about seasoning in that day. Why was that?**

In his book, "The Twilight's Last Gleaming," Robert Jeffress has an interesting take on why we are to be "salt and light:"

*"Most Evangelical Christians understand (even if they don't obey) the mandate to serve as lights in this dark world, pointing people to Christ's offer of salvation to all who believe. But I have discovered that many Christians do not comprehend Jesus' command to delay the decay of our culture by acting as salt in the world."*

As a result, Jeffress says, "We become tasteless salt and a diminished light." And he warns, "When Christians lose their motivation to be restrainers of evil, it is only a matter of time until society crumbles under the weight of its own sin."

Jeffress challenges his readers:

*"While our responsibility to delay our culture's decay is not our primary mission here on earth, it is a necessary prerequisite if we are to fulfill our ultimate calling of pointing people to Jesus Christ. At this critical time in our nation's history, we*

*cannot afford to sit back with folded hands as we wait for “the end.” God is calling you and me to stand up and push back against the tide of unrighteousness that threatens to engulf our country.”<sup>9</sup>*

- Being “salt and light” is not only about sharing the Gospel. It’s about preserving the culture so more people can hear it and be saved before time is up!

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- In this passage, Jesus spells out how He expects His followers to live. That life is totally “upside down” compared to the natural life.
- The only way to have all the blessings Jesus promised is to live in this counter-intuitive way. The only way sinful people can live like that is to be empowered from the “inside out” by His Holy Spirit.
- Those of us who are believers already have that power inside us to live like this. These verses are a great “check up” to see if others would describe our lives this way:
  - o Am I totally dependent on Christ (poor in spirit)?
  - o Do I choose to be humble instead of harsh (meek)?
  - o Do I literally hunger for the things of God or am I satisfied with the junk food the world provides?
  - o Am I merciful or oblivious?
  - o How pure is my heart? Are my thoughts and actions pleasing to God?
  - o Do I make peace or stir the pot?
  - o Do I expect the same kind of criticism that Jesus got for living this way? Do I count it a blessing when it happens?
- More importantly, am I intentionally being “salt and light” in the world, or just a secret disciple that looks like everyone else?
- This is who Jesus called us to BE. That’s why some have called them the BE-attitudes.
- The question is: Who will we BE this week?

<sup>1</sup> Schemm, P. (2003). Beatitudes. In C. Brand, C. Draper, A. England, S. Bond, E. R. Clendenen, & T. C. Butler (Eds.), *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (p. 178). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

<sup>2</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 1, p. 21). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>3</sup> The New American Commentary Volume 22 - Matthew by Craig L. Blomberg

<sup>4</sup> Explore the Bible Leader Commentary - Lifeway

<sup>5</sup> The New American Commentary Volume 22 - Matthew by Craig L. Blomberg

<sup>6</sup> Explore the Bible Leaders Commentary - Lifeway

<sup>7</sup> Life Application Study Bible p.1651

<sup>8</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 1, p. 21). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

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