



Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church

The Sermon on the Mount - Part 1 • beatitudes • Matthew 5:1-6 • 05/20/2018

Main Point

Citizens of God's kingdom are marked by inner attitudes which are blessed by God and, when lived out, bring Him glory.

Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Growing up, which teacher, coach, or other leader in your life taught you the best lessons on attitude and character development?

What did you learn from that person?

Being a Christ-follower isn't just a matter of thinking and doing the right things and avoiding the wrong things. Foundational to being a Christian is a personal relationship with Jesus that empowers you to live for God. That relationship is the result of God's blessing in your life, and it changes you from the inside out. God's power at work in you enables you to reflect kingdom characteristics in the way you live.

Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| Have a volunteer read Matthew 5:1-2.

Why do you think the disciples followed Jesus to the mountain? What might they have expected Him to do?

Jesus could have taught the crowd many different truths. Why do you think He chose to focus on His followers?

How would hearing this teaching be different for someone who is just following the crowd and one who is a true disciple?

When we imagine the scene of the Sermon on the Mount, we typically picture Jesus perched on the side of a large hill speaking out to a crowd of people. Pictures and videos often portray the sermon that way, too. But that's not what we read in Matthew 5:1. Matthew reported that Jesus saw the crowds, went up on a mountain, and sat down with His disciples. Instead of a grand speech, we see an intimate conversation with His small group of disciples. By the end of the sermon (Matt. 7:28), it becomes evident that the crowds could hear what Jesus was telling the men.

Think about the small group you're in right now. Do you talk about things differently here than you would if you were giving a speech? What are some key differences?

| Have a volunteer read Matthew 5:3-6.

What do you think the word "blessed" means in the context of the Beatitudes?

What do the first four Beatitudes have in common?

Matthew 5:3-10 is often referred to as the “Beatitudes.” They’re a set of blessings set up in Hebrew poetical form. The first statement, “The poor in spirit are blessed, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs” (v. 3), bears the same reward as the last, “Those who are persecuted for righteousness are blessed, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs” (v. 10). In Hebrew poetry, the repeated theme means that everything in the middle (vv. 4-9) shares a common theme. In this case, it’s the attitudes by which we can recognize people who are a part of the kingdom of God. Beatitudes one through four focus on the inner attitude of Christ followers.

What does it mean to be “poor in spirit” (v. 3)? What would the opposite of this quality be?

The reward for those who are poor in spirit is that “the kingdom of heaven” is theirs. What does this mean, and why is it a reward?

Poor in spirit is the opposite of being spiritually self-sufficient. It means we recognize we have nothing to offer God that merits His favor. Only the humble may enter Christ’s kingdom. Further, we depend on His mercy every day. No one can experience the full purpose of discipleship who is arrogant or haughty. What reward did Jesus promise those demonstrating lives of humility? The kingdom of heaven is theirs. This means they experience God’s rule through Jesus the Messiah. All who come to the Messiah in humble faith, He welcomes as citizens of His heavenly realm.

What kind of mourning do you think Jesus is talking about in verse 4? What causes you to mourn like this?

Compare these first two Beatitudes with Isaiah 61:1-2. What parallels do you find between the two passages of Scripture?

When Jesus said God approves of those who mourn, He didn’t mean His disciples mope around gloomy all the time. He did mean we are sorrowful over the sin in our lives. One reason we mourn over our sins (and the sins of others) is that we realize how destructive sin is. It shatters our lives and our relationships. Only as we understand how terrible sin is and how horribly broken we are without the grace of God’s forgiveness are we in a position to be restored.

When you think of someone who is a good example of meekness (v. 5), what is that person like? What do you admire most about that person? How does that person model humility?

What are some ways you can demonstrate this spiritual quality in your relationships with God and others?

How can you increase your hunger for righteousness? What next step do you need to take to do so?

God's children are to seek the Savior in all they do. This is indeed an upside-down life from what is "normal." Yet according to Jesus, desiring to grow in Christlikeness is a first-rate sign we are truly born again. The clear theme in verses 3-6 is that God approves of people who know they're broken, who know they're nothing without His blessing. We don't earn the kingdom of heaven by being poor in spirit. We're poor in spirit because we know that we could never earn a place in God's kingdom, but through His grace He provides a way to let us in.

Consider the attitudes expressed in Matthew 5:3-6. How do these compare with the attitude of Jesus as explained by Paul in Philippians 2:5-11?

Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What are some of the most memorable or significant blessings from God that you have experienced in your life thus far? What makes those blessings stand out from others?

Of the four Beatitudes we examined today, which are you most tempted to avoid? What is one step you can take this week to allow God to transform your life in that area?

Pray

Close in prayer, asking God to help your small group members and the people at our church grow into people who exhibit the kingdom characteristics we discussed today.

Commentary

| Matthew 5:1-6

5:1-2. Matthew 4:23-25 sets the stage for Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. People from all over Galilee and surrounding areas flocked to see and hear Him as well as to seek healing. On a particular day, when He saw the crowds, He went up to a place on a nearby mountain. Teachers of that day customarily spoke from a seated position, so He sat down with His disciples gathered around Him. Then He began to teach them (v. 2). Although His disciples and the crowd could hear Jesus (7:28), His message seems targeted mainly to those He had singled out to follow Him. Still, His words certainly reveal to all His hearers the real meaning of following Him.

5:3. Jesus declared people who exhibit particular characteristics to be divinely blessed. He was not saying that people should strive to attain those characteristics so they could earn the right to tap into God's blessings. Rather, those characteristics identify people who by God's grace are citizens of the kingdom of

heaven. This designation does not imply they are perfect, fully mature believers. It does indicate they have begun to follow the Lord.

The first four Beatitudes (vv. 3-6) reflect inner attitudes, the first of which is poor in spirit. This is opposite the attitude of being arrogant and self-sufficient, a trait prized and admired by the world. No one can earn God's blessing. People who think they can please God on their own are blind to their sins and ignorant of God's high standards. Poverty of spirit is the prelude to the riches of salvation. Jesus pronounced the poor in spirit to be blessed because, as followers of Jesus, the kingdom of heaven is theirs ("kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of God" are used interchangeably in the Gospels). While this citizenship is a present possession of believers, the full benefit of kingdom citizenship awaits Christ's return.

5:4. Those who mourn are blessed, for they will be comforted. Jesus did not specify what sort of mourning He had in mind, so it could include all mourning. In the context of the other Beatitudes, mourning over our sins of commission and omission probably should receive emphasis. When we honestly repent of our lapses into sin, we are comforted anew with the assurance our sins all have been atoned in Christ. Mourning over sin also can include the sinful attitudes and actions in cultures throughout the world and around us. We mourn sins' destructive effects on multitudes. Part of God's comfort in that arena lies in the assurance that in the end, His scales of justice will be balanced.

5:5. The next attitude is gentleness. The word translated gentle conveys the notion of being meek, humble, sensitive, considerate, and courteous. Gentleness puts the focus on others rather than self. Being gentle does not mean being a pushover. This inner attitude stems from a spiritually educated awareness of our own spiritual poverty. Scripture indicates Jesus' followers will reign with Him (2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 5:10). That promise will be fulfilled when He establishes His kingdom in the new heavens and earth. Ruling with Him implies our attitudes will parallel His. The blessing Jesus pronounced won't be centered in ownership but in serving Him (in ways not yet revealed).

5:6. The fourth attitude is a hunger and thirst for righteousness. This righteousness is not the righteousness of Christ through which God views us believers (justification). Rather this is the inner desire to make right choices, say right words, and do right actions, which is part of God's work to make us more like Christ. We who seek to follow Christ know we don't measure up to His standards, but we want to do so. As we walk faithfully with Him over time, He instills in us more and more the purpose and the power to please Him (Phil. 2:13). Admittedly, though we grow in right living, in this life we will never be absolutely righteous. So we are called blessed as we long for righteousness in the sense that we have the sure hope that we will be filled with righteousness (Matt. 5:6). The process has begun, and our limited progress brings encouragement. That process won't be completed, however, until Christ's second coming (1 John 3:2).