

# “THE BEATITUDES: PART 1”

## Matthew 5:3-6

Turn in your Bible to Matthew 5. Tonight, we will continue our study of the Beatitudes. These are 8 characteristics that Jesus emphasized as being essential in every believer’s life. They are found in the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord’s kingdom manifesto. Make no mistake about it. Jesus is staking His claim over the lives of believers. As disciples of our Lord, we take our directions from the Lord Jesus. He directs our lives and shapes our character and choices!

**Romans 14:9...** For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

Understand that the Sermon on the Mount was addressed to the disciples of our Lord, not to the crowd in general.

**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. 2 He opened His mouth and *began* to teach them, saying...

Why were so many people congregating around the Lord Jesus? Back up into the last part of chapter 4 and you will find the answer...

**Matthew 4:23–25...** 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. 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. 25 Large crowds followed Him from Galilee and *the* Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judea and *from* beyond the Jordan.

Notice that as His disciples came to Him Jesus “*sat down*” to teach them. That was the normal pattern for a Rabbi in the first century.

The purpose of the Beatitudes is to explain what it means to be a disciple and to present a challenge to live up to the standards of the kingdom of God. The

emphasis is on the heart, not some form of external righteousness based on keeping the Law. The 10 Commandments focused on what you shouldn't do, whereas the Beatitudes focused on what you should do.

**“Blessed”**—When Jesus used this word, He was telling His disciples how they could be deeply, spiritually, and profoundly happy and how they could maintain this happiness even in the midst of life's disappointments and hard times.<sup>1</sup>

- **Some form of this word is used 516 times in the Bible.**
- **It means to be approved of God. God wants to bless us abundantly.**
- **The blessing of God is something real and tangible.**

I want you to make sure that you grasp this truth about the beatitudes...

**All eight of the beatitudes apply to all believers, and all eight blessings are promised to each believer. This is not a buffet line where you can choose what you like and ignore what you don't like.**

The Beatitudes seem illogical and paradoxical. The conditions and their corresponding blessings do not seem to match. By normal human standards such things as humility, mourning, desire for righteousness, mercy, and persecution are not the stuff of which happiness is made. To the natural man, and to the immature or carnal Christian, such happiness sounds like misery with another name. As one commentator has observed, it is as if Jesus went into the great display window of life and changed all the price tags.<sup>2</sup> The world says...

**“Happy are the rich, the noble, the successful, the macho, the glamorous, the popular, the famous, the aggressive.” But the message from the King does not fit the world's standards, because His kingdom is not of this**

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<sup>1</sup> James Montgomery Boice, [\*The Sermon on the Mount: An Expository Commentary\*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 15.

<sup>2</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., [\*Matthew\*](#), vol. 1, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), 142.

**world but of heaven. His way to happiness, which is the *only* way to true happiness, is by a much different route.<sup>3</sup>**

Okay, are you ready to dive into this study of the Beatitudes? There are 9 references to blessings. These blessings cover 8 kingdom values the Lord desires for His disciples to live by. Tony Evans explained...

**The main idea, though, as we start on our journey through these kingdom values, is that living according to them brings about blessing. Jesus wants each of us to know that choosing to embrace kingdom values isn't just something you do so you can check off a list....Rather, Jesus pairs each of these kingdom values with a blessing that comes right back to you.** (Kingdom Values, p. 93)

John MacArthur pointed out another important fact about the Beatitudes ...

**The Beatitudes are progressive. As will be seen, each one is discussed in detail, they are not in a random or haphazard order. Each leads to the other in logical succession. Being poor in spirit reflects the right attitude we should have to our sinful condition, which then should lead us to mourn, to be meek and gentle, to hunger and thirst for righteousness, to be merciful, pure in heart, and have a peacemaking spirit. A Christian who has all those qualities will be so far above the level of the world that his life will rebuke the world—which will bring persecution from the world (5:10–12)<sup>4</sup>**

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<sup>3</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., [Matthew](#), vol. 1, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), 142.

<sup>4</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., [Matthew](#), vol. 1, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), 145.

**Matthew 5:3... “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

**“Poor in spirit”** Classical Greek used the word *“poor”* to refer to a person reduced to total destitution, who crouched in a corner begging. The term did not mean simply poor, but begging poor. It is used in Luke 16:20 to describe the beggar, Lazarus. This person is completely dependent on others for sustenance and has absolutely no means of self-support. The *poor in spirit* are those who recognize their total spiritual destitution and their complete dependence on God.<sup>5</sup> **(Read Philippians 3:1-9; Luke 18:9-14; Proverbs 16:15)**

Deep in his heart, Paul knew that only Christ could give him what he needed to live out these kingdom values. Otherwise, he would starve to death spiritually. That’s what it means to be *“poor in spirit.”*

**“Theirs is the kingdom of heaven”** –The word “theirs” is emphatic, meaning theirs and theirs alone. In all of these great promises there is a sense of experiencing them right now in part and in the future we will experience them fully.

How would it impact your life if you found out that the living God was searching for people to whom He could show favor and blessing? This is the message an Old Testament prophet delivered to King Asa...

**2 Chronicles 16:9...** “For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His. You have acted foolishly in this. Indeed, from now on you will surely have wars.”

King Asa blew it big time. Notice what the prophet said to the king—“**...those whose heart is completely His.**” God is not looking for the most intelligent, the best looking, the wealthiest, the wisest, the most popular, or the most successful. The one thing that will qualify a person for receiving the favor and blessing of God is a humble heart that is completely devoted to Him.

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<sup>5</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., [Matthew](#), vol. 1, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), 146.

God forbid they we buy into the notion that we simply humble themselves to get into the kingdom and then become self-sufficient for the rest of our lives. We are to live our lives in total dependence on God. Whatever you do, don't miss this golden opportunity to put yourself in a position to receive God's blessing. Is your heart completely His?

**Matthew 5:4...** **“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”**

**“Mourn”** pictures a deep sense of agony. Jesus is not referencing the kind of mourning that takes place when a loved one dies. He is referring to a deep sense of brokenness over personal sin and the sin that dominates our culture. Do you want to experience true happiness and joy? If you do, then you've got to embrace God's perspective concerning sin. The mark of spiritual maturity is not sinlessness but a growing awareness of sinfulness.

**James 4:4–10...** You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. **5** Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: “He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us”? **6** But He gives a greater grace. Therefore *it* says, “GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.” **7** Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. **8** Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. **9** Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. **10** Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

Why is this important? It reflects genuine repentance as does the following passage...

**2 Corinthians 7:9–10...** I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to *the point of* repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to *the will of* God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. **10** For the sorrow that is according to *the will of* God produces a repentance without regret, *leading* to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.

Do you see the agony over sin exhibited in these two passages and the repentance it produces? We often learn more and mature more from times of sorrow than from times when everything is going well. A familiar poem by Robert Browning Hamilton expresses the truth:

**I walked a mile with Pleasure,  
She chattered all the way,  
But left me none the wiser  
For all she had to say.  
I walked a mile with Sorrow,  
And ne'er a word said she,  
But, oh, the things I learned from her  
When Sorrow walked with me.<sup>6</sup>**

**"They shall be comforted"**—Again the "they" is emphatic. The only way to find genuine comfort is to be forgiven. Listen to David's words...

**Psalm 32:1**... How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered!

As we continually mourn over our sin, we shall be continually comforted. The word "comfort" also forms the same root word for the Holy Spirit who is known as the comforter.

**2 Corinthians 1:3–4**... Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, **4** who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

Look at the next beatitude...

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<sup>6</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., [Matthew](#), vol. 1, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), 155.

**Matthew 5:5... “Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.”**

The idea of a gentle (meek) Messiah leading a gentle (meek) people was far from any of the Jewish concepts of the messianic kingdom. They understood military power and miracle power. They even understood the power of compromise, unpopular as it was. But they did not understand the power of gentleness (meekness).<sup>7</sup>

**“Gentle”** means power under control. It does not refer to weakness. In fact, the Greek word pictures a powerful, wild stallion that has been broken to the bridle. The gentle person possesses tremendous strength which is submitted to the Lord. He or she stands fearlessly for God, for truth, and for those who are mistreated. Yet, they refuse to retaliate when they are wronged.

**Ephesians 4:1–3...** Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, **2** with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, **3** being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Moses is a great example. Do you remember how angry he got when he confronted God’s people over the golden calf. He was not weak; he was powerful because he was totally submitted to God.

**\*Read Numbers 12:1-13**

The blessings of the Beatitudes are for those who are realistic about their sinfulness, who are repentant of their sins, and who are responsive to God in His righteousness. Those who are unblessed, unhappy, and shut out of the kingdom are the proud, the arrogant, the unrepentant—the self-sufficient and self-righteous who see in themselves no unworthiness and feel no need for God’s help and God’s righteousness.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., [Matthew](#), vol. 1, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), 168–169.

<sup>8</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., [Matthew](#), vol. 1, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), 170.

**“They shall inherit the earth”**—Once again, the “they” is emphatic. Because we belong to Christ, our place in the kingdom is secure. One day we will reign with Christ! (Rev. 19:11-16; 22:1-5)

**Matthew 5:6...** **“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”**

**“Hunger and thirst”** are strong words. A starving person has a single consuming passion as does someone who is thirsting to death. Nothing else can get his/her attention. These verbs are in the present tense indicating an ongoing passion.

**Psalm 63:1...** O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly; My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, In a dry and weary land where there is no water.

The Christian life is for those who will renounce anything that stands in the way of total commitment to Jesus Christ!

**“For righteousness”**—This is God’s righteousness. The person with this passion desperately wants to measure up to God’s standards, to be right with Him.

**“They shall be satisfied”**—The word for “satisfaction” here was used when animals were fed until they wanted no more. Our part is to seek. God’s part is to satisfy. A funny thing happens though. The person who hungers and thirsts for righteousness finds it so satisfying that he/she wants more and more! John Stott observed...

**Looking back, we can see that the first four beatitudes reveal a spiritual progression of relentless logic. Each step leads to the next and presupposes the one that has gone before. To begin with, we are to be “poor in spirit”, acknowledging our complete and utter bankruptcy before God. Next we are to “mourn” over the cause of it, our sins... and the reign of sin and death in the world. Thirdly, we are to be “meek” (gentle), toward others, allowing our spiritual poverty to condition our behavior to them as well as to God. And fourthly we to “hunger and thirst for righteousness” ....** (The Message of the Sermon on the Mount, p.46)



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