

Last week we concluded that the primary purpose of the Sermon on the Mount is about Christ coming to inaugurate or to constitute, to establish His kingdom, and then giving instruction for how His people are to live in the kingdom of God.

We presented background Scripture about the Old Covenant saints and their anticipation of the kingdom, we referenced the Scriptures in the New Testament that say Christ came to constitute or establish His kingdom and we learned that the kingdom reality is not yet fully realized or consummated. That will occur with Christ's return.

So, the kingdom has been anticipated, constituted and will be consummated.

And this brings us to the first part of the Sermon on the Mount, which are called the Beatitudes and I want to restate what I said last week about this part of the Sermon on the Mount.

There are three things you ought to notice about this entire passage of the beatitudes, of verses 1-12.

The first is that the Christian mindset is paradoxical to the world's thinking.

Secondly, that the Christian life is a progression--that it starts at one place and moves on toward another, this is progressive sanctification.

And thirdly, that the Christian will live in a constant tension between the present and the future that is yet to come the now - not yet tension.

Now, if in fact what Jesus is doing in these twelve verses is describing what a citizen of the kingdom of God is like, then I will have to ask you and me, this question, Are we, as citizens of the kingdom of God, living as if we are the blessed, the ones who have the favor of God poured out upon them. Are we finding our satisfaction above all other things or persons in Christ alone? Or are we ornery and mean and cantankerous and upset and cranky and touchy and out of sorts with everybody, because our joy and our blessedness depend on outward circumstances? And all God's people said, "Ouch."

If you held on to anything at all from last's week's study I hope it was the fact that God says, "You are blessed because you're mine.

Because of this blessedness, each of the things listed in the beatitudes is something that the world would designate as that which produces misery. And yet the Christian is not to become miserable by these experiences, but on the contrary, is supposed to take particular satisfaction in all these things, as difficult as some of them are.

The world cultivates and rewards aggressiveness, but Jesus says, "Blessed are the gentle, for

they shall inherit the earth." Well wait a minute, if we don't stand up for ourselves, nobody will stand up for us. You might be right. Who says standing up for yourself is the best way? It's a difficult thing to do, but, you see, the world thinks differently than the Christian thinks.

The world encourages the satisfaction of every lust and the denial of none. Jesus says, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. The world does not believe in mercy but in survival of the fittest, but Jesus says, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy." The world applauds a duplicity which says, "What does it matter what I'm like in my private life as long as I can do my job well?" And Jesus says, "Blessed are the pure in heart." The world is continually restless, and Jesus says, "Blessed are the peacemakers." The world rejects any form of persecution, whether it's real or imagined, demanding to be treated after their own self-conceptions. And Jesus says, "Blessed are you when they persecute you." And so some Christians will start something like a Christian Anti-Defamation League. And we'll write letters to the newspaper and to the television station and say, "You portrayed Christians in a bad light," as though we're doing something righteous. Or we really believe that if we have a Christian president it will change the world or if we march and demonstrate and join the Moral Majority or the Christian Right every thing will get better in the good old so-called Christian USA. How foolish we can be. This is how the world reason's but Jesus tells us that we are to reason and to live differently.

So remember, the overall purpose of the entire sermon is kingdom living for the believers

The second thing we see as we examine the beatitudes as a whole is that in them we see that the Christian life is a progression.

We need understand that there's a progression as we work through each of the beatitudes themselves. In other words, salvation begins with a revelation of the poverty of our souls. We begin as poor in spirit, and then we mourn and grieve over sin. And then we humble ourselves before the throne of God, and having done that, it produces within us a hungering and a thirsting after righteousness. And then having come to mercy, we carry that mercy to others who are out there who still need Christ. We pursue after holiness and purity. We desire to see others reconciled to God, and we want to be peacemakers for them in that situation. And we gladly begin to suffer the identification with Christ that may lead to persecution.

There is a progression in the Christian life and the Beatitudes present the norms of the Christian life that are to be owned by all Christians. They're not just representing one person who excels at mercy or one who is hungry and thirsty for God, no, but each of us is to partake of the fullness of these things because they are the normal progression of the Christian life.

And lastly, we understand that it's a progression and that does not end in the here and now. We aren't existentialists who believe in Being and Nothingness. We have an expected end--"Blessed are those who are poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." We don't live just in the here and now, but we live in the here and now knowing that God has set for us a goal and an end and a place for us for eternity. And so we see the progression of the Christian life as moving from this age into the next age, from this kingdom into the next kingdom, from this day into the one that is yet to come, from grace to grace and glory to glory.

So the Christian mindset, the normal way of living and viewing the world is paradoxical to the world's thinking, and the Christian life is a progression in our sanctification ad maturity.

The Christian lives in a tension between the benefit of living in the present kingdom and looking forward to the future final kingdom. "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven", present and future. And between the time of these two kingdoms we are blessed but sometimes all things will not be complete.

"Blessed are those who mourn now, for they shall be comforted," but maybe not now.

"Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth, but not now. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied, now, but not as completely as in the final kingdom."

In each of these there is a tension between what is and what is yet to come. And when we lose that tension, when we lose the reality of that tension, we are at a loss as to how to live with a Christian mindset in a pagan world.

And this brings us to our beginning of examining the Beatitudes in detail beginning with Vs.3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Notice that verse 3 and 10 end with the phrase theirs is, meaning already.

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.

So, how does one become blessed by God for being poor in spirit?

Notice that the poor does not refer to material wealth, therefore wealthy people are not excluded from being blessed by God in the kingdom. Their riches have nothing to do with this favor or blessing of God.

What does it mean to be poor in spirit?

The word for poor is ptochos; an adjective from ptosso (to crouch, cower) it speaks of one who crouches and cowers, as beggars when they are seeking to collect alms from

passers-by. The word used here is applied to the beggar Lazarus in Lu 16:20,22. So the word takes on the meaning of being beggarly. Those who are economically stable are not beggars or beggarly or poor concerning material wealth.

But Jesus uses this tremendous word picture to describe a spiritual condition that must be met to become a member of the kingdom of God.

Now, some may ask, "But are we not already spiritually poor if we are dead in our trespasses and sins? If we have not experienced the richness of His mercy and His grace are we not poor? The answer to that is yes, emphatically yes! As Paul writes:

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). The richness of His mercy when it is coupled with saving grace is only for those whom He saves and are then become the blessed as we have been discussing.

Therefore, if we must be poor in spirit but are already poor in spirit is Jesus saying that we must somehow become poorer in spirit by doing something so we can merit His favor? The answer to that is emphatically, no! We are already as spiritually bankrupt and destitute as we will ever be if we are in a condition of being unredeemed sinners. We are dead in our trespasses and sin.

So what is Jesus saying? It is obvious that He means 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.<sup>17</sup>

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.

So, the favor of God is poured out upon those who are poor in spirit and know it because of the grace of God. By the Word and the Spirit we come to this understanding by an act of God's grace.

It is an all encompassing act of God's grace because as we have said we are dead in our trespasses and sins until God makes us alive. We are children of wrath, followers of the prince of this world, we are alienated from God and we are His enemies. We are without hope and without help in this present world. We are incurable haters of God who do not seek after Him according to His way and we make up gods in our own image until by wonderful, amazing and

violent grace, God gives us a heart to know Him as He really is and tears down the idols of our imagination. This wonderful entrance into the kingdom of heaven is of grace and by grace and it is for His purpose and for His pleasure and thereby we are the beneficiaries of this grace, for the glory of God our Father and our Savior Jesus Christ.

There is no further progression in the process of salvation for anyone if this act of grace that awakens our souls to our spiritual poverty does not occur.

Without this knowledge there will be no repentance or need for faith in a Savior and there will not be the knowledge of being blessed and being a member of the kingdom of heaven and realizing that being blessed is satisfaction enough for life.

Once this act of God's grace is accomplished, Jesus can say "that theirs is the kingdom of heaven" because one who genuinely recognizes this will be brought by God to faith and repentance. Jesus said, "all whom the Father has given me are mine."

Therefore, as much as this is a moving forward in our progress in the kingdom it is something that should remain with us and progress to even a deeper understanding of the greatness of God's grace as we mature in our Christian character.

We should always be aware that without the grace of God we are nothing but spiritually bankrupt and it should keep our spiritual pride in check so that we may be used well of God as obedient children of the kingdom. This poorness of spirit is the first norm of living in Christ's kingdom and how different it is from the world's way of living. What is normal for us is abnormal for them.

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.

Once I realize how utterly destitute I am spiritually, 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.

Coming to repentance and faith is not just some mere intellectual decision. Everyone may not be as emotional as the next person in expressing their sorrow and mourning but somehow and someday there must be sorrow and mourning over spiritual poverty.

But today all we expect people to do is accept Christ as their personal savior, a completely unbiblical teaching, after uttering some prayer and sometimes not even that. Or we ask them to acknowledge some steps or spiritual laws, whether God is really tearing up their hearts or not.

I mean, who wants to deal with some slobbering heart broken repentant fool who

realizes how sinful they are and cries out to God for forgiveness fully believing that Christ died for him so that he can enter the kingdom of heaven. That might be to novel of an idea. That means that person has to feel bad so that he can feel good. But we are not supposed to feel bad in church, we are supposed be happy and get happy and leave happy even though we many times completely fall apart once we walk out the door and confront the real world again.

Jesus says blessed are those who mourn over their sin for they will be comforted.

And what is the first comfort that the blessed have? They realize their sins are forgiven, and that 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.

They are comforted by rejoicing that they have heard the true Gospel and if it has been the true gospel then they know of sin and it's consequences and they know of a great Savior who died, and was buried and rose from the dead for their justification so that they may have eternal life.

What comfort, what joy inexpressible. What comfort, to be eternally blessed by God rather than to be eternally cursed by Him. What comfort, to know His grace rather than to know His wrath. What comfort and what reason to also express tears, not just of sorrow for sin but sweet tears of joy.

But we must also recognize that the mourning that is being discussed has a progression as well. If our premise that these are progressions of our normal Christian living and we have mourned initially at the time of our repentance and believing then over what do we mourn as we progress in our Christian life?

I believe we will always mourn to some degree when we sin and then seek God's forgiveness. The more we mature in Christ the more we realize the awfulness of sin and the greatness of God's grace. But I also believe that as we grow more sensitive to sin we will mourn over the sin of our families, our friends, our communities, our nation and the world. Jesus mourned over the sinful condition of Jerusalem and there was no immediate comfort given, the now and the not yet tension. Listen to Jesus, Mt. 23:  
"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling.<sup>38</sup>\* "Behold, your house is (the now) being left to you desolate!<sup>39</sup> "For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until (the not yet) you say, 'BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!'"

What occurred before Jesus mourned might help us to see how we should mourn as we mature in Christ.

This entire chapter is another confrontation with the Pharisees and the Scribes and

Jesus final statement is the end of His public ministry in the Gospel of Matthew.

Eight times Jesus says “woe to you” while addressing them. Seven of those times He says "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites.

He condemns them in vs 23 “because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.”

In the next 13 verses He chastises them for false prayers, false disciple making, for desiring money, for being without justice, mercy and faithfulness, and for being legalists. He calls them false, liars, serpents and vipers and in the end says they have been and will be the murderers of God’s prophets, obviously meaning beginning with Him.

But His final statement to them are words of mourning. Speaking from a divine perspective, as Israel’s Savior, there is compassion in His words even with the knowledge that judgement is certain for them. So here we see not only the tension of our here and not yet truth but of the tension of the Sovereignty of God and the responsibility of men in salvation.

This should help us understand how we mourn as we mature in Christ. We are surrounded with mankind in darkness not knowing the truth. We are the realists in this world. We know the ugliness of sin and its devastation. We know there is life and death, pardon and judgement, heaven and hell. We do not know God’s purpose concerning who will enter into the kingdom of heaven regarding those for whom we mourn but we should mourn for them and ask that God though He must judge, also to be merciful, even though we may very often not find comfort now when we mourn for them..

Yet, the day will come when we understand more clearly the wisdom of God and His purposes for now we see through a glass darkly, and we have the precious promise of Rev. 21:4 - and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."

I would ask you today if you have ever understood that you are poor in spirit - that you are spiritually destitute. I would ask you if knowing this to be true do you have a guilt about your sin and a sorrow because of you now know that you have lived your life opposed to God and His holiness? I would ask you do you have a desire that you have never had before because God has through the Scriptures, convinced you to admit your guilt because you do not want to be that way any more. Do you believe what you have heard, that Christ was crucified and shed His blood was buried and rose again on the third day for sinners and that all sinners who know they are sinners and know that Christ shed his blood for sinners who truly believe - will be saved, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Then do what Jesus said, “repent and believe in the Gospel for the kingdom of God is at hand.”

If you are a Christian, do you give Christ the honor He deserves by not letting spiritual pride rise up in your life but rather remembering how destitute you were and still would be if God had not been gracious to reveal your souls condition to you? Do you mourn over your present sin while asking God’s forgiveness and do you mourn for those who do not know that they are spiritually destitute and do not know God?

Let’s pray.

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SERMON ON THE MOUNT PART 2 FIRST BAPTIST EVANS 11-27-05

PASTOR JOSEPH KRYGIER