

Authentic Christians

Lesson 3 – Matthew 5:6-12

1. Initial Observations:

- Kingdom of Heaven

- The idea behind “kingdom of heaven” is *dominion* or *reign*; this dispensation of grace is allowed to “taste” the dominion of God or the reign of God in the heart of believers.
- The future kingdom will be a literal kingdom, physically present on the earth, in which righteousness will rule – it’s this future dominion or reign of God that will ultimately fulfill the promises of the Beatitudes. (See Isa. 49:8-13, Rev. 7:9-17, Rev. 21:1-8)

- Beatitudes (5:3-12)

- These beatitudes are in two groups of four verses (vv. 3-6 & vv. 7-10), and both groups end with a discussion of righteousness (vs. 6 – “hunger and thirst for righteousness” & vs. 10 – “persecuted for righteousness sake”) – the first group is characterized by **deprivation** (poor, mourn, meek, hunger & thirst) and internal filling & the second by **overflow** and external behavior (merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers, righteous activity – righteousness that exceeds the righteousness of the Pharisees)
- There seems to be an interdependence of the 8 beatitudes – they are linked, dependent on each other, essential characteristics of a citizen of the kingdom (absence of one would fundamentally alter the nature of the person, thus preventing their inclusion in the kingdom).

2. The Fourth - Seventh Beatitude (5:6-9)

- **“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.” (5:6)**

- “Hunger” and “thirst” have been used in Scripture to indicate a yearning; they have reference to the desires of the human heart for satisfaction.

Have a student read Psalm 42:2, Psalm 63:1 & John 4:13-14

- These citizens of the kingdom yearn for “righteousness” (used 5 times in the SOTM – 5:6, 10, 20 & 6:1, 33) or they yearn for behavior that “conforms to the will of God.” (Vine)
- They yearn for a righteousness that is not their own (“poor in spirit”), that is approved of God (“mourn”), and that in the end justifies their trust and dependence on God (“meek”).

“This Beatitude follows logically from the previous one. See, it is a statement to which all the others lead. It is the logical conclusion to which they come ... I do not know of a better test that anyone can apply to himself or herself in this whole matter of the Christian profession, than a verse like this. If this verse is to you one of the most blessed statements of the whole

of Scripture, you can be quite sure you're a Christian. If it is not, you had better examine your foundations again." (Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Studies in the Sermon on the Mount)

- Notice that the persecution taking place in vs. 10 is for the sake of Christ (cp. Vs. 11) and is due to the righteousness the person exhibits – what righteousness?
- The immediate context points to the righteousness of mercy, purity of heart, and peacemaking!

How does one maintain a "yearning" (very strong desire, a passionate pursuit, an ambition) for righteousness? You either have it, or you don't – right?

Should our "yearning" for righteousness motivate us in ways other than spiritual (e.g. political, civil, financial, etc.)?

John MacArthur says, "Happiness belongs to the holy ... If you're unhappy, somewhere along the line you're unholy." (The Beatitudes, Commentary on Mt. 5:6) – Agree?

- ***"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." (5:7)***

- Jesus now begins to unpack the righteousness that will govern His kingdom!
- This beatitude begins the transition from the recognition of being deprived of "God-approved" righteousness to the righteousness that exceeds that of the Pharisees (external only – Mt. 5:20).

"The first four Beatitudes are entirely inner principles, dealing with how you see yourself before God. This fifth Beatitude, while also being an inner attitude, begins to reach out and touch others. This is the fruit of the other four. When we are broken as beggars in our spirit, when we are mournful and meek and hungering and thirsting after righteousness, being merciful to others will be the result. The first four Beatitudes line up with the last four. The first four are inner attitudes and the last four are the things the attitudes manifest." (MacArthur, The Beatitudes, Commentary on Mt. 5:7)

- Mercy flows from being "poor in spirit" – if we are innately/naturally devoid of "God-approved" righteousness, we will be compassionate and merciful to others "cut from the same cloth"!
- Being merciful is the opposite of being egotistical, self-righteous, and condemning – it is an action of compassion and sympathy toward the miserable and needy.

Give some personal illustrations of what it means to show mercy and also to lack mercy. (what does it look like)

Is it possible to be merciless as a church family - corporately? If so, in what way?

Where do you draw the line between being merciful and being wise and just (with your money, with your approval, with your judgment)? (See Ps. 85:10)

- Mercy extends help to those who don't deserve it, and mercy doesn't expect a reward.

Have a student read Gen. 32:9-10, 2 Sam. 24:13-14, & Lam. 3:22-23.

- Those who are merciful, will experience even more mercy – those who recognize that they have received mercy from God, will be merciful (See Mt. 18:21-35).
- The happy and contented in God's kingdom (those who are satisfied with God's rule in their heart and life) are those who relish the abundant mercy God has extended and continues to extend to them as the result of the Spirit-induced mercy they show to others.
- ***“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” (5:8)***
 - This beatitude is Psalm 24:1-6 condensed – who can face/see God except those who have a pure heart! (Cp. Psalm 15:1-5)
 - The “heart” is the seat of a person's will, personality and attitude; it is the source of our intellect, emotions, behavior. (See Prov. 4:23 & 23:7)
 - Since our heart has been corrupted by sin (Jer. 17:9-10) and that corrupt heart produces all manner of unrighteousness (Mt. 15:18-19), it needs to be cleansed (literally “washed”).
 - This beatitude reveals the hunger of all people, to “see” God or to stand before Him without condemnation!

What is necessary to cleanse the heart? Can it ever be fully cleansed?

In what way does “purity of heart” contrast the righteousness the Pharisees offered?

- 1 John 3:3 – the Christian purifies himself now because pure is what he will ultimately be; his present efforts are consistent with his future hope. (Carson, The Sermon on the Mount, pg. 26)
- The true child of God who is destined to see God will maintain a pure heart.

What does this phrase “pure in heart” have to do with pure motives? Is it enough to have pure motives (a heart that treasures the righteousness of God), or should a purity of motives also evidence itself in a purity of deeds?

MacArthur lists five (5) types of purity (The Beatitudes, Commentary on Mt. 5:8):

1. Primitive Purity – The purity that exists only in God.
2. Created Purity – The creation of pure beings (human, angel) before the Fall.
3. Ultimate Purity – The purity that comes with glorification.
4. Positional Purity – Justification (imputed the righteousness of Christ).

5. Practical Purity – The purity of living righteously.

• **“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.” (5:9)**

- This beatitude does not reference people who live peaceful lives or those who don’t cause trouble, but those who actively seek to restore to our world the virtue that has been missing since the Fall – PEACE!
- This beatitude certainly has soteriological implications (salvation brings peace with God), but it shouldn’t be limited to that (2 Cor. 5:18-20):

“The Christian’s role as peacemaker extends not only to spreading the Gospel, but to lessening tensions, seeking solutions, ensuring that communication is understood.” (Carson, The Sermon on the Mount, pg. 27)

In light of this characteristic of a genuine believer, what should be the peacemaking role of a Christian at their place of employment? In their community? At home?

“Peace is the absence of conflict” – agree or disagree? Why? When is this definition not sufficient or biblical? (responding to conflict by fleeing)

- “Children of God” (KJV) is an unfortunate translation – the original is “sons of God” referring to the nature of the progeny (they are a “son of” ____, bearing the nature of their father).
- No violent person (non-peacemaker) will inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19-21).
- Peacemakers are content, happy and satisfied because they bear the nature of their Father!

3. The Eighth Beatitude (5:10-12)

- Although the word “blessed” occurs in 5:11, most commentators believe that vv. 11-12 are a further explanation of the last kingdom beatitude (cp. Lk. 6:22).
- **“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (5:10-12)**
 - Confirmation of one’s fitness as a citizen of God’s kingdom is found in persecution for the righteousness displayed in vv. 7-9.
 - Notice that persecution does not necessarily mean the deprivation of life of bodily comfort – Christ defines persecution as ridicule for the cause of Christ, or for living righteously.

Give some personal illustrations of 21st Century persecution at work, in the family, in the community, at church.

How do you balance “keeping the peace” and living righteously under the threat of persecution, and the possibility of being accused of “stirring up trouble” when a confronta-

tion is needed or an injustice needs to be addressed?

In order to avoid persecution, which of the beatitudes would you jettison?

- This beatitude (and the one before it) forms a transition to the next section – the citizen of God’s Kingdom is called to be salt and light in the world.
- If a person has genuinely experienced the first seven beatitudes, the eighth is guaranteed (John 15:18-20 & 2 Tim. 3:12); if any of the first seven are missing, the eighth may or may not happen.
- The expansion vv. 11-12 gives us three additional insights:
 - Persecution can include insults and spoken malice – not just physical opposition.
 - Persecution “because of righteousness” is the same persecution “because of me (Christ)”, meaning that the righteousness of the preceding beatitudes is a genuine imitation of Christ.
 - We are commanded to rejoice in persecution because our “reward is great”, i.e. entrance and enjoyment of the kingdom of heaven.

Should we be happy (content, satisfied with our spiritual life) if we avoid persecution? Is something wrong if we never face persecution?

What are the implications of this beatitude on preaching, teaching, conversation?

4. The “Manifesto” is over – the rest of the SOTM fleshes these eight truths out!