

Matthew

Sermon on the Mount

February 25, 2024

I. Introduction

- 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. **REVIEW**: Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. The meek are those who are willing to accept what they should not have to accept and endure what they should not have to endure without responding in any way that is unloving or unjust. In other words, the meek are intent on only adding what is good and godly to any and every situation and relationship – in spite of how they are being treated. And though their losses can be extensive, their rewards far exceed their losses.
- C. Today we are going to look at the next two beatitudes. And remember that we are looking at these beatitudes from an inward, spiritual perspective.
- D. Pray

II. [6] Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

- A. To **hunger and thirst** for something is to want something so much that you relentlessly drive yourself toward that which will satisfy your want.
1. This kind of hunger and thirst is spoken of in the Psalms. For example:
 2. **Psalms 42:1-2**, “As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God. [2] My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?”
 3. **Psalms 63:1**, “O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly; my soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, (*as if I am*) in a dry and weary land where there is no water.”

4. **Psalm 119:20** “My soul is crushed with longing after Your ordinances at all times.”
 5. **Psalm 143:6** “I stretch out my hands to You; my soul longs for You, as a parched land (*longs for water*).
- B. To **hunger and thirst for righteousness** is to relentlessly and purposefully drive yourself toward a godliness or holiness that transforms your heart, mind, attitudes, beliefs, values, words, and deeds.
1. It is the rare Christian who starts this purposeful of a pursuit with this kind of inwardly driven zeal and determination.
 2. Most of us begin this pursuit with a well-reasoned decision. Then to carry out our decision, we have to add a daily regimen, put forth a serious amount of self-discipline, memorize and meditate on scriptures that support our pursuit, pray often about the various aspects and needs related to our pursuit, and if possible, find someone to disciple us and hold us accountable.
 - a. At first, all of this effort will seem like very hard work that leaves you tired from the effort. And occasionally you’ll wonder if you are making progress, or if it is worth the effort.
 - b. But if you persevere – which will include getting back up and pressing on after a moment or hour or day of returning to old, sinful ways – you will begin to see a growth in godliness that can be measured and verified by changes in the way you think, what you value, how you speak, the way you behave, your confidence in the goodness of God, an awareness of the presence and activity of God, and a deepening relationship with God.
 3. If – by God’s gracious help and empowerment – you remain relentless in your pursuit, you will find that what began as a determined, disciplined pursuit, will become a heartfelt longing and driving passion that compels you forward, and which – in time – will bring you into an intimacy with God that will satisfy you at a depth and in ways that is unimaginable to those who have not experienced it.
- C. It is my finding that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness long to be perfectly godly, and completely Christ-like. Such a desire is highly commendable and perfectly legitimate, but it is not focus of this beatitude.
1. The focus of this beatitude is the intensity of our longing for godliness. This is because the more passionate and urgent our longing for godliness, the more urgently and fervently we will pursue it.
 2. Therefore, this beatitude is not about becoming perfectly holy in all your behavior. This beatitude is about making an intelligent, a heart-felt, and a persistent effort in your pursuit of godliness.

3. Though progress is dependent on God's involvement and your efforts, it is also dependent on your abilities and opportunities. Therefore, this beatitude can be taken seriously by all of us – young or old, educated or uneducated, Bible scholar or illiterate, one who is highly capable or one who is barely capable.
 4. The reality is, some will be more capable than others. Some will have more opportunity than others. Some will understand more than others. Some will live longer than others. Therefore, some will go farther than others. But all who hunger and thirst will have gone as far as they did because they pursued their longing to be godly.
- D. A few final thoughts on this beatitude.
1. Beware of pride – for as you grow in godliness you will be tempted to look down on those who are not growing or who are not very godly. This temptation will be especially strong when dealing with those who are not growing or not very godly by their own doing.
 2. Beware of settling in, as if you have grown to the point of having gone far enough, or as if vigilance is no longer needed to guard against the attacks of the devil or to the rising up of old fleshly desires. As long as you are in this world, your work is not done. The devil will tempt you, and without remaining vigilant against his attacks, you may fall back into old ways.
 3. If you recall, we've spent time in the past talking about what I call the "Change Process." If you want to get some ideas of a regimen to follow, try it. If you need to review it, you can find it on our Web Site.
 4. Remember, a sincere, whole-hearted, and determined pursuit of godliness will transform your outward behavior, your thinking, your desires, and your values, **and in time**, will produce in you (1) godly love for your fellow man, (2) freedom from fear and anxiety, (3) an inward peace and contentment that is independent of your circumstances, and (4) intimate fellowship with God. It is these kinds of outcomes that satisfy beyond measure.

III. [7] Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

- A. Given the influence of grace theology coupled with eternal security within the church today, it is easy to look past the message that God will treat us according to our treatment of others.
1. However, according to God's word, this truth not only applies to mercy, it applies to forgiveness, judging, condemning, pardoning, and giving.
 2. **Mercy:** Matthew 5:7, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy."

3. **Forgiveness:** Matthew 6:14-15, “For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father **will also forgive** you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father **will not forgive** your transgressions.”
 4. **Judging:** Matthew 7:1-2, “Do not judge so that you will not be judged. [2] For **in the way you judge**, you will be judged; and **by your standard of measure** (*how much of the story you seek to know and verify, and how much compassion you have when passing judgement*) it will be measured to you.”
 5. **Judging, Condemning, Pardoning:** Luke 6:37, “Do not **judge**, and you will not be judged; and do not **condemn** (*to declare guilty and determine the punishment*), and you will not be condemned; **pardon** (*release from the punishment due*) and you will be pardoned.”
 6. **Giving:** Luke 6:38 . . . Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure (*how much you give in relation to the need or request*) it will be measured to you in return.
 7. As you can see, our choices and behavior in these areas directly affect God’s dealings with us. Therefore, if we want to receive mercy from God (*and who of us doesn’t need mercy on a recurring basis*), we need to be merciful toward those who need and ask for mercy from us.
 - a. Do not be deceived, God’s mercy is not guaranteed, it is granted. It is not something we are owed (*even as a Christian*), it is a gift, and an undeserved gift at that – just as all mercy is undeserved.
 - b. Therefore, we ought never to take God’s mercy for granted, or as if asking for mercy will automatically bring mercy, or as if once we’ve received mercy, it is ours forever.
- B. We learn the importance of continuing to be merciful and forgiving in Jesus’ parable about a debtor who received mercy, but who after receiving mercy regarding his debt, refused to show mercy to someone who owed him money (**Matthew 18:23-35**).
1. Clearly, the primary propose of this parable is to show that God will treat us according to the way we treat others. However, there are two additional truths in this story that should grab our attention.
 - a. **First**, the king to whom the large debt was owed **felt compassion**, and as a result, forgave the debtor when he begged for mercy.
 - b. **Second**, upon hearing of the debtor’s lack of mercy toward someone who owed him money, the king summoned the debtor and said, “You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not also have had mercy on your

fellow slave, **in the same way** that I had mercy on you?” And the king, moved with anger, (*took back His mercy and*) handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him.”

2. We cannot be certain this story applies to our salvation, but we can be certain it applies to retaining God’s merciful forgiveness in daily life based on how we deal with those who wrong us after we have received God’s merciful forgiveness.
 3. Therefore, the lesson for us today is, after receiving God’s great mercy in the form of salvation from the power, practice, and penalty of sin, be careful to show mercy to those who mistreat or wrong you in some way – for that is what God expects from you.
 4. If we refuse or fail to show mercy, what mercy we have received may be withdrawn, and what mercy we may need in the future may be withheld.
 5. **James 2:13**, For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.
- C. When I first mentioned this parable, I said there are two additional truths that should grab our attention. We’ve looked at the second, now I want to return to the first – for this is just as important as the second.
1. Notice: the king **felt compassion**, and as a result, mercifully forgave the debtor.
 2. What I want you to see is that compassion and mercy go hand-in-hand, and compassion can be a strong motivator for showing mercy.
 - a. What is compassion? Compassion is identifying with and therefore understanding a person’s situation or feelings based on having had the same or similar situations or feelings yourself.
 - b. In other words, compassion feels what another person is feeling or experiencing, and as such is able to see the person’s situation through their eyes.
 - c. It is in this way that compassion compels pity, which in turn drives a desire to relieve the feelings or remove the situation.
 3. Therefore, where you lack compassion, you will neither identify with the suffering of the other person, nor be motivated to show mercy.
 - a. The lack of compassion most likely means you are either unaware of or ungrateful for the mercy you have been shown. To be unaware is an indication of pride and short-sightedness. To be ungrateful is an indication of pride and foolishness. Either way, you won’t be showing much mercy, if at all, and that to your own harm.
 - b. But the lack of compassion also means you are not hungering and thirsting for that part of righteousness that develops and nurtures

compassion – which means you have further to go in your pursuit of godliness.

D. Finally, to be a compassionate person is to be like Jesus.

1. I believe that what we do and say, we do and say for a reason. This may not be true all the time, but it is true so much of the time that it is as if it were true all the time.
2. Therefore, if we will look for the reasons behind our words and deeds, we will gain an understanding of our inner workings and why it is so easy for us to be foolish, selfish, sinful, and in need of mercy.
3. And then, if we take the time to understand the reason a person acted or said what they did, we would find it much easier – most of the time – to have compassion and show them mercy.
4. This is what God did. He came to earth in human form in order to experience life as we experience it in order to nurture compassion and motivate His mercy. We read about this in:
 - a. **Hebrews 2:17**, “Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a **merciful** and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.”
 - b. **Hebrews 4:15-16**, “For we do not have a high priest who cannot **sympathize** with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. [16] Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive **mercy** and find grace to help in time of need.”
5. We are guilty sinners deserving eternal damnation. We are repetitive sinners deserving condemnation and severe punishment. Because this is who we are, we need God’s mercy. May we show mercy in the same gracious way and to the same degree we have received it from God.

IV. Conclusion

- A. Let me remind you of the importance of hungering and thirsting for righteousness. Anything less in regard to pursuing a godly life will result in barely measurable, almost insignificant spiritual growth that will take so long, it may be indiscernible to those who are most effected by your choices and behavior. That would be sad!
- B. Finally, avoid condemning when you can, and make mercy, forgiveness, cautious judging, and gracious pardoning an active and constant part of your life, for in so doing, you will put yourself in the position to receive these same things from God. That is wise!