

I. Vs.3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

1. verse 3 and 10 end with the phrase *theirs is*, meaning already.

2. Verses 11-12 are an extension of 10, expanding on the idea of persecution.

The kingdom of heaven *is already* the reality of those who meet these conditions.

A. How does one become blessed by God for being poor in spirit?

poor does not refer to material wealth describes a spiritual condition to become a member of the kingdom of God.

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).

B. We must be *brought* to an understanding that we are poor in spirit and once we *realize* that, once we *understand* that we are spiritually destitute and bankrupt it then allows us to progress to the next phase of the Christian experience and that is mourning over our sinful condition.

These Jews would have an understanding of this from OT scriptures, for example:

Ps 51:16 For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You are not pleased with burnt offering.17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.

This poorness of spirit is the first norm of living in Christ's kingdom What is normal for us is abnormal for the world.

C. This first beatitude brings us knowledge and the second could be said to be that which stirs us emotionally. We move from our intellect being informed to our emotions being stirred.

Vs.4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

I am to weep and grieve at the idea of my sinfulness. I am to be *upset* with my sinfulness in some way and express it. Jesus says *blessed* are those who mourn over their sin for they will be comforted. The first comfort the blessed have? They realize their sins are forgiven, and they have been loved by Christ, even while they were sinners. Christ loved them because He did so from before the foundation of the world.

II. Mt. 5:5 "Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth."

None of the Beatitudes sound more contradictory to modern Western culture than the third. This statement would be more difficult to receive among the multitude of Jews on the mount. As mentioned above, they looked for a strong mighty Prince who would sweep away imperial Rome and establish a worldwide kingdom whose hub was Jerusalem. The Messiah they longed for came from the scroll of Psalm 2, not Isaiah 53, and wielded a Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth." But what is meekness?

It is The Description of the Person's Character-" the meek."

Biblically interpreted, meekness is the opposite of self-will toward God, you do not try to impose your will on God and you do not show ill will toward men, because you have a true view of yourself. This essence of meekness results in the inner attitude of submission to authority.

A study of its (i.e. meekness) usage in Scripture reveals, first, that it is linked with and cannot be separated from lowliness (Matt. 11:29) (Eph. 4:1,2

Second, it is associated with and cannot be divorced from gentleness: (2 Cor. 10:1) (Titus 3:2).

Third, "receive with meekness the engrafted word" (James 1:20,21).

Fourth, the Divine promise is "the meek will He guide in judgment, and the meek will He teach His way" (Psalm 25:9

Christ illustrates meekness in action in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:38-48); Psalm 37:11 is the Old Testament passage that Christ quoted from; Moses models meekness in the Old Testament

(Numbers 12:3); Christ in the New Testament (Matthew 11:29; 2 Corinthians 10:1); Matt. 11:29 and Eph. 4:1,2 links meekness with lowliness; 2 Cor. 10:1 and Titus 3:2 links meekness with gentleness; James 1:20,21 and Psalm 25:9 connects meekness with reception of the Word of God.

Psalm 37 is Jesus' reference point from Scripture as He gives a New Covenant meaning to this A picture of those who wait for the Lord ..verses 5-8.

Meek people begin by trusting God (verse 5b)

Meek people commit their way to the Lord (verse 5a).

Verse 7a, meek people are quiet or still before the Lord and wait patiently for him.

Meekness consists in a peaceful freedom from fretful anger and is based on trusting God and rolling all our ways onto God and waiting patiently for God.

Other Biblical instances of meekness.

1. Numbers 12:1-4 describes an occasion when Miriam and Aaron criticized Moses severely. Meekness refrains from revenge and defensiveness. Meekness loves to give place to wrath and leave its vindication with God. Meekness is the power to absorb adversity and criticism without lashing back.

2. James 1:19-21.

Meekness is teachability.

Meekness does not mean that there is the absence of passion and conviction and even indignation for the glory of God.

James 3:13 and 17. The truly wise person is also the truly meek person is that true wisdom is peaceable, gentle and open to reason."

Then we come to The Statement of the Reason for the Blessedness-

"For they shall inherit the earth."

"Many have tried to earn the earth through military might-Ghenghis Khan, Alexander, Hannibal, Napoleon, Hitler, and Stalin, but all have failed. God's people will inherit the earth in the future."

But our Sovereign Lord has told us who are the poor in spirit and who have mourned over our sin that being meek is part of the character of those who will be with Him for all of eternity in the consummated kingdom on a recreated earth that will be filled with His glory. A kingdom that will be established not by military might by the mighty God Himself who is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

III. Mt.5:6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

I believe this fourth beatitude is the heart of the beatitudes.

Righteousness is a word and a condition that Jesus' hearers understood although it was not practiced in a godly manner by most of them.

So what is this righteousness?

The Law and the Prophets contain 217 references with various words that translate to the word righteousness in our English Bibles, starting in the book of Genesis. Ge 15:6 Ge 18:19

Abraham would prove to be *righteous because of what God had done* by choosing Him and it would be demanded of Abraham to instruct his children in the ways of God's righteousness because from Abraham there would be four seeds that had a unique bearing on God's redemptive history. He would bear a son Issac, he would father a nation through Jacob, from his line and nation would come the Messiah, Jesus, and all who believed in the Christ (Jew and Gentile) would also be of the spiritual heritage of Abraham.

It has always been meant that God's righteousness, not a human righteousness, would be evident in God's chosen people whether under the Abrahamic Covenant, the Mosaic Covenant, once Israel was established as a nation, or the New Covenant.

Righteousness from God's perspective is His doing right, that is all that He can do.

What does righteousness mean for us.

Mt 5:20* "For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

1. Jesus is not saying that kingdom people need more righteousness than the Scribes and the Pharisees. What He is saying is we need a different quality, a different kind, in other words not the righteousness of men but the righteousness of God.

So how is this possible? How do we obtain the righteousness of God? **2Cor 5:17**

2. Righteousness means a pattern of life in conformity to God's will that occurs because we are being transformed inwardly by His Spirit.

3. This is a norm of the Christian life but it appears that many Christians today are abnormal: they hunger for spiritual experiences, for recognition, for power, for money, for fame - but where is the hunger for conformity to God's will.

4. The promise of satisfaction is made to those who hunger for righteousness and not to those who simply hunger for God, there are two reasons.

a. One is that when we hunger and thirst for righteousness we don't look to the broken cisterns of our own resources. We look to God. So it is not either-or: we hunger for righteousness in God.

B. The second...The Sermon on the Mount ends in 7:22-23

You cannot hunger and thirst for righteousness if the first three beatitudes are not a part of your life. The rest of the beatitudes all grow out of this one.

IV. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy Mt. 5:7

1 This mercy first has to be understood in the context of the audience to whom Jesus was speaking. Again, this was primarily His disciples, those who would become the apostles and then secondarily the masses gathered on the mount within His hearing.

The question we must again ask ourselves as we have with all of the other beatitudes is what did mercy mean to the hearers and what did Jesus mean when He used the term.

The first use of the word mercy in Scripture is found in Gen 19

Mercy as it is known here is an act of kindness on the one hand, yet it is tied to the sinfulness of mankind. Ps 103:9

The distribution of the mercy of God is found and rooted in His sovereign will.

Ex 33:19 ; Ro 9:15-24

Did God expect men who were in covenant with Him to be merciful, to show mercy to others?

Here is an example where mercy was not to be given. Dt. 7:2

And here is an example that God required mercy Zec.7:9, Micah 6:8

Why? Because of all the times that God showed mercy to Israel even in their rebellion.

1. Israel as a nation was called by God with certain privileges under the Mosaic Covenant. God was merciful to them time and time again even in their rebellion that proved their hearts as an entire people were not for God.

2. There were those under the Old Covenant who were genuine believers with changed hearts. They were expected to be merciful in a greater sense and so it is with us who are New Covenant believers.

There is a general mercy, to all of His creation (Ps. 145:9)

The LORD is good to all, And His mercies are over all His works

Why does the creation need to know the mercy of God. Romans 8:21-22

And there is a special mercy, to all of mankind that is not connected to the suffering caused because of sin (Matt. 5:45).

There are also some distinctive qualities of God's mercy:(1) Great mercy (I Kings 3:6).(2) Covenant mercy (Neh. 1:5).(3) Abundant mercy (Ps. 86:5).(4) Everlasting mercy (Ps. 103:17).(5) Tender mercy (Luke 1:78).(6) Rich mercy (Eph. 2:4).(7) Full mercy (Jas. 5:11)

V. Blessed are the pure in heart

1. Again we must ask the question, was there a context of meaning for the hearers. The answer is yes.

There was much knowledge of the idea of purity already written in the Old Covenant and the Hebrew Scriptures. 1Sa 16:7

The idea of being pure in heart is essential for those who are the blessed of God, those who are the favored of God and are therefore spiritually prosperous.

Prov. 4:23 is one of the most important verses in all of Scripture

This is another direct result of hungering and thirsting after God's righteousness.

What is it to be pure in heart?

Psalm 24:3-4.

1. Purity of heart is to will one thing, namely, to "seek the face of the Lord" (verse 6).
2. You can see this idea of purity in James 4:8.
3. The impurity of double-mindedness is explained in James 4:4.
4. Where in the gospels did Jesus explain purity of heart in this way, the answer would be Matthew 22:37, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart."
5. Purity of heart is to will one thing, namely, God's truth and God's value in everything we do.

VI. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."

Matthew 5:9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."

1. One after the other the beatitudes tell us that the blessings of eternity will be given only to those who have become new creatures.

2. The whole history of redemption, climaxing in the death and resurrection of Jesus, is God's strategy to bring about a just and lasting peace between rebel man and himself, and then between man and man.

What it means to be a peacemaker.

1. The second half of the Matthew 5:9 points us to Matthew 5:43-45 for our main insight. Both of these texts describe how we can show ourselves to be sons of God.

1. The first thing he mentions is prayer (verse 44) Pray for those who persecute you. Pray what? The next chapter tells us. In Matthew 6:9-10 Jesus says, "Pray like this..."

Matthew 5:47 Jesus gives the other specific example of peacemaking-love in this text: Peacemaking tries to build bridges to people.

2. Romans 12:18 is very important at this point.

3. In James 3:17 it says "The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable." First pure, then peaceable, not the other way around. And that is the order we have in the beatitudes also (in verses 8 and 9): First, "Blessed are the pure in heart," then, "Blessed are the peacemakers." Purity takes precedence over peace. Purity is the basis of Biblical peace. Purity may not be compromised in order to make peace.

Why does a message on peacemaking from the Sermon on the Mount focus on the individual issues of prayer and greetings and personal reconciliation?

The answer is because you must become a new creature if you are to have eternal life. You must have a new heart. Without a merciful, pure, peacemaking heart you cannot be called a son of God at the judgment day.

VII. "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

As we come to the final beatitude we are reminded again of how contrary to the world the Christian normal life is as Jesus has described it.

We are favored of God when we know persecution because of righteousness, when we are spoken about in an evil manner and we are to rejoice because we are identified with the prophets of God who have preceded us. Mt 23:35 2 Tim.3:12

It is because of Christ and that we demonstrate His righteousness that we will be persecuted. He taught about persecution more than once.

John15:18

So what we learn from this is that true righteousness—the righteousness that surpasses the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees (5:20) a righteousness that is of a different origin and demonstrates itself in mercy, purity of heart and peacemaking—always involves a relationship with Jesus. True righteousness is not done for its own sake. It is done for Jesus' sake. The mercy and the purity and the peacemaking of a disciple of Jesus comes from Jesus ("without me you can do nothing," John 15:5) and is done for the honor of Jesus. It's this attachment to Jesus that gives our righteousness its distinct character.

So we can see why a life devoted to righteousness or godliness will be persecuted or reviled or spoken against.

If you cherish chastity, your life will be an attack on people's love for free sex.

If you pursue self-control, your life will make others guilty about things like excess eating.

If you live simply and happily, you will show the folly of luxury.

If you walk humbly with your God, you will expose the evil of pride.

If you are punctual and thorough in your dealings, you will lay open the inferiority of laziness and negligence.

If you speak with compassion, you will make the cynical uncomfortable.

If you are earnest, you will make the flippant look flippant instead of clever.

And if you are spiritually minded you will expose the worldly-mindedness of those around you.

Look to the prophets! Look to the martyrs! Whatever you must do to get your heart in heaven and off the world, do it! Otherwise you will not be able to obey the command of our Lord, "Rejoice and be glad in persecution, for great is your reward in heaven."

And hear the words of the martyr Jim Elliot:

"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

Finally - I quote from John Piper – "If someone should ask whether having our heart in heaven will make us useless on earth, the answer is given by Jesus in the very next paragraph of the Sermon on the Mount. People who have their hearts so much in heaven that they fear no man but rejoice in persecution—such radically free.