

Week of September 23, 2012
Back to Basics



Passage Outline:

1. Your Inner Attitude (Matt. 5:1-6)
2. Your Outward Relationships (Matt. 5:7-12)
3. Your Worldwide Influence (Matt. 5:13-16)

What's This About?

We will learn the foundational qualities that should characterize Christian disciples' lives.

How Can This Impact Your Life?

This can help you understand the kind of person Jesus calls you to be as His follower and by the power of the Holy Spirit to commit to being that kind of person.

1. Your Inner Attitude - Matthew 5:1-6

Matthew 5:1-6

¹ Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, ² and he began to teach them, saying: ³ "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. ⁵ Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. ⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Introduction

- A. Jesus makes use of the natural sound amplification by teaching from a mountainside (5:1). Also, teachers of that day customarily spoke from a seated position.

If you have not already done so, please read the article "*Geographical Setting for the Sermon on the Mount*" contained in your preparation packet you picked up last Sunday. If you did not get one, additional copies are on the back table.

- B. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus declared people who exhibit particular characteristics to be divinely blessed. He was not saying that people should strive to attain those characteristics so they could earn God's blessings. Rather, those characteristics identify people who by God's grace are already citizens of the kingdom of heaven. As we follow Jesus, we are not to be passive but active in cultivating these characteristics.

If you have not already done so, please read the article "*Jesus' Use of Blessed*" contained in your preparation packet you picked up last Sunday. If you did not get one, additional copies are on the back table.

- C. As we begin our study, please note that these eight qualities do not describe eight separate and distinct groups of people, but rather all eight characteristics or qualities define one group of people—people who follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Beatitudes

- A. **Blessed are the poor in spirit:** This is the opposite of being arrogantly and proudly self-sufficient, a trait often prized and admired by our world.

- i. Being poor in spirit means we are unable to earn God's blessing. People who think they can please God on their own are not only blind to their sins but totally ignorant to God's high standards.
 - ii. When we became open to God's truth and acknowledged how vast our spiritual need, we have an attitude adjustment. We realize how spiritually poor we are before God.
 - iii. Only when we admit this are we ready to repent and to receive God's gracious gift of salvation in Christ Jesus.
 - iv. Recognizing our spiritual poverty is the beginning to having the riches of salvation, the very Kingdom of Heaven.
- B. Those who mourn are blessed, for they will be comforted:** Jesus did not specify what sort of mourning He had in mind, but given the context, He probably means mourning over our sins, the ones we commit and those we omit to do.
- i. When we honestly repent of our lapses into sin, we are comforted anew with the assurance of forgiveness in Christ.
 - ii. Mourning over sin can also include sins' destructive effects in our world.
 - iii. Many of us have mourned losses of loved ones, or jobs, or savings, or opportunities, and so on. Losses bring sadness; let's not pretend otherwise.
 - iv. Understand that mourning is no more related to a lack of faith than is bleeding when cut. When cut, we bleed; when hit with a loss, we grieve.
 - v. The special blessing for mourning believers is that He comforts us with His presence as we work through the painful process of grief. Jesus never leaves us to bear our sorrows alone.
- C. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth:** The word *meek* conveys the notion of being humble, sensitive, considerate, and courteous. The idea here is to place the focus on others rather than self.
- i. Maintaining a gentle spirit is a spiritual challenge, especially when people, both in or outside the church tell us that our agendas in life are not important.
 - ii. Being meek does not mean being a pushover or caving in to pressure. Instead, we are to trust the Lord to provide the wisdom and strength we need to rightly represent Him in this world.
 - iii. Gentle believers will inherit the earth. In the eyes of the world, the meek are considered losers, not winners. Who receives recognition, promotions, and awards? Is it not usually the arrogant, aggressive individuals who push aside or run roughshod over the meek?
 - iv. Jesus said His followers will reign with Him (2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 5:10). But we need to understand that ruling with Him implies our attitudes will be the same as His. Jesus was meek, like a lamb led to slaughter, and did not use His almighty power against His enemies.
- D. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.** This is not the salvation righteousness we have in Christ. Rather, it is that inner desire to be and live right before God's eyes.
- i. We who follow Christ know we don't measure up to His standards, but we want to do so.
 - ii. As we walk faithfully with Him over time, He instills in us more and more the purpose and the power to please Him (Phil. 2:13).
 - iii. So, even as we grow in right living, we have the sure hope that we will be filled with righteousness and completely so at Christ's second coming (1 John 3:2). Until then, may He find us faithful!

How Do You Fair?

Rank the following inner attitudes from 1 (being the most obvious) to 4 (being least obvious) as you see them displayed in your life.

___ Poor in Spirit;

___ Mourn;

___ Meek and Gentle:

___ Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness;

If one or more are on the less obvious side of the ranking, what can you pray for the Holy Spirit to give you so that attitudes can become more obvious? How often will you pray this prayer?

2. Your Outward Relationships - Matthew 5:7-12

Matthew 5:7-12

⁷ Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. ⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. ⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. ¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹ "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Introduction

The first four Beatitudes focus were on inward attitudes, while the last four concern our outward relationships.

The Beatitudes

- E. **Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.** Being merciful not only involves forgiving, but it also includes a loving response to the helpless. As God's children we have received mercy, and this equips us to extend mercy to others.
- Have you ever encountered someone in a distressing situation, had a desire to help, but then doused it with a series of "reasons" not to become involved? We've all done that.
 - When we are merciful, we are both blessed and become a blessing to someone else. It may be help with money, kind and helpful words, practical deeds, shared tears, forgiveness for a failures, transportation in a pinch, meals during family illnesses, encouraging letters, caring phone calls, e-mails, and more.
 - None of us can show mercy to everyone who needs it, but we can determine to help when and how we can.
- F. **Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.** The *heart* is the core of our being—our thoughts, our feelings, our intentions, our values, our longings—the whole ball of wax. The word *pure* includes sexual purity but much more, including all areas of our life, thoughts, words and deeds.
- It describes those whose hearts are cleansed by Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit.
 - Such hearts lead us away from acting with any kind of deceit, meanness, or selfish motives.

If you have not already done so, please read the article "*The Pure in Heart*" contained in your

preparation packet you picked up last Sunday. If you did not get one, additional copies are on the back table.

- iii. This purity of heart will enable us to see God in the faces of those we help. When our hearts are clean, we see Him more and more clearly (meaning we better understand Him, His ways, His purposes).

G. **Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.** *Sons of God* is a way of saying “like father, like son.”

- i. God is the supreme Peacemaker, making peace between sinners and Himself through Christ.
- ii. He also leads redeemed sinners to help others be reconciled to God as well as to one another.
- iii. Churches’ outreach efforts are good avenues for all believers to act as peacemakers.

H. **Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

- i. The final Beatitude seems paradoxical, akin to mixing oil and water, and we know those don’t mix well.
- ii. Notice this is persecution for righteousness, in other words, suffering because of Jesus.
- iii. This can include insults, false accusations, slander and gossip. In some cases, persecution may even bring death.
- iv. So, in what sense are the persecuted Christians blessed? Because they are citizens of His kingdom and their heavenly reward is sure.
- v. Jesus placed persecuted believers in the same category as God’s persecuted prophets. In the world’s eyes, they were zeros; in God’s eyes, they are heroes.

How Do You Fair?

Rank the following inner attitudes from 1 (being the most obvious) to 4 (being least obvious) as you see them displayed in your life.

___ Merciful;

___ Pure in Heart;

___ Peacemakers;

___ Persecuted for Righteousness;

If one or more are on the less obvious side of the ranking, what can you pray for the Holy Spirit to give you so that attitudes can become more obvious? How often will you pray this prayer?

3. Your Worldwide Influence - Matthew 5:13-16

Matthew 5:13-16

¹³ "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. ¹⁴ "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

- A. We are to have an influence on the world like salt on food, to preserve and to flavor.

- i. For salt to preserve meat it has to be rubbed into it. For salt to flavor food, it has to be added to it. We cannot impact world by avoiding it.
 - ii. We need to be the most upright, friendly, available, thoughtful, considerate, and helpful people on the block, on the job, or on the team.
 - iii. Our saltiness can help check bad behavior and also can make others thirsty for Christ.
- B. We are the light of the world in the sense that we reflect the life of Jesus, given us by Holy Spirit.
- i. Cities are built on high places to be seen, not to be hidden.
 - ii. Lamps are placed on elevated stands so they will dispel the most darkness.
 - iii. Likewise, we believers are to be open and obvious Christians in all ordinary activities, shining the light of God’s truth in a spiritually darkened world.

If you have not already done so, please read the articles “Salt in Ancient Israel” and “Lamps in Ancient Israel” contained in your preparation packet you picked up last Sunday. If you did not get one, additional copies are on the back table.

- iv. The word for *good* in good works means both good and attractive. These deeds are admirable, and reflect the quality of our character.
- v. They are not intended to draw the spotlight to us but to God. Jesus doesn’t want us to be spiritual show-offs. He wants us to live and serve in ways through which God can show Himself.

How Do You Fair?

As you consider being “salt of the earth” and “light of the world,” what percentage of your typical day do you spend around people who need that salt or light? ____ %

Is this adequate for you to exercise an influence on their lives? In other words, if the salt stays only in the salt shaker, what influence will it have on the food?

How can you be more intentional about being salt and light in your world?

Biblical Truths

- 1) When we become followers of Christ, He begins to grow His own character within us.
- 2) Our following Jesus expresses inward aspirations and attitudes of humility, repentance, gentleness, and righteousness.
- 3) Our following Jesus leads us to relate to others with mercy and purity of heart.
- 4) Our following Jesus includes serving as peacemakers and remaining faithful under persecution.
- 5) Our following Jesus draws us into influential relationships with people who need Jesus Christ.

- In light of this study, what kind of person is Jesus calling you to be as His follower?

- Will you commit to being that kind of person? Why or why not?

Word Study: *Disciple*

The Greek word for *disciple* means “learner.” The term describes one who studies under a teacher and not only believes the teachings but also lives by them. Philosophers and religious leaders had disciples (see Matt. 9:14; 22:15-16).

At times in the Gospels, the word *disciple* describes the Twelve, those Jesus chose to be with Him for special training, development, and service (Matt. 10:1; 11:1). At other times, the term is used in a broader sense to include people who listened to Jesus but only seemed to accept His teachings as true (see John 6:66). Luke 6:12-16 reports Jesus’ naming the Twelve and then is followed by a shorter version of the Sermon on the Mount in 6:20-49. Matthew reported Jesus’ initial calling of the first four of the Twelve (Matt. 4:18-22), and his own call (9:9), though the other seven obviously were with Him before being named in 10:1-4.

Most likely, therefore, in Matthew 5–7, Jesus addressed primarily His committed disciples and secondarily those who were interested in His teachings but perhaps not fully committed to Him.