

# Matthew

Sermon on the Mount

February 11, 2024

## I. Introduction

A. Last Sunday we looked at John the Baptist's baptism of repentance, Jesus' baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire, and the three temptations of Jesus. From here on, the book of Matthew focuses on Jesus' ministry, teaching, death, resurrection, and His final words to His disciples.

1. In **Matthew 4:12-16**, we learn that following King Herod's arrest of John the Baptist, Jesus left Nazareth and went to an area called Galilee. Matthew uses Jesus' relocation to remind us that God prophesied such a move in **Isaiah 9:1-2**.
2. Then in **vs 17**, Matthew says, "From that time on, Jesus began to preach and say, '**Repent**, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'" This is important information, for it tells us that Jesus made repentance as much a part of His teaching as did John.
3. **Vs 18-22** speak of Jesus beginning His selection of disciples. Possibly the most notable thing about His selection is who He selected. In these verses, we learn that Jesus selected four fishermen, made up of two sets of brothers – Peter & Andrew, James & John.
  - a. Imagine starting a global business focused on influencing people to join a specific group, to follow a specific and somewhat unique teaching, and to live a way of life that is not just different, but in many ways contrary to the way most people live. Then, imagine selecting working class people to be part of your inner circle tasked with making your business successful.
  - b. Who would do that? Yet that is what Jesus did. Why? Because "God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart" (**1 Samuel 16:7**).
  - c. May we follow Jesus' example of paying closer attention to who a person is on the inside than what he appears to be on the outside.
4. Finally, in **vs 23-25**, we learn that Jesus was "going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness . . . including demoniacs, epileptics, and paralytics."
5. On a side note: **vs 24** mentions **Syria**. This is not the Syria of our day, but rather a province named Syria that included the area of Galilee.

## B. Pray

## II. Beatitudes

A. **Matthew 5:3-12**, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. [4] Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. [5] Blessed are the gentle (*meeek*), for they shall inherit the earth. [6] Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. [7] Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. [8] Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. [9] Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. [10] Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. [11] Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. [12] Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

### B. Preliminary comments and observations

1. The **first** thing to notice about these eight beatitudes is that those who are blessed are blessed because of who and what they are on the inside (*character, beliefs, values, thoughts, desires*) as manifested by who and what they are on the outside (*words, deeds*).
  - a. For example, the first beatitude says, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Because the word “poor” is qualified by the words “in spirit,” it makes sense to view the phrase from an inward, spiritual perspective.
  - b. However, there are some Christians who view the first two beatitudes from an outward, physical perspective – and they support this by pointing to **Luke 6:20-49**.
  - c. For example: **Luke 6:20b–21**, “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. [21] Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.”
  - d. In Luke’s gospel, the words “poor,” “hunger,” and “weep” are not qualified, which for some Christians is a reason to view them from an outward, physical perspective.
  - e. It is true that God cares for those whose poverty is not of their own making – such as the widows, orphans, and emigrants. And according to God’s word, we are to do likewise.
  - f. However, only **Luke 6:20** and **James 2:5** seem to say that God rewards outward, earthly poverty with membership in the kingdom of heaven. (**James 2:5**, *Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the*

*kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?)* Therefore, it is my opinion that all eight beatitudes ought to be viewed from an inward, spiritual perspective – and that is how I will be presenting them to you.

2. **Second**, placing these beatitudes with their inward, spiritual focus at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount lays the foundation for understanding the distinction between the teachings of the Jewish religious leaders (*which emphasized an outward show of godliness even though it was contaminated by hypocrisy*) and the teachings of Christ (*which emphasized an inward transformation that would remove hypocrisy by changing who we are*).
  3. **Third**, the Greek word for “blessed” has also been translated “happy.”
    - a. And though “happy” is a legitimate translation, the beatitude kind of happiness is intrinsically different from the kind that comes from eating desert, or getting a new toy, or getting your way – for those kinds of happiness come from the outside as a result of getting something we want.
    - b. The beatitude kind of happiness is an inward based happiness that grows out of the kind of beliefs and values that are, first and foremost, focused on loving God and those around us.
    - c. And because this happiness grows out of love and giving, it’s by-products include a sense of well-being, true contentment, and an inward peace that the outward-in kind of happiness cannot give.
    - d. The point is, when you have made worthy progress in becoming (*from the inside out*) what these beatitudes describe, you will begin to know a deeply contented and joy-filled happiness that makes whatever happiness you can gain from anything this world has to offer seem worthless by comparison.
  4. **Fourth**, though the beatitudes require us to pursue and nurture godly character qualities, that in turn produce godly living, the rewards come **directly** from God. And these rewards are not only for our future in eternity, they are for us, today.
  5. **Finally**, if the beatitudes present some sort of progression, and it is possible they do, then humility (*being poor in spirit*) begins our journey toward a mature, inside-out righteousness that genuinely exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees.
- C. [3] Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
1. In this context, to be poor in spirit is to have a humble mindset that transforms your view of God, your view of yourself, your view of

- yourself in relation to God, and your view of yourself in relation to others – that is, at least, closer to what it ought to be.
2. It is a way of thinking about and seeing yourself more like the way God and others see you.
    - a. The reality is, we are prone to think of ourselves as better than we are, as more important and more self-sufficient than we are, as better at taking care of ourselves than God is, and as deserving better than we are getting. Yet in spite of this being the most common mindset in our world, it is the opposite of being poor in spirit and having a humble mindset.
    - b. To be poor in spirit is to recognize your true spiritual and moral condition to the extent that you are able to sincerely agree that you deserve eternal damnation.
      - (1) And when I say sincerely agree, I don't mean you are agreeing because God said it is the penalty for sin.
      - (2) What I mean is that you honestly and sincerely agree that you deserve eternal damnation because
        - (a) you see and feel the weight of your sinfulness,
        - (b) and you see and feel the damage your sin has done and can still do to the people around you – including the people you love,
        - (c) and you see how attracted you are to certain sins and selfish ways,
        - (d) and you know how easy it is for you to sin and how hard it is to consistently do what is right.
      - (3) Therefore, those who are poor in spirit, who have a humble mindset, who see themselves more nearly as they are, agree that they deserve eternal separation from God.
    - c. Those with a humble mindset recognize that they are incapable of solving their sin problem – that is, their problem with the power and practice of sin, and their problem with the penalty for sin.
      - (1) For example, if you are humbly honest about your personal struggles with sin, then you know the power of sin to enslave you. And you know that you practice certain sins as if addicted to them. Therefore, it is this humble realization that shows you your need for a savior – who will set you free and empower you to remain free.
      - (2) But you also need help to pay sin's penalty, because the only two options are to pay it yourself, by spending eternity in hell, or turn to Jesus Christ, repent, and live accordingly.

- (3) In other words, the poor in spirit accept the reality that they cannot drive sin's presence out of their heart and mind without outside help, and they cannot avoid eternal damnation without outside intervention. And they accept that the kind of help and intervention needed only comes from God.
3. To summarize, to be poor in spirit, to have a truly humble mindset in relation to God and godliness is (1) to see yourself as desperately needy, (2) to admit you lack both the ability and the means to meet your need, and (3) that your only hope is in trusting in God and submitting to His will and word. Therefore, Jesus says, the poor in spirit possess the kingdom of heaven.
- D. [4] Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
1. Continuing with our inward, spiritual perspective, and building on what it means to be poor in spirit, this second beatitude speaks of those who feel a deep sense of sorrow over their sin.
  2. In other words, those who mourn, mourn because they realize that in sinning, they have (1) disappointed God and pushed Him away (*mistreating the One who has treated them so well*), **and** (2) they have acted selfishly, and in so doing have – for selfish reasons alone – mistreated those they've sinned against.
  3. However, you will not **sincerely care** and therefore **honestly consider** the effects of your selfish and sinful behavior on God and others if your happiness and sense of well-being are more important to you than their happiness and well-being.
  4. Which brings us back to being poor in spirit. The reality is, it is **humility** coupled with **love** that compels us to sincerely care and honestly consider the effects of our behavior on God and others.
    - a. The reality is, pride and selfishness get in the way of any genuine concern you might have for God's happiness and the good of others.
    - b. And pride is able to do this because it encourages and justifies the kind of thinking, attitudes, and motives that make you, your happiness, and your sense of well-being more important than pleasing God and doing what is loving and good for others.
    - c. In other words, pride makes your interests more important than the interests of others, and your happiness more important than the happiness of those effected by your selfish and sinful choices and behavior.
    - d. Therefore, you need the kind of humility that makes you "poor in spirit" in order to mourn over your sin, to have a broken and

contrite heart in response to having sinned, and to sincerely feel grief and sorrow because of what your sin has done to God and to others – which often includes those you claim to love.

5. Now you may be thinking that being poor in spirit and mourning over your sin would put you into a discouraged and emotionally miserable condition. After all, we've been taught that feeling good about yourself is important to a healthy mindset. And besides, aren't these beatitudes about being happy and blessed?
  - a. Yes they are – but in this case it is a happiness that comes from being comforted by God as a result of feeling bad about what you have done. Therefore, do not ignore or short-change the mourning, because it is the mourning over your sin that brings you into the joy, inward peace, and happiness of being comforted by God.
  - b. It is true that mourning over your sin can be an emotional downer. But the ensuing **comfort** that comes from God, and the **joy** that comes from a restored relationship with God, and the sense of **well-being** that comes from knowing that God is pleased because you are loving those around you as you ought, brings a sense of joy and peace that washes away the sorrow and sadness.
  - c. God's word puts it this way in **James 4:8b-10**, "Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. [9] Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. [10] Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you."
6. Therefore, though your sadness and sorrow and grief over your sin and selfish ways are very real, they are the God-made path that leads to a comfort, inward peace, and a valid sense of well-being that replaces your mourning with genuine joy. This is true happiness, or as these beatitudes say, blessedness.

### III. Conclusion

- A. If you will work towards being sincerely and whole-heartedly poor in spirit, you will discover, one day, that you are broken-hearted over how you have, or still may mistreat God and those around you.
- B. Truly, there is no substitute for humility – towards God, towards others, and in response to your selfishness and sin – because humility not only puts you in good stead with God, it puts you on the path to genuine, lasting, deeply satisfying happiness. And this is what it means to be blessed.