

# The Beatitudes: Introduction

The Beatitudes are the pathway Jesus laid out to growing in our life with Him.



The Transformation for Adult LifeGroups

Matthew 5:1-12

June 2, 2019/June 5, 2019

## TODAY'S TEXT

Text: **Matthew 5:1-12**

Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him,<sup>2</sup> and he began to teach them.

He said:

<sup>3</sup> "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. <sup>4</sup> Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. <sup>5</sup> Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. <sup>6</sup> Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. <sup>7</sup> Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. <sup>8</sup> Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. <sup>9</sup> Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. <sup>10</sup> Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. <sup>11</sup> "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

## FIRST THOUGHTS

The word "BLESSED" has become more and more popular with Christian culture. We see it on t-shirts, bumper stickers, and more. In the Social Media world, "#blessed" has become one of the most popular (and some would say annoying) hashtags of all time. People use it to talk about something good that has happened to them ("Got a new job #blessed"), to express how great something in their life is ("Proud mama of these kids #blessed), and to humblebrag ("Me trying to figure out my brand new iphone #blessed). On Instagram there are about 110,000,000 posts tagged #blessed. Why do we use this word so much?

- How would you define a blessed life? What does it look like?

## UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Matthew chapters 5-7 has been referred to as "The Sermon on the Mount". This is the longest collection of Jesus teachings in all of the gospels. Luke records a similar teaching, although shorter, that has been called "The Sermon on the Plain" in Luke 6:17-49. These very passages may, in fact, describe the same sermon or a similar sermon Jesus preached another time. The location of the Sermon on the Mount is now known as the Mount of Beatitudes located on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee. The "mount" there overlooks a long plain running down to the Sea. For this reason some think the sermons from Matthew and Luke occurred at the same place and time. The Church of the Beatitudes now sits on this site. It is an 8-walled structure with one wall for each Beatitude.

What is a Beatitude? The word is derived from the Latin word for "blessed" which is how Jesus begins each of the first 8 statements "Blessed are . . ." As the first statements of the Sermon on the Mount, they lay out the characteristics of the new kingdom Jesus is establishing. He will go on in the rest of the passage to explain how this kingdom fulfills, deepens, and builds on the law of Moses. He will show us the practical applications of living in God's kingdom in the way we handle our day-to-day lives.

## EXPLORE THE TEXT

> What are some of the marks of someone's life who is following Christ?

> Read **Matthew 5:1-12**

- Would any of these statements make your list for "the marks of a Christian"? Why do you think some of the things described in the Beatitudes are often overlooked in the Christian life?
- One thing to make clear about the Beatitudes—they are a path to spiritual growth, not salvation. They do not describe what we have to do to be saved. They describe how we are to live after we have been saved. What happens when we try to earn our relationship with God?

The Beatitudes are a pathway or ladder to show us how to grow spiritually. Whenever we read what Jesus said, we know his words were intentional and purposeful. The same with the Beatitudes. There is a definite order in them. Each one flows from the others that went before. The Beatitudes do more than describe a blessed life—they give us a road map for pursuing it.

- ° How does the boy get on the rings?
- ° Can the little boy skip any rings? Why?
- ° How is this a picture of growing in Christ?

Now let's take a look at the Beatitudes as a series of rings and see how they flow from each other. It's ok if you don't get the meaning of every Beatitude yet, we'll be spending a week on each one of them all summer.



- The first three deal with our need. Read Matthew 5:3-5 again. What do you think it means to be poor in spirit? What are we to be mourning about?
- Read Matthew 5:6 again. After we have realized we have nothing to offer, we mourn our sins, and we approach God meekly, then we begin to develop an appetite for His righteousness. We want Him to fill our emptiness and comfort our mourning.
- Read Matthew 5:7-9 again. As we are filled with God's righteousness, it produces these changes in us: we become merciful, pure in heart, and peacemakers.
- Read Matthew 5:10 again. How is this one different from the previous 7?
- Does this progression make sense? How does seeing the relationship between the Beatitudes help you understand them?

## SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

We're at the beginning of our summer series. As we spend time studying and applying the Beatitudes, begin to ask yourself these questions

- Do I struggle with trying to earn God's love?
- Where do I see the blessing of God in my life in ways I didn't expect?
- What is keeping me from experiencing more of God's blessing in my life?

Remember, Jesus taught the Sermon on the Mount to his followers and disciples as a group. The greatest way to grow in the Christian life is as a group. We might sometimes think we could be a better follower if we secluded ourselves and spent all our time meditating. But that's not the picture of life that Jesus calls us to. He calls us a body that lives and works together. We need one another. In the midst of our crazy summer schedules, let's remember to make time to be with God's people regularly and to help one another grow in our faith. Remember the picture of the kid on the rings? How much more fun is it for him when all his friends are at the playground with him, cheering him on as he crosses the rings. That's the picture we want for our LifeGroups in this summer series.

## PREPARING FOR NEXT WEEK

- Next week we begin with the idea of being "poor in spirit". Here's some scriptures to reflect on to prepare for next week.
- Read Isaiah 6:1-6 and Psalm 34.
- Reflect on this quote: *"Can those converted to God obey His commandments perfectly? No. In this life even the holiest have only a small beginning of this obedience. Nevertheless, with all seriousness of purpose they do begin to live according to all, not only some, of God's commandments."* Heidelberg Catechism, 1563.

## READ THROUGH THE BIBLE

**2nd** – Proverbs 22-24; Romans 14 | **3rd** – Proverbs 25-27; Romans 15 | **4th** – Proverbs 28-29; Psalm 60; Romans 16 | **5th** – Proverbs 30-31; Psalm 33; Ephesians 1 | **6th** – Ecclesiastes 1-3; Ps. 45; Ephesians 2 | **7th** – Ecclesiastes 4-6; Psalm 18; Ephesians 3 | **8th** – Ecclesiastes 7-9; Ephesians 4