

THE BEATITUDES

SERMON ON THE MOUNT: MATTHEW 5.1-12



A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

T . M . M O O R E

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Sermon on the Mount: The Beatitudes: Matthew 5.1-12
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Matthew 5.1-12: Introduction

Matthew places the sermon on the mount near the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, because its place in the story of redemption recalls Moses' receiving the Law of God on Mt. Sinai.

The first part of this sermon is the precis for the whole. The beatitudes are to the sermon on the mount what the Ten Commandments are to the rest of God's Law. Jesus is the Lawgiver in the New Testament, assuming His rightful role, and calling the world to learn from Him what life in the Kingdom of God entails.

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We hope you find this study of Ecclesiastes a challenging and stretching experience of journeying more deeply into the Word of God. Thank you for joining us.

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1 Want to Learn from Jesus?

Pray Psalm 128.1.

Blessed is every one who fears the LORD,
Who walks in His ways.

Sing joyously Psalm 128.1, 2

(Fountain: *There is a Fountain Filled with Blood*)

How blest are they who fear You, Lord, who walk within Your ways!
Rejoicing in Your bounteous Word, they prosper all their days!
They prosper all their days, they prosper all their days!
Rejoicing in Your bounteous Word, they prosper all their days!

Read Matthew 5.1-12; meditate on verses 1 and 2

Prepare.

1. Where did Jesus go to teach the people?
2. Who sat closest to Him as He began to teach?

Meditate.

We'll be looking at the sermon on the mount for the next several installments of our study of Matthew's gospel, beginning, in this installment, with the beatitudes (Matt. 5.1-12). Chapters 5-7 present the foundational teachings of life in the Kingdom of God, and they deserve our careful consideration.

I find Matthew's introduction to the sermon instructive. Jesus saw a multitude. He must have been getting used to that, even this early on in His ministry (cf. Matt. 4.24, 25). Jesus was wary of multitudes, however, since He knew what was in every person's heart (Jn. 3.24), and He understood that a good many, if not most, of those people had come to Jesus because they wanted something from Him (cf. Jn. 6.26-67). That is, the people came in multitudes to Jesus because they heard He was *blessing* those with needs – those who were sick, diseased, demon-possessed, and so forth. Some may have been merely curious about Jesus, or perhaps they had other needs they wanted Him to satisfy (cf. Lk. 12.13, 14).

But Jesus was about to give the people something much more valuable. He was about to draw back the curtain on a new realm of existence – a new state of being and way of life. His teaching would throw down a gauntlet at the feet of those who heard Him, and would begin to distinguish Him as a teacher unlike any they had heard before.

So in view of the assembling multitude, Jesus headed up to the top of a nearby mountain. Would everyone follow Him? We don't know. But we can imagine the groans and complaints of some in the crowd, who had already walked a long way to get to Jesus, only to have Him add to their trek by heading up a mountain!

There is also something very symbolic about His ascending the mountain to give this sermon. Just as Moses received the Law on the top of a mountain, Jesus would give a new Law – clarifying and enlarging the old Law – on the top of a mountain. Jesus is the new Moses, the new Law-giver (Jn. 13.34, 35), and the One Who gives not only the demands and promises of the Law, but the Law

itself, in His life, death, and resurrection. In leading the multitudes up the mountain, Jesus also symbolically fulfilled – and pointed to an even greater fulfillment – of such prophecies as Micah 5.1-8. A new day of reversal had begun. Now all nations would flow to the mountaintop to know the blessings of God and His Word.

We also note the seating arrangement of this great sermon: Disciples (only four at this time) sitting nearest to Him, and whoever had the stamina to make the climb scattered out from there. Jesus wanted to make sure His disciples – those who had left all to follow Him – got every word He would speak. So He sat them in the front row, so to speak.

The message in this setting is clear: What Jesus teaches is important and demanding. If we're coming to Jesus merely for what we want from Him, we might miss what He wants for us.

Reflect.

1. Is Jesus primarily in the business of meeting people's needs? Explain.
2. Jesus made it harder for people to hear the sermon on the mount. What's the message in this?
3. How can we make sure that, in coming to Jesus with our needs, we don't miss what *He* thinks we need the most?

When the law was first given on the mountain, the people were forbidden to draw close. But now, as the Lord was teaching on the mountain, no one is forbidden. Rather, all are invited that they may hear, because there is severity in the law and grace in the gospel. In the former case, terror is instilled in the unbelievers. In the latter case, a gift of blessings is poured out on the believers. Chromatius (ca. 400), *Tractate on Matthew 17.1.3-4*

Lord, help me to pay careful attention to Your every word, so that today, as I go out into my Personal Mission Field, I may...

Pray 128.2-6.

Give thanks to God for His many blessings. Ask Him to make you a blessing to the people you will see today.

Sing Psalm 128.3-6.

Psalm 128.3-6 (Fountain: *There is a Fountain Filled with Blood*)

Their homes with happy children bloom who fear Your holy Name.

Their tables and their every room declare Your glorious fame!

Declare Your glorious fame, declare Your glorious fame!

Their tables and their every room declare Your glorious fame!

O Lord, from Zion send Your peace, and prosp'rous make our ways.

Thus may Your blessings e'er increase upon us all our days!

Upon us all our days, upon us all our days!

Thus may Your blessings e'er increase upon all us all our days!

2 Entering the Kingdom

Pray Psalm 130.6.

My soul *waits* for the Lord
More than those who watch for the morning—
Yes, *more than* those who watch for the morning.

Sing contemplatively Psalm 130.6.

(Hamburg: *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*)

More than the watchmen wait for the day, eagerly seeking the morning light,
I wait for You and earnestly pray, hoping in You with all my might.

Read Matthew 5.1-4; meditate on verses 3, 4.

Prepare.

1. What does Jesus promise in these two verses?
2. What do we learn about the Lord's blessings here?

Meditate.

Jesus ascended a mountain and arranged His disciples close to Him, while the crowd that followed scattered around to hear Him. The scene was deliberately staged to recall the meeting of Moses and the elders of Israel with God, on the top of Mt. Sinai, just prior to God giving the Law, in the form of stone tablets, to Israel (Ex. 24.9-12). Here Jesus would outline the ethics of life in the Kingdom, just as the Law of God outlined the ethics of life in Israel. Instead of stone tablets, however, He would give them His Word, and more importantly, Himself. Now that the Kingdom was “at hand”, its unique character and demands needed to be set before the people. As we shall see, life in the Kingdom does not negate life in the Law; rather, it clarifies and enlarges the Law within a framework not of works, but of grace.

The people had come to be blessed by Jesus. Perhaps most of them had an idea of the blessing they wanted to receive. The purpose of the beatitudes is, in one sense, to clarify the meaning of blessing, so that we make sure that what we're seeking from the Lord is what He desires to give us.

The word *blessing* means “pertaining to being happy, with the implication of enjoying favorable circumstances – happy” (Louw and Nida). Left to our own devices, we will define *happiness* in many different ways. Jesus indicates that happiness – as He intends it – is available, first of all, to those who recognize the impoverished state of their souls, and who seek the Kingdom as the remedy (v. 3). Even more than in the Old Testament, where to be truly happy and blessed was to enjoy life in the Kingdom of Israel (Lev. 18.1-5) – a condition the people of Israel could never fully realize – now in the New Testament – and even *more* truly – to be happy is to know life in the Kingdom which Jesus proclaimed, and which He was bringing near.

Jesus was, I believe, deliberately vague in His use of “spirit” (NKJV) here. In the Greek, a definite article is included, so that the translation is more accurately *the spirit* or even *the Spirit*. I believe Jesus wanted His hearers to think of both – the Holy Spirit of God and their own souls (spirits). Only when we recognize the impoverished condition of our own spirit, and our lack of engagement with the Spirit of God, are we ready to receive the Kingdom which the Spirit of God brings. And *receiving*

the Kingdom is the *entry point* to a life of blessedness from God.

Verse 4 continues this focus on entering the state of blessedness – life in the Kingdom. Life in the Kingdom entails *being comforted* or *encouraged* in life. The word in the Greek is παρακληθήσονται, *paraklethesontai*, and it shares the same root as the word, Comforter (Greek: παρακλητος, *parakletos*). The kind of mourning Jesus intends here is the kind that can only be soothed by the Comforter of God, Who dwells in all who are forgiven and born from above. Recognizing the poverty of our souls – how utterly destitute of good we are, how completely incapable of making ourselves right with God, how loathsome we are to ourselves and God – leads to a deep spiritual mourning, sorrowing for our wretchedness and weeping for our lost condition.

These two verses deliberately recall Isaiah 61.1-3, in which the coming of the Messiah is announced. Jesus offered the people blessing – life in the Kingdom, where the Comfort of the Spirit attends to all who enter there. But we must first recognize our need for such blessing. We must accept the idea of blessing as Jesus defines it, and recognize our impoverishment apart from such blessing with sorrow and mourning (cf. Lev. 23.26-32; Is. 22.12-14). Only then are we ready to be blessed by Jesus and elevated to a new and truly happy life.

Reflect.

1. What does Jesus mean by “blessing”?
2. What are the prerequisites for entering the Kingdom of God? Why?
3. Why is “comfort” the first blessing we receive upon entering the Kingdom of God?

“Blessed are the poor in spirit,” who on account of the Holy Spirit are poor by willing freely to be so. Hence, concerning this type of poor, the Savior also speaks through Isaiah: “The Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor.” Jerome (347-420), Commentary on Matthew 1.5.3

Show me my sins, Lord, and help me to weep for my impoverished soul, so that I...

Pray Psalm 130.1-5, 7, 8.

This psalm moves from desperation to hope, from confession to confidence in the Lord, from seeking the Lord to resting in His redemption. Let it guide your prayers this morning, that you may be renewed in your spirit as you mourn for your sins.

Sing Psalm 130.1-5, 7, 8.

Psalm 130.1-5, 7, 8 (Hamburg: *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*)

Out of the depths I cry to You, Lord! Lord, hear my voice; have mercy on me!
Who can resist Your powerful Word if You should mark iniquity?

There is forgiveness, Lord, with You, that we may fear before Your face.
I wait for You; in Your Word most true I hope to find renewing grace.

Hope in the Lord, with Jesus is love! Plenteous redemption abounds in His face.
He will redeem us, who rules from above; He will forgive us by His grace.

3 Kingdom Vision

Pray Psalm 37.1-6.

Do not fret because of evildoers,
Nor be envious of the workers of iniquity.
For they shall soon be cut down like the grass,
And wither as the green herb.
Trust in the LORD, and do good;
Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness.
Delight yourself also in the LORD,
And He shall give you the desires of your heart.
Commit your way to the LORD,
Trust also in Him,
And He shall bring *it* to pass.
He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light,
And your justice as the noonday.

Sing Psalm 37.1-6.

(Neumark: [*If Thou But Suffer God to Guide Thee*](#))

Let not the wicked make you worry; envy not those who break God's Word.
Like dying grass will they be sorry, and fade like every dying herb.
Trust in the Lord and do His will; dwell in His grace, be faithful still.

Delight yourself in God's salvation; He'll give you all your heart's desire.
Commit to Him your every station, and His good purpose will transpire.
Your righteousness a blazing light He will bring forth against the night.

Read Matthew 5.1-6; meditate on verses 5, 6.

Prepare.

1. What expectations does Jesus hold out to us in these verses?
2. What qualifications does He require for us to realize those expectations?

Meditate.

In verses 3 and 4, Jesus outlined the *entry requirements* for those who would be blessed with the Kingdom of God. They must recognize their spiritually impoverished condition, and weep for their sins. These are not one-time conditions, but the ongoing posture of those who know the happiness of being citizens in God's Kingdom.

In verses 5 and 6, Jesus sweeps His hand across the horizon of history, as He teaches us *what to expect* from this Kingdom life, that is, what His priorities for the Kingdom are. The whole earth lies before us, and Jesus intends to give it to His followers, that they might fill it with righteousness. The Kingdom of God is righteousness, Paul reminds us (Rom. 14.17, 18), and righteousness is the highest objective of Kingdom-seekers (Matt. 6.33).

Jesus reached back to Psalm 37 for these two verses. The whole psalm, because it tells us what to seek in the Kingdom, warns us to expect opposition, and encourages us to delight in the Lord, shows He'll bring the Kingdom to pass in and through us.

We are truly meek when we are like Jesus (cf. Matt. 11.29 where NKJV *gentle* is actually *meek*), and we can only be like Jesus when we are *in* Him – heart, soul, mind, and strength. Believe in Jesus. Trust in Him and fear nothing. Delight in Him above all else. Let the indwelling Spirit transform you increasingly into His image, and you will be meek, and you will bring righteousness into every aspect and to every person of your Personal Mission Field, just as Jesus did in His.

Ah, but we must *hunger and thirst* for righteousness. We must earnestly desire this, so that we will work at attaining righteousness, whatever it takes. And this means desiring Jesus, for only Jesus is righteous! When we want to know Jesus, see Jesus, learn Jesus (Eph. 4.17-24), be transformed into the image of Jesus (2 Cor. 3.12-18), put on Jesus (Rom. 13.12-14), and have Jesus increase in us even as we decrease to make more room for Him (Jn. 3.30), then we will be hungering and thirsting for righteousness. When we do, we will delight in the Lord, and He will give us what we want desire – which should be more of Him (Ps. 37.3-7)!

Here is the vision of life in the Kingdom: The earth, filled with followers of Jesus, hungering and thirsting above all else for more of Jesus, being filled with Jesus to overflowing (Jn. 7.37-39), and filling all the earth with Him (Eph. 4.8-10). This is the vision that should animate and move us in everything we do, as we seek the Kingdom and righteousness of God.

Reflect.

1. How would you explain Christ's vision for life in the Kingdom to a new believer?
2. What does it mean to delight in Jesus? How can you tell when someone truly delights in Him?
3. Is Jesus' vision for life the Kingdom the vision that animates and moves you each day?

The meek are those who submit to wickedness and do not resist evil but overcome evil with good. Let the haughty therefore quarrel and contend for earthly and temporal things. But "blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the land." This is the land from which they cannot be expelled. Augustine (354-430), Sermon on the Mount 1.2.4

Make me more like You, Lord Jesus, so that, as I go into my Personal Mission Field today I can...

Pray Psalm 37.7-16, 34-37.

The Lord has given you a Personal Mission Field, as the place on earth He intends for you to inherit, in the meekness and power of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wait on the Lord, and go forth to serve Him, delighting in the Lord and His peace.

Sing Psalm 37.7-16, 34-37.

Psalm 37.7-16, 34-37 (Neumark: [*If Thou But Suffer God to Guide Thee*](#))

Rest in the Lord and wait on Jesus; fret not at those who practice sin.

Forsake all wrath till anger ceases; let anxious fears not enter in.

The wicked perish from the Lord, but they are blest who heed His Word!

The wicked man shall shortly perish; his place no longer shall be found.

The humble will God's grace inherit, and in His blessings much abound.

The wicked plot the righteous' fall: God laughs; He will destroy them all!

The wicked wield their sword and arrow to cast the righteous to the ground.

Them they would slay and fright and harrow, but God shall turn their schemes around.

The little of the just is more than all the wicked lay in store.

Wait on the Lord, His way observing, and He will lift you up on high.
Those prone to wicked ways preserving, your eyes shall see cast down to die.
The blameless man shall stand upright, for God preserves him by His might!

4 Kingdom Goals (1)

Pray Psalm 15.1.

LORD, who may abide in Your tabernacle?
Who may dwell in Your holy hill?

Sing contemplatively Psalm 15.1.

(Arlington: [*This Is the Day the Lord Has Made*](#))

Lord, who may dwell within Your tent, or on Your holy hill?
All those who keep Your covenant and walk within Your will.

Read Matthew 5.1-8; meditate on verses 7, 8.

Prepare.

1. Who are they who know the Lord's blessings in His Kingdom?
2. Of what do those blessings consist, as we see them in these verses?

Meditate.

The first two beatitudes show us that entry is possible to the Kingdom Jesus proclaims, but only for those who recognize their impoverishment, mourn over their sinfulness, repent, and believe the Good News that the Kingdom is at hand.

The next set of beatitudes shows us the broad sweep of the Kingdom, and the purpose of Christ's bringing it near, and us into it. He intends to fill the earth with His righteousness!

The remaining verses in the beatitudes outline some goals and expectations for life within the Kingdom. Once we have entered it, and have set our hearts to achieve its broad objectives, we can get busy about the daily work of seeking and advancing the Kingdom.

We can summarize verse 7 as follows: Show mercy, get mercy (cf. Ps. 18.25). Mercy includes a variety of affections and disciplines, including compassion, kindness, forgiveness, generosity, perseverance, and so forth. In the Kingdom, God intends to channel His mercy through us, to one another and to the world. But we must *show* mercy to others to make room in our soul for God to give us *more* mercy to bestow. In the Kingdom, this is what we do: We flood our Personal Mission Fields with mercy – just like Jesus did His – and we experience the Lord showing us more mercy, and giving us more mercy, that we might have more mercy to share.

What a great idea!

The second attribute characterizing those who live in the Kingdom (v. 8) can be summarized with equal conciseness: Be pure, see Purity (cf. again Ps. 18.25, where for *blameless* read *pure*; cf. v. 26). We need to see God daily if we're going to sustain the demands of Kingdom living. We need to see Him, seeing us, watching over us, speaking to us from His Word, filling and overflowing in us by His Spirit, granting us an ever-clearer vision of Himself in glory (Col. 3.1-3). But we will only be able to see Him Who is altogether pure and lovely by being pure ourselves (cf. Ps. 66.18). Thus, life in the Kingdom involves not only receiving mercy from God and showing mercy to others, but keeping our eye on Jesus, and our souls cleansed of everything that keeps us from growing in Him. The more we see of His purity, by keeping ourselves pure and looking on Him, the more we will grow to be like

Him, and thus the more we will show mercy to the world.

Again, what a great plan!

Now that we're in the Kingdom, what should we do? What should we expect? To begin with: Show mercy, and keep yourself pure; if you do, you'll have more mercy to share, and *you will see God!*

Reflect.

1. What is it like to experience God showing you mercy? How does He do that?
2. Why is mercy so greatly needed in your Personal Mission Field?
3. What must we do to see God? What does that mean?

The pure of heart are those who have gotten rid of sin's filth, have cleansed themselves of all the pollution of the flesh and have pleased God through works of faith and justice. As David testifies in a psalm, "Who will climb up the Lord's mountain, or who will stand in his holy place? The one with innocent hands and a pure heart, who has not received his soul in vain." And David, rightly knowing that God can be seen only with a pure heart, prays as follows in the psalm, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." So the Lord shows that it is pure-hearted people like this who are blessed. Chromatius (fl. ca. 400), Tractate on Matthew 17.6.3-4

Lord, help me to show mercy today as I...

Pray Psalm 15.2-5.

This psalm deals with the kind of character they have who dwell in the Kingdom of the Lord. Use it to let the Lord search your soul, and to help you set some practical goals for growing in His mercy and grace.

Sing Psalm 15.2-5.

Psalm 15.2-5 (Arlington: [*This Is the Day the Lord Has Made*](#))

All they who with integrity work peace and righteousness,
forever in God's house shall be forgiven, kept, and blessed.

Let truth from every heart proceed, and slander disappear:
Thus shall we know God's grace indeed and feel His presence near.

No evil to your neighbor speak, nor turn against your friend:
Thus shall you know the end you seek – God's presence without end.

Let every sinner be despised; but those who fear the Lord
shall honor have before our eyes, according to God's Word.

All they who keep their word in faith, though suffering may ensue,
shall know the favor of God's grace, His presence ever true.

No greed and no injustice shall they do who seek the Lord;
but on His mercy ever call and stand upon His Word.

5 Kingdom Goals (2)

Pray Psalm 84.5-7.

Blessed is the man whose strength is in You,
Whose heart is set on pilgrimage.
As they pass through the Valley of Baca,
They make it a spring;
The rain also covers it with pools.
They go from strength to strength;
Each one appears before God in Zion.

Sing joyfully Psalm 84.5-7.

(Holy Manna: [Brethren, We Have Met to Worship](#))

Blessed are they whose strength is founded
in Your strength, O Lord above.
All whose hearts in You are grounded
journey in Your strength and love.
Though they weep with tears of sadness,
grace shall all their way sustain.
In Your presence, filled with gladness,
they shall conquer all their pain.

Read Matthew 5.1-10; meditate on verses 9, 10.

Prepare.

1. Who are the blessed of the Kingdom, according to these verses?
2. Where should they expect to receive their fullest reward?

Meditate.

Having shown us the way into the Kingdom (vv. 3, 4), and cast a vision for the scope and character of the Kingdom (vv. 5, 6), Jesus began to explain the goals and expectations of Kingdom living, starting with mercy and purity and the vision of God (vv. 7, 8). In today's passage, Jesus continued to put before us what to expect and what to strive for as we follow Him into the Kingdom of heaven.

We are called to be peacemakers (v. 9). Righteousness describes the character of the Kingdom; peace describes the condition that adheres to those who dwell in righteousness, and joy is the consequence of those together (Rom. 14.17, 18). They who have come into the Kingdom are at peace with God. They have peace in the world, so that its vicissitudes and uncertainties do not cause them to be anxious (Phil. 4.6, 7). Believers work hard to be at peace with one another, so that the reality of the Kingdom may flourish from within their midst (Eph. 4.3; Jn. 17.21). And they extend the promise of peace to their neighbors, that they may enter the Kingdom and know the peace of God that accompanies the pursuit of righteousness.

Knowing peace, sharing peace, proclaiming peace, and leading others to the *shalom* of the Lord: This must factor large in our daily agenda as citizens of the Kingdom whose ruler is the Prince of Peace. Kingdom citizens are vessels of mercy and bringers of peace to world.

But notice (v. 10) that not everyone will be happy to know of this peace, or glad to receive it. For

some, the offer of peace with God is a threat against their presumed autonomy. And since they can't strike out at God, they will strike out at His messengers, as Daniel was shown in Daniel 7.13-27. We must expect opposition and even persecution; so we must take as a goal to prepare ourselves for these, so that when they come, they will neither shake our peace nor deter us from offering mercy to those who hate us.

Note here also that Jesus extended the promise of the Kingdom beyond this lifetime into the Kingdom of heaven yet to come – a note He will reiterate in verse 12. He has outlined the whole course of our journey in and to His eternal Kingdom. We are not merely creatures of the here and now; we live toward a glorious then and there, in which our adoption as sons and daughters of God will be finalized, and full possession of the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ will be ours to enjoy.

We must pass through some valleys of tears in this life. But if we keep our eyes on Him Who alone is pure, and on the Kingdom He has given and is preparing for us, we can take up our calling to be living sacrifices for His glory (Rom. 12.1, 2), and know peace and show mercy, even to those who seek to do us ill.

Where else in the world can you find people who live like that?

Reflect.

1. What does it mean to have peace with God? How would you explain this to an unbelieving friend?
2. In Ephesians 4.3, Paul said we have to work hard to maintain the unity we have in Christ, in the bond of the Spirit. Jesus said in John 17.21 that this is an important part of our mission in the world. Why must we work hard at keeping peace within the Body of Christ?
3. In what ways should citizens of the Kingdom expect to encounter persecution? How can we prepare for this?

The peacemakers are those who, standing apart from the stumbling block of disagreement and discord, guard the affection of fraternal love and the peace of the church under the unity of the universal faith. And the Lord in the Gospel particularly urges his disciples to guard this peace, saying, "I give you my peace; I leave you my peace." Chromatius (fl. ca. 400), Tractate on Matthew 17.7.1-2

Use me today to spread peace, O Lord, especially as I...

Pray Psalm 84.1-4, 8-12.

We are called to be living sacrifices for the Lord (Rom. 12.1, 2). Offer yourself to Him today, as a pleasing sacrifice. Focus on Him in glory, and ask Him to give you every good thing you will need to do all His will today.

Sing Psalm 84.1-4, 8-12.

Psalm 84.1-4, 8-12 (Holy Manna: [*Brethren, We Have Met to Worship*](#))

Lord of hosts, how sweet Your dwelling;
how my soul longs for Your courts!
Let my soul with joy keep telling
of Your grace forever more.
Like a bird upon the altar
let my life to You belong.
Blessed are they who never falter

as they praise Your grace with song!

Lord of hosts, my prayer receiving,
hear me, help me by Your grace!
In Your courts I stand believing;
turn to me Your glorious face!
Lord, our sun, our shield, our glory,
no good thing will You deny
to those who proclaim Your story,
and who on Your grace rely.

6 Kingdom Goals (3)

Pray Psalm 115.1-3.

Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us,
But to Your name give glory,
Because of Your mercy,
Because of Your truth.
Why should the Gentiles say,
“So where is their God?”
But our God is in heaven;
He does whatever He pleases.

Sing joyfully Psalm 115.1-3.

(Plainfield: [*Nothing but the Blood of Jesus*](#))

Not to us, O God, not us, but unto Your Name give glory!
For Your love and faithfulness, ever to Your Name be glory!
Why should the nations cry, "Where is their God on high?"
You rule us, Lord, on high: Ever to Your Name be glory!

Read Matthew 5.1-12; meditate on verses 11, 12.

Prepare.

1. What kinds of persecution did Jesus specify here?
2. How should we respond to such persecution? Why?

Meditate.

Jesus wraps up this portion of the sermon on the mount by enlarging on the theme of persecution as what we must expect in the Kingdom of God. It must be an important theme and a most real expectation, as it's the only one He elaborates in more detail. He mentions reviling us, speaking evil of us, and lying about us as particular forms of persecution to consider. We know, however, that those who hate Jesus will do much worse than this to His followers, when they are able.

Get your mind around this: If you have a vision for the Kingdom, and live a life of repentance, purity, showing mercy, and seeking peace, some people will speak evil of you and lie about you, and try to make you look stupid or naïve, or dangerous. You must not try to avoid such responses, but let your light shine in spite of it (as we shall see in verses 13ff).

When persecution comes, rejoice and be exceedingly glad. Persecution is proof that your faith is genuine. Rejoicing in persecution strengthens your faith by sharpening the focus of your life on the unseen things above, where Christ is seated in heavenly places, preparing a place for us with Him forever (Heb. 11.1; Col. 3.1-13; Jn. 14.1-4). We're in good company when we have to undergo persecution, because the prophets of the Old Testament and the disciples of the New were persecuted, as have been many of our brothers and sisters throughout history; and as many are throughout the world today.

Jesus points us to the eternal manifestation of His Kingdom (v. 12), beyond time into heaven and beyond, into the new heavens and new earth. The beatitudes set the theme and basic categories for life in the Kingdom. They are our essential marching orders while we remain here in time. In the remainder of the sermon on the mount, Jesus will fill in more of the details He has outlined in verses

1-12. Thus, the beatitudes are like the Ten Commandments, which the rest of the Law unpacks and illustrates. Jesus is giving a new Law for His Kingdom, but, as we shall see, it does not eliminate, but is based on and enhances that Law and those commandments already received.

Reflect.

1. How are the beatitudes like the Ten Commandments?
2. How must we respond to persecution? How can believers help one another during times of persecution?
3. What “reward” can we expect for responding to persecution as Jesus commands?

Not only should we patiently endure all the horrible treacheries of the persecutors that can be contrived in a time of persecution for Christ's name against the just, or the various reproaches that can be heaped upon us, or the punishments that can be applied to the body, but we should even welcome them with exultation because of the coming glory.
Chromatius (fl. ca. 400), *Tractate on Matthew 17.9.2-3*

Embolden me for the Kingdom today, O Lord, and help me to...

Pray Psalm 115.9-18.

In a time like this – indeed, at all times – we need to remember that God is sovereign, that He does all things well, works all things together for good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose, and that He works good through those who know Him to show His love to the world. Pray that He will use you thus today.

Sing Psalm 115.9-18.

Psalm 115.9-18 (Plainfield: [*Nothing but the Blood of Jesus*](#))

All who trust in Jesus yield – ever to His Name be glory! –
find in Him their help and shield – ever to Your Name be glory!
O Israel, trust the Lord! He helps us evermore!
Fear Him obey His Word: Ever to Your Name be glory!

Blessings from our gracious Lord – ever to Your Name be glory –
will attend us evermore – ever to Your Name be glory!
Bless all who fear You, Lord, all who obey Your Word,
all who Your Name adore: Ever to Your Name be glory!

Grant us, Savior, great increase – ever to Your Name be glory!
Bless us with eternal peace – ever to Your Name be glory!
Heaven and earth are Yours; let every soul adore
and bless You evermore: Ever to Your Name be glory!

7 The Course of the Kingdom

Pray Psalm 111.1-3.

Praise the LORD!

I will praise the LORD with *my* whole heart,

In the assembly of the upright and *in* the congregation.

The works of the LORD *are* great,

Studied by all who have pleasure in them.

His work is honorable and glorious,

And His righteousness endures forever.

Sing joyfully Psalm 111.1-3.

(Manoah: [*When All Your Mercies, O My God*](#))

Praise the Lord! O let my heart give praise here amid His chosen race!

Your works are great, O Lord, and sought by all who know their grace.

For Your work is full of splendor, Lord, and of majesty most pure;

Your righteousness, O glorious God, forever will endure!

Read aloud and meditate on Matthew 5.1-12.

Prepare.

1. Which aspects of life in the Kingdom does Jesus address in these verses?
2. What does it mean to be “blessed”?

Meditate.

We should remember that in God’s covenant, the core promise is that He will bless us (Gen. 12.1-3). To be blessed of God is to be a beneficiary of His favor, to be given access to His Presence, to know and love and serve Him, and to be in a position to realize all the other promises of His covenant which includes extending His blessing to all the families of the earth. The Kingdom of God is the context in which those precious and very great promises are all realized in Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 1.4). As God spoke words of blessing to Abram, Moses, and Israel, here Jesus – as God’s Sent One – speaks words of blessings to all who hear and obey Him.

Jesus assumes the role of covenant-keeper, and He stands in the place of God to give entry to the Kingdom, where all those promises and blessings may be finally possessed. We enter the Kingdom through meekness, mourning for our sins, and looking to Jesus for comfort. He holds out the earth to us as His proper domain – having wrested it all from the devil in Matthew 4.1-11 – and calls us to seek righteousness and purity for our part of it. Kingdom citizens look to God through Jesus Christ, and offer the mercy and peace of God to the world, inviting them to enter the Kingdom as they have, through the blessing of Jesus and His words and work.

Our course in this world will be difficult, as not everyone welcomes the Good News of the Kingdom. But we must meet all opposition with rejoicing, looking to the end of our faith, which is to see Jesus face to face, and to dwell forever with Him in thanksgiving and praise, in a place He is even now preparing for us.

The beatitudes offer a concise summary of the Good News of the Kingdom. But we have many

questions, and, in the remainder of the sermon on the mount, Jesus will continue to sketch out the implications and opportunities of life in the Kingdom which is not of this world.

Reflect.

1. How would you explain life in the Kingdom to a new believer in Jesus?
2. All the blessings and promises of the Kingdom are to be found in Jesus. Why is it important that we understand this?
3. Where do you need to see growth in your life as a citizen and ambassador of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ?

*So do not suppose that the reward of the kingdom of heaven belongs only to the poor in spirit. It also belongs to those who hunger for justice, and to the meek and to all these blessed others without exception. For he set his blessing upon all these things to keep you from expecting something belonging to this material world. John Chrysostom (344-407), *The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 15.5**

I love Your Kingdom, Lord! Help me to seek and further it today as I...

Pray Psalm 111.4-10.

Thank the Lord for transferring you into His Kingdom, sealing you in His covenant, redeeming you by His blood, and showing you His wisdom for Kingdom living. Pray about the day ahead, that you might be a faithful ambassador of that Kingdom.

Sing Psalm 111.4-10.

Psalm 111.4-10 (Manoah: [*When All Your Mercies, O My God*](#))

You have caused Your many wondrous works to remain before our face.
For You are full of mercy, Lord, and abounding all in grace.

For all who fear You, You provide; Your covenant endures.
Your pow'r You show Your people, Lord, and make the nations theirs.

The works of Your all-sovereign hands are faithful, Lord, and just.
Your precepts ever more are true and worthy of our trust.

You have sent redemption, to us, Lord, in Christ of cov'nant fame,
and we in wonder, grace, and awe adore Your holy Name.

All they who would true wisdom know must learn to fear You, Lord,
And in that wisdom daily live and praise You evermore.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. What does it mean to be blessed in the Kingdom of God?
2. Summarize Jesus' teaching about Kingdom goals and expectations.
3. Why should we expect people to persecute us for our Kingdom lifestyle? What kinds of persecution should we expect?
4. How should we respond to persecution? Why is this an effective way of keeping our proper Kingdom focus and calling when persecution comes?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from Matthew 5.1-12? How are you putting that lesson to work in your Personal Mission Field?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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