

THE BEATITUDES: EIGHT ATTITUDES

I. The Scripture

Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down.

His disciples came to him, and he 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 will be comforted.

5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

*6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.*

7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

8 Blessed are the pure at heart, for they will see God.

9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

*10 Blessed are those who, are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs
is the kingdom of heaven.*

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

Matthew 5:1-12

II. Looking at the Beatitudes

The Beatitudes are eight keys to the Kingdom of God. Each of these eight statements contains more insight and truth than there is in most books. Jesus had a way of putting profound truths into simple words. In the Beatitudes we find this to be especially true.

Blessed means happy or, better yet, joyous. Blessedness is a joy completely independent of all the circumstances and changes of life. It is a kind of spiritual joy that is linked with those who share in the salvation of the kingdom of God.

The greatness of the Beatitudes is not that they are wistful glimpses of the future or golden promises that will come to be in some distant day. Their greatness lies in the fact that they are triumphant shouts of a present, permanent joy that nothing in the world can ever take away.

What do these verses say about the blessedness of those who follow God?

Psalm 1:1

Psalm 119:1-3

Proverbs 8:32-34

1. Poor in Spirit - Matthew 5:3

To be "poor in spirit" is to acknowledge our spiritual poverty, our bankruptcy before God. Why is this an indispensable condition for receiving the Kingdom of Heaven?

Why do you think Jesus begins his greatest collection of teachings with "Blessed are the poor in spirit"?

Why is it so difficult to admit our spiritual poverty?

2. Mourn - Matthew 5:4

Those who mourn feel sorrow not only for their own sin but also for the sin they see around them. What have you experienced lately that caused you to mourn?

How do you think those who mourn will be comforted?

3. Meek - Matthew 5:5

The word meek means for have a humble and gentle attitude toward others. From the world's point of view, why is it surprising that the meek will inherit the earth? What can you see in the life of Christ that exemplifies or defines meekness?

4. Hunger and Thirst - Matthew 5:6

What does it mean to hunger and thirst for righteousness?

What is the important result of hungering and thirsting for righteousness according to this verse?

5. Merciful - Matthew 5:7

According to this verse, why do you think our treatment of others will affect God's treatment of us?

What are examples of acts of mercy in and around your life?

6. Pure in Heart - Matthew 5:8

The people in Jesus' day considered the heart the center of a person's being, including mind, will and emotions. To be "pure in heart" means that our thoughts, motives and reactions are pure. Why might being "pure in heart" help you "see God"?

7. Peacemakers - Matthew 5:9

It is the Father's nature to make peace. Why is it fitting that "the peacemakers" will be called sons of God?

How can you be a peacemaker in your home, school, church and community?

8. Persecuted - Matthew 5:10-12

What do you think the disciples might have felt when they heard Jesus' words as recorded in Matthew 5:10-12?

"Persecution is a terrible thing but unfaithfulness is far worse. "What is your reaction to this statement?

III. The Beatitudes and You

A Be-Attitude Check

Read the following statements that reflect commitment to the teaching of the Beatitudes. Then, in the space by each statement evaluate your level of commitment to each beatitude.

Rate your commitment from 1 to 10.

1 = Christlike

5 = Lukewarm

10 = A long way to go

Poor in Spirit	"I am helpless without Christ, therefore my complete trust is in Him."
Mourn	"I am truly sorry for my sin and for the suffering in the world."
Meek	"I have a humble and gentle attitude towards others."
Hunger and Thirst	"I desire a relationship with God more than money, people, success or anything."
Mercy	"I hurt for others, feel what they feel, think their thoughts, experience their pain."
Pure in Heart	"I have pure motives and reasons for all my actions. I do not dwell on impure thoughts."
Peacemaker	"My goal is for all my relationships with others to be completely peaceful."
Persecuted	"I obey Christ regardless of criticism, loneliness, rejection or fear."

Circle the sentence completions that apply to you.

For me to become more of a disciple of Christ, I need to ...

- a. obey Him more.
- b. meditate on His word.
- c. start a new life with Him.
- d. trust Him completely
- e. choose one beatitude and make a commitment to improve my obedience to its teaching

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- f. find Christlike friends.
- g. weigh the costs and pay the price.
- h. put my happiness in Him, not money, health, people, etc.
- i. other

The following is one of the stories that have most influenced my life. It took place during World War I and was told by an old colonel in the Austrian Army.

I was commanded to march against a little town on the Tyrol and lay siege to it. We had been meeting stubborn resistance in that part of the country, but we felt sure that we should win because all of the advantages were on our side. My confidence, however, was, arrested by a remark from a prisoner we had taken. "You will never take that town," he said, "for they have an invincible leader."

"What does the fellow mean?" I inquired of one of my staff. "And who is this leader of whom he speaks?"

Nobody seemed able to answer my question, and so in case there should be some truth in the report, I doubled preparations.

As we descended through the pass in the Alps, I saw with surprise that the cattle were still grazing in the valley and that women and children-yes, and even men-were working in the fields.

Either they are not expecting us, or this is a trap to catch us, I thought to myself. As we drew nearer the town we passed people on the road. They smiled and greeted us with a friendly word, and then went on their way.

Finally, we reached the town and clattered up the cobble-paved streets-colors flying, horns sounding a challenge, arms in readiness. Women came to the windows or doorways with little babies in their arms. Some of them looked startled and held their babies closer, then went quietly on with their household tasks without panic or confusion. It was impossible to keep strict discipline, and I began to feel rather foolish. My soldiers answered the questions of children, and I saw one old warrior throw a kiss to a little golden-haired tot on the doorstep. "Just the size of Lisa," he muttered. Still no sign of an ambush. We rode straight to the open square which faced the town hall. Here, if anywhere, resistance surely was to be expected.

Just as I had reached the hall and my guard was drawn up at attention, an old white-haired man, who by his insignia I surmised to be the mayor, stepped forth, followed by ten men in simple peasant costume. They were all dignified and unabashed by the armed force before them—the most terrible soldiers of the great and mighty army of Austria.

He walked down the steps straight to my horse's side, and, with hand extended, cried, "Welcome, brother!" One of my aides made a gesture as if to strike him down with his sword, but I saw by the face of the old mayor that this was no trick on his part

"Where are your soldiers?" I demanded.

"Soldiers? Why, don't you know we have none?" he replied in wonderment, as though I had asked, "Where are your giants?" or "Where are your dwarfs?" "But we have come to take this town." "Well, no one will stop you." "Are there none here to fight?"

At this question, the old man's face lit up with a rare smile that I will always remember. Often afterward, when engaged in bloody warfare, I would suddenly see that man's smile—and somehow, I came to hate my business. His words were simply:

"No, there is no one here to fight. We have chosen Christ for our Leader, and He taught men another way."¹

¹Clarence Jordan, *Sermon on the Mount* (Judson Press, 1952), p. 61, italics added.

How does this story summarize the important message of the Beatitudes?

Which Beatitude do you need to work on the most?

What action steps will you take this week to use the Beatitudes to make a difference in your life?

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