

Solid Rock Christian Church Manassas, Virginia

Bible Study - January 19, 2023

Prepared & Presented by: Pastor James G. Austin, Jr., PhD., D.Min.

Title: "The Sermon on The Mount" - Part II

"The Beatitudes" - Part I - Matthew 5:1-12

I. Introduction [Part I] - The Setting (Vv 1-2)

"And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set his disciples came unto him. And he opened his mouth, and taught them saying,"

A. Jesus was always concerned for the multitudes, for whom He had great compassion - whether they were "distressed and downcast," (Matt. 9:36), sick (14:14; cf. 4:23), hungry (15:32), or in any other need.

B. Whether the people were physically ill or healthy, emotionally stable or demon-possessed, financially poor, or rich, politically oppressed, or powerful, religiously insignificant, or influential, intellectually ignorant or educated, Jesus had compassion on them.

Point: Jesus attracted people from all walks of life because He loved them all.

C. Jesus goes up into a mountainside just as Moses did at Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments. Many have seen Matthew's portrait of Jesus, as one of a new Moses or new lawgiver.

D. However, Jesus is not proclaiming a new law, but He is announcing what He knows is the legitimate interpretation of God's will as contained in the already-existing Torah (i.e., the first five books of the Hebrew Bible or the first five books of the Old Testament - Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy).

II. Introduction [Part II] - The Preacher

A. It was Jesus who saw the multitudes and went up on the

mountain; and sat down. God's own Son delivered the sermon, the greatest Preacher who ever lived preached the greatest sermon ever preached.

B. When He concluded, "the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Matt. 7:28b-29).

C. Jesus quoted no sources, no ancient rabbis, no revered tradition. What He spoke, He spoke on His own authority. That was unheard of among the Jews, who always derived their authority from recognized sources.

D. The Sermon on The Mount is the supreme model of good preaching, a homiletical masterpiece.

Note: Homiletics is the art and science of sermon preparation and delivery.

E. This Sermon beautifully and powerfully flows from the **Introduction** (Matt. 5:3-12) to the **first point** (the citizens of the kingdom, 5:13-16), to the **second point** (the righteousness of the kingdom, 5:17-7:12), to the **third point** (the exhortation to enter the kingdom, 7:13-27), and to the **conclusion** (the effect of the sermon on its hearers, 7:28-29).

Comment: The transitions from point to point are clear and unmistakable.

III. Introduction [Part III] - The Location

A. The sanctuary for the greatest sermon ever preached was the mountain. The Greek reads literally *the mountain*, but Matthew uses this expression (**to oros**; "a mountainside"), more generally to the hill country that dominated the skyline surrounding Capernaum (Matt. 14:23; 15:29).

B. This is the traditional site on the northeast shore of Galilee, known as the Mount of Beatitudes.

Comment: This location gives a good acoustical illustration of how a

speaker could address a large crowd on a plateau in the hills overlooking the lakeside and be heard by thousands at once.
//I have been privileged to visit this site and behold its beauty.//

IV. Introduction [Part IV] - The Style

A. A rabbi commonly sat down when he taught. If he spoke while standing or walking, what he said was considered to be informal and unofficial. But when he sat down, what he said was authoritative and official.

B. Even today we speak of professors holding a "chair" in a university, signifying the honored position from which they teach.

C. When the Roman Catholic pope gives an official pronouncement, he is said to speak ex cathedra, which literally means "to speak from his chair."

D. When Jesus sat down and delivered the Sermon on The Mount, He spoke from His divine chair with **absolute authority** as the Sovereign King.

Comment: As mentioned previously, the multitudes were an important audience for this evangelistic sermon. But the standards of spiritual life that Jesus gave in this sermon, could not apply to them, or be followed by them unless they belonged to Him.

E. The fact that "his disciples came unto him" (Matt. 5:1c), indicates that they were also His audience. In fact, the twelve were the only ones at that time who, to any real extent, could know the blessedness of which the Lord spoke, and follow the perfect way of righteousness which Jesus set forth.

F. The twelve were the only ones who had partaken of the inner divine power and presence that was absolutely necessary for obeying God's perfect will. They saw first-hand what Jesus could do.

G. Trying to apply the teachings of Jesus without receiving Him as Lord and Savior cannot be done.

Point: You cannot behave like Christ until you become like Christ!

V. Introduction [Part V] - The Content (v 2)

"And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying."

A. Matthew's use of this statement (v2), was a common way used to indicate that what Jesus was about to share in His Sermon was both authoritative and of the utmost importance.

B. The teachings of the Sermon on The Mount are for believers today, marking the distinctive lifestyle that should characterize the direction of the lives of Christians in every age.

C. Jesus' new way of living comes from a new way of thinking, and the new way of thinking comes from a new life.

D. As the Sermon on The Mount makes very clear, internal changes bring external changes. When our attitudes and thinking are right, our actions will fall in line.

E. If our inner life does not make our outer life better, our inner life is deficient or nonexistent. "Faith without works is dead" (James 2:20).

F. Paul tells us that we "are his (God) "workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." (Eph. 2:10).

VI. Exposition [Part I] - The Beatitudes (Matt. 5:3-12)

A. The series of conditional blessings promised in Matthew 5:3-12 have long been called the Beatitudes, a name derived from Latin and referring to a state of happiness or bliss.

B. Jesus presents the possibility of people being genuinely happy, and that available happiness is the opening theme of the Sermon on The Mount.

C. Many people, including some Christians, find that hard to believe. How could a message as demanding and impossible as The Sermon on The Mount be intended to make people happy?

D. Yet, the first and greatest sermon ever preached by Jesus Christ begins with the resounding and repeated theme of happiness. What a fitting start for the New Testament's "Good News."

E. God desires to save mankind from his tragic lostness, to give the power to obey His will, and to make him happy.

F. In this great sermon, the Lord Jesus Christ carefully and clearly sets forth the way of blessedness for those who come to Him.

G. The Greek word ***Makarios*** (**blessed**) means happy, fortunate, blissful. The fullest meaning of this word has to do with an inward contentedness that is not affected by circumstances.

H. That is the kind of happiness God desires for His children, a state of joy and well-being that does not depend on physical, temporary circumstances (Phil. 4:11-13).

I. The word blessed is often used of God Himself, as when David ended one of his psalms with the declaration, "Blessed be God" (Psalm 68:35).

J. Solomon sang, "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things" (Ps. 72:18).

K. Paul spoke of "... the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust" (1 Tim, 1:11), and of Jesus Christ, "Who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of Lords" (1 Tim. 6:15).

L. Blessedness is the nature of God. There is no blessedness, no perfect contentedness and joy of the kind of which Jesus speaks except - "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1:4).

M. Because blessedness is fundamentally an element of the

character of God, when mankind partakes of His nature through Jesus Christ, they partake of God's blessedness.

N. Therefore, it becomes clear at the very beginning of the Sermon on The Mount that Jesus is speaking of a reality that is only for believers.

Points:

- 1) To be blessed is not a superficial feeling of well-being based on circumstances, but a deep supernatural experience of contentedness based on the fact that one's life is right with God.
- 2) Blessedness is based on objective reality, realized in the miracle of transformation to a new and divine nature.

O. The philosophy of the world says, things satisfy. Acquiring things brings happiness, achieving things brings meaning, doing things brings satisfaction.

P. Consider Solomon, the wisest and most magnificent of ancient kings who tried the world's way to happiness for many years.

Q. He had the royal blood of his father, David, running through his veins. Solomon had vast amounts of gold and jewels and he "made silver as common as stones in Jerusalem" (1 Kings 10:27).

R. Solomon had fleets of ships and stables filled with thousands of the finest horses. He had hundreds of wives, gathered from the most beautiful women of many lands.

S. He was acclaimed throughout the world for his wisdom, power, and wealth. He should have been happy beyond measure. Yet, this earthly king, so great and blessed by earthly standards, concluded that his life was purposeless and empty.

- a. The theme of Ecclesiastes, Solomon's personal testimony of the human situation, is - "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity. What profit hath a man of all his labors which he taketh under the sun." (Eccl. 1:2-3).

Comments:

- 1) It is important to know that the Beatitudes are pronouncements, not probabilities. Jesus does not say that if men have the qualities of humility, meekness, etc., that they are more likely to be happy.

- b. Nor is happiness simply Jesus' wish for His disciples.
- c. The Beatitudes are divine judgmental pronouncements.
- d. The blessed life is represented by the true inner righteousness of those who are humble, poor in spirit, whereas the cursed life is represented by the outward, hypocritical self-righteousness of the proud religionist (Matt. 5:20).

- 2) The Beatitudes are progressive, they are not in a random or haphazard order. Each leads to the other in logical succession.

T. Consider the following: "Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven" (Prov. 23:4,5).

U. Tragically, many preachers, teachers, and writers today, "whose mouths must be stopped" (Titus 1:11a) are passing off worldly philosophy in the name of Christianity, claiming that faithfulness to Christ guarantees health, wealth, success, prestige, and prosperity. Jesus **DID NOT** teach such things!!

Point: It is impossible to follow Jesus' new way of living without having His new life within you!

VII. Exposition [Part II] - The Poor in Spirit (Matt. 5:3)

A. For a discussion of this first beatitude, it is essential that it be viewed from five perspectives:

1. The meaning of poor in spirit.
2. The location of this virtue in the list.
3. The way to achieve that attitude.
4. How to know if we have that attitude, and
5. The result promised for having it.

The Meaning of Poor in Spirit

B. The Greek word *Ptochos* (Poor) is from a verb meaning to shrink, cower, or cringe, as a beggar often did in that day.

1. Classical Greek used the word to refer to a person reduced to total destitution, one who crouched in a corner begging.
2. As he held out one hand for alms, the beggar often hid his face with the other hand because he was ashamed of being recognized.
3. The term Ptochos (Poor) did not simply mean poor, but begging poor. It was used in Luke 16:20 to describe the beggar Lazarus.

C. To be poor in spirit is to recognize one's spiritual poverty apart from God. Apart from Jesus Christ every person is spiritually destitute, no matter their education, wealth, social status, accomplishments, or religious knowledge.

D. That is the point of this first Beatitude. The poor in spirit are those who recognize their total spiritual destitution and their complete dependence on God. Their pride and self-assurance are gone.

VIII. Exposition [Part III] - Why Humility (Poor in Spirit) is First

A. Jesus puts this beatitude first (Blessed are the poor in spirit) because humility is the foundation of all other graces, which is a basic element of becoming a Christian (Matt. 18:3-4).

B. Pride has no part in Christ's kingdom, and until a person surrenders pride, they cannot enter the kingdom.

C. Yet, in many churches today, there is very little emphasis on humility and self-emptying. Until a soul is humbled and the inner person is poor in spirit, Christ can never become dear, because He is obscured or blocked by the individual's own self.

Point: Where self is exalted, Christ cannot be. Where self is king, Christ cannot be. Until the proud in spirit become poor in spirit, they cannot receive the King or inherit His kingdom.

IX. Exposition [Part IV] - Achieving Humility

A. How do we become poor in spirit? It must first be recognized that it cannot start with us or with anything that we can do or accomplish in our own power.

B. Humility is not a necessary human work to make us worthy, but it is a divine work to make us see that our condition cannot change without God!

C. The first step in experiencing humility is to turn our eyes off of ourselves and look to God!

Point: When we study God's Word, seek His face in prayer, and sincerely desire to be near Him and please Him, we move toward being poor in spirit.

D. Second, we must starve the flesh by removing the things on

which it feeds. The essence of the fleshly nature is pride, and to starve the flesh is to remove and avoid those things that promote pride.

Points:

- 1) Rather than looking for praise, compliments, and popularity, we should be wary of them.
- 2) The evil is not in being given praise but seeking it and glorying in it. //Please turn to Jeremiah 9:23-24 and let's read that together.//

E. The third and balancing principle in coming to humility is asking God for it. With David, we should pray - "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Ps., 51:10).

F. Humility, like every other good gift, comes only from God.

X. Exposition [Part IV] - Knowing When We Are Humble

A. How can we know if we are genuinely humble if we are poor in spirit?

Note: I would like to invite your attention to the biblical insight of Thomas Watson (1620-1686), who was an English, Puritan Preacher, and author. His works - The Beatitudes [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, pp. 45-48]. Thomas Watson provides some very keen biblical insight on how we can know if we are humble.

1. First, if we are humble we will be weaned from ourselves, We will be able to say with David, "Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child." (Psalm 131:2)

- a. One who is poor in spirit loses his or her self-preoccupation. Self is nothing, and Christ is everything.

- b. The Apostle Paul expressed it this way - "I am crucified with Christ: Nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Gal. 2:20).
2. Second, humility will lead us to be lost in the wonder of Christ, "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. 3:18)
 3. Third, we will not complain about our situation, no matter how bad it may become. When our suffering is for Christ's sake, we not only will not complain or feel ashamed, but we will glorify God for it, (1 Peter 4:16).
 4. Fourth, we will more clearly see the strengths and virtues of others as well as our own weaknesses and sins - "... but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves" (Phil. 2:3).
 5. Fifth, we will spend much time in prayer. We will knock often at heaven's gate because we are always in need.

6. Sixth, we will take Christ on His terms, not on ours or any others. We will not try to have Christ while keeping our pride, our pleasures, our covetousness, or our immorality. The Word of God alone will be our standard.
7. Seventh, When we are poor in spirit we will praise and thank God for His grace. Abounding gratitude will characterize the humble believer. (cf. 1 Tim. 1:14).

XI. Exposition [Part V] - The Result of Being Poor In Spirit

- A. Those who come to the King, the Lord Jesus Christ in this humility, inherit His kingdom, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- B. God has gladly chosen to give the kingdom to those who humbly come to Him and trust Him. (Luke 12:32)
- C. Those who come to the Lord with a broken heart do not leave with a broken heart. //Please turn to Isaiah 57:15 and lets read it together.//

XII. Summary

- A. God wants us to recognize our poverty so that He can make us Rich. He wants us to recognize our lowliness so that He can raise us up. "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." (James 4:10)

I sincerely trust that this lesson has been encouraging and a blessing to you and for you. If the Lord does not Rapture us to Glory, it is my intention to continue with an exposition of the Beatitudes during our next study session.

Instead of our usual "fill in the blank spaces" of selected Bible passages at this point of our lessons, please take some time and

write down a few of the insights that you have gleaned from this lesson. Also, please be prepared to share them at the conclusion of our study time together on Thursday night, January 19, 2023.

//In the Master's Service - Pastor Austin//