

Refine Women's Ministry
Introduction To The Beatitudes: Matthew 5:1-12
Beatitude #1

September 13, 2017 by Kim Peelen

The Bible is not an end in itself, but a means to bring men to an intimate and satisfying knowledge of God, that they may enter into Him, that they may delight in His Presence, may taste and know the inner sweetness of the very God Himself in the core and center of their hearts.

A.W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*, p. 9-10.

Our theme for the year is *Walk Worthy. . . the Intentional Journey*, from the Apostle Paul's exhortation to *walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace [Ephesians 4:1-3]*. The Beatitudes, a familiar passage in Matthew 5:1-12, get their name from the beginning phrase of each truth, *Blessed are the . . .* These opening verses of "The Sermon on the Mount" (Matthew 5 to 7) explain the sermon's purpose: that true believers know true happiness. The rest of Jesus's sermon teaches the requirements for happiness and the life-style that produces true happiness. The blessedness Jesus promises is based, not on circumstances, but on the indwelling character of God in the true believer. Today we will examine the context in which Jesus spoke as well as His first blessing/beatitude.

The Sermon's Purpose: Believers Know True Happiness
The Beatitudes in Matthew 5:1-12 [NASB]

- 1 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 is heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

To glean the Biblical context of Jesus's words, read and discuss the following:

Biblical Context: Jesus's Predecessor

Matt. 3:1 In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying,

3:2 "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

3:13 Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John, to be baptized by him.

3:14 But John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?"

3:15 But Jesus answering said to him, "Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he permitted him.

1. What is the message of John the Baptist (v. 2)?
2. What reason does Jesus give to convince John to baptize Him (v. 15)?

Biblical Context: Jesus's Location

[NOTE: Matt. 4:1-11 describes Satan tempting Jesus in the wilderness and Temple]

Matt. 4:12 Now when Jesus heard that John had been taken into custody, He withdrew into Galilee;

13 and leaving Nazareth, He came and settled in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali.

14 This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet:

15 "THE LAND OF ZEBULUN AND THE LAND OF NAPHTALI, BY THE WAY OF THE SEA, BEYOND THE JORDAN, GALILEE OF THE GENTILES-

16 "THE PEOPLE WHO WERE SITTING IN DARKNESS SAW A GREAT LIGHT, AND THOSE WHO WERE SITTING IN THE LAND AND SHADOW OF DEATH, UPON THEM A LIGHT DAWNED." [quoted from Isaiah 9:1,2]

3. What event causes Jesus to withdraw (v. 12) and where does He go (v. 13)?
4. Which John is this, do you think? [NOTE: John's fate explained in Matt. 14: 1-14]
5. Describe Jesus's reason for withdrawing to this specific place (v.14 - 16). What or Who is the Light?

Biblical Context: Jesus's Message

Matt. 4:17 From that time Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

6. What is the message of Jesus (v 17) and how does it compare to John the Baptist's message (Matt 3:1-2)?

Matt 4:23 Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people.

10. What do you think Jesus taught/ proclaimed in the synagogues (what was His gospel message)? What else did He do?

Biblical Context: Jesus's Audience

4:24 The news about Him spread throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all who were ill, those suffering with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics; and He healed them.

4:25 Large crowds followed Him from Galilee and the Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judea and from beyond the Jordan.

5:1 When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him.

5:2 He opened His mouth and began to teach them, saying,

11. What news about Jesus prompts crowds to follow Him?

12. Who does Jesus teach on the mountain (5:1)?

Matthew 7:28 When Jesus had finished these words [chapters 5-7], the crowds were amazed at his teaching;

7:29 for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.

13. After Jesus delivered His Sermon, what did the people learn about Jesus?

14. Even without reading all of Matthew chapters 5 - 7, what do you think is the main message of Jesus's Sermon on the Mount?

Biblical Context Summary: The New Testament opens with Matthew presenting Jesus of Nazareth as Israel’s long-awaited and rightful King and ushering in a new age, a new kind of king, and a new message. God uses John the Baptist to *prepare the way of the Lord* with His message: “repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”. Before Jesus begins His public ministry, John baptizes Him, *for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness*. As the Creator of the Universe submits to the ordinance of baptism, He models what His followers are to do, for it fulfills righteousness and pleases God. After Satan tempts Jesus and Herod arrests John, Jesus purposefully relocates to the predominantly Gentile area of Galilee from the Jewish-populated Jerusalem. Jesus’s first public sermon carries the identical message of John The Baptist, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”.

The Following from The Beatitudes: John MacArthur’s Bible Studies:

Political Context

Jews were looking for the promised Messiah to rule as a political king, to govern them and implement social justice (as they interpreted it). Jesus did not come as this kind of king; rather His Kingdom contradicts man’s idea of governing with His concern for what men ARE, not what they do. Those in His kingdom are poor in spirit, mourning over sin, meek, hungry and thirsting for righteousness, full of mercy, pure in heart, peaceable, and persecuted. This is not how the world defines success. Jesus works on the inside of individuals, not changing society. Jesus was not political.

Religious Context

To the Jewish religious leaders Jesus declares “You are misguided! My Kingdom is internal, God writes His law on the inward parts, not in external rituals.” Jer. 31:33

Pharisees observe tradition and point of the law for their happiness.
The Past/Traditionalists/ Go Back

Sadducees pursue modernism and liberalism, setting aside the past for an updated religion to achieve happiness. The Present/ Modernists/Go Ahead

Essenes separate themselves from the world, changing geographic locations for happiness. Isolationists/ Go Out

Zealots believe political revolt against the Roman (or current) government to gain happiness. Social Activists/ Go Against

The Audience/The Speaker

Matthew 5:1,2 “When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. He opened His mouth and began to teach them, saying,”

• **Primary Audience is Jesus’s disciples.** Because of their repentance and faith, they are the only ones who could know and live the King’s standards and enjoy the happiness Jesus promises.

• **Secondary Audience is the multitude.** Apart from repentance, they could not know true blessedness, but Jesus tells them it is available. He invites them to know the King.

• He *sat down* – this is the position of a rabbi who is **officially teaching**

• He *opened His mouth* – a Greek colloquialism that **His words are weighty**, dignified, serious, and spoken intimately from the heart.

The Sermon

The Beatitudes is the first portion of Jesus’s sermon and defines The Citizens of the Kingdom. He then explains The Righteousness of the Kingdom, and finally, the Exhortation to enter the Kingdom to complete His sermon.

Beatitude #1: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

As Jesus opens His message, He does not say, “I wish you blessedness”, but “blessed is the man who. . . “. In contrast, when He says, “woe to the man who”, He is not wishing something, but rather He is making judgmental pronouncements. He is emphasizing the inside of man, giving a new way to live, a new standard.

Definitions:

Blessed: *mekarios*, means happy, blissful, blessed within themselves; state unaffected by world of men; it is true of God

Poor: *ptochos*, one who is totally dependent upon gifts of others; often crippled, blind, or deaf; having no personal resources and plead for grace/mercy from others

Being Poor In Spirit . . .

- Is the fundamental characteristic of a Christian: humility
- Leads to right knowledge of self: I am incapable of attaining the standard Christ demands, I am utterly lost, worthless
- Leads to right knowledge of Christ: I begin to comprehend His wondrous, redeeming love in contrast to my utter helplessness and sinfulness
- Is the opposite of pride: a self-sufficient person has no room for Christ
- Is not the same as being lazy or indifferent
- Is not referring to physical poverty
- Is referring to spiritual poverty, recognizing I am spiritually bankrupt

The LORD is near to the brokenhearted, and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

Psalm 34:18

God said, “To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at my word.” Is. 66:2

Happy are those with destitute, cowering spirits because they have the right attitude toward sin. To enter God’s Kingdom, you must empty yourself and accept God on His Terms alone. This is the only way to salvation.

For Theirs is The Kingdom of Heaven

- Those who recognize their spiritual worthlessness and ask God for help will go to heaven
- “Theirs” is emphatic in the Greek, it is a definite reality not a wish
- The **grace** of the kingdom is now – we are subjects of Christ in this world
- We will have the **glory** later: *But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. Ephesians 2:4-7*

Summary

What is the first step for an intentional journey that glorifies God? It is emptying myself of any illusion that my human efforts contribute anything holy, righteous, or acceptable to God apart from His Character dwelling within me. As I embrace my helpless condition before a Holy God, and beg Him for rescue, then He offers His Kingdom of Heaven through salvation in His Son Jesus Christ. Focusing on God and not self, starving my pride of the flesh, and continually looking to God for help are His methods to cultivate poverty of spirit. Being poor in spirit is first requirement of citizens in God’s Kingdom.

Homework

1. Read Matthew 4:1 -5:2. What events occur just before Jesus begins His sermon? Who are the first people to respond to Jesus’s message “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”?
2. Read Matthew 5: 1 - 7:29. Find the sections which cover the three themes of the Sermon of the Mount: True Believers in the Kingdom; Requirements for Happiness; and the Life-style that Produces True Happiness. Record some main points in each.
3. Write out Matthew 5:1-12. Read it through each day and begin to memorize it.

RESOURCES:

Precept Upon Precept: Sermon On The Mount, How Can I Be Blessed?, 2014

The Beatitudes: The Only Way to Happiness, by John MacArthur, 1998.

The Beatitudes: John MacArthur’s Bible Studies by John F. MacArthur, Jr. 1990