

The Mountain to Righteousness (Part 2)

Matthew 5:1-10

Preface

President Bush said this week, “911 will never feel like history.” What happened on September 11, 2001 is a stark reminder of that evil exists in this world. The solution is Jesus Christ.

Scripture Text

5 Now when he 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.

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. Matthew 5:1-11 NIV

Introduction

Of course we call the words of this great message, “The Beatitudes.” Their truths are still profound today. These words are not powerful because they are ancient but because they possess the divine authority and wisdom of God.

The first three: poor in spirit, mourn and meek describe the wonderful process of arriving at salvation.

Poor in spirit refers to the process of one recognizing they are not in a right relationship with God.

Mourning is the natural reaction to placing our life in the light of God’s glory and grace. We come to grips with our sin and all that has been missed without a right relationship with God.

In response to our enlightened experience with God, we become meek in terms of allowing Him to be Lord of our life.

Salvation is a glorious experience, but there is more. His work continues transforming us into mature Christ-followers.

1. As we grow, we thirst for more of God.

⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

We naturally pursue self promotion and thirst for personal pleasure. But in Christ, everything begins to change.

We become less focused on ourselves and more focused of the things of God. We want to know Him better and experience all He has for us.

When you sincerely begin to think of God as creator of all things, you realize He knows what is best for you. You then long to discover Him and His will.

Hunger and thirst describe an ongoing desire for something. Even before you were born again, God created you with a desire to know Him.

Toward the end of Paul’s earthly journey, he said, “*not that I have already obtained it, but I press on toward the goal to win the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (Phi. 3:14)?*”

Jesus made a glorious promise to those who approach God with a hungry soul. They will not be disappointed, “*for they shall be filled!*”

2. As we grow, we react to wrong with mercy.

⁷ *Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.*

Our natural human tendency is to harbor anger and retaliate. But when we experience the glory of God's mercy, we become inspired and learn how to show mercy to others.

Some people identify the greatest attribute of Christ as His love, but I am convinced His most defining characteristic is forgiveness. The most powerful words uttered by Jesus on the cross were, "Father forgive them." To be like Christ we must learn to forgive.

When you have been wronged, you have two options: harbor anger or give mercy.

Illus: Max Lucado shared the following letter in his book.

"I caught my husband having an affair with another woman. He swore it would never happen again. He begged me to forgive him, but I would not. I was so bitter and so incapable of swallowing my pride that I could think of nothing but revenge. I was going to make him pay dearly. I'd have my pound of flesh. I filed for divorce, even though my children begged me not to.

Even after the divorce, my husband tried for two years to win me back. I refused to have anything to do with him. He had struck First; now I was striking back. All I wanted was to make him pay. Finally he gave up and married a lovely young widow with a couple of small children. He began rebuilding his life – without me. I see them occasionally, and they all look so happy. And here I am – a lonely old, miserable woman who allowed her selfish pride and foolish stubbornness to ruin her life.

Unfaithfulness is wrong. Revenge is worse. But the worst part of all, is that without forgiveness, bitterness is all that is left.

Because of Christ forgiveness, you possess a capacity to forgive others. Hatred, bitterness and unresolved conflict are like a rabid dog that turns against his owner. But forgiveness liberates us.

3. As we grow, our lives become pure.

⁸ *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.*

As we approach the final three parts of the Beatitudes, the pure, the peacemakers and the persecuted, each describe us being involved in the actual ministry of Christ.

There are special blessings in store for those who demonstrate Christ-likeness.

To the Hebrew mind, the heart represented the core being. Solomon warned in Proverbs 4:29, *"above all else guard your heart."*

Jesus said in Matthew 15:18-19 *"It's not what goes into the mouth that defiles but what comes out of your heart."*

When we fully trust and turnover our lives to Christ, we become blessed with a heart purified by the blood of Christ. Jesus promised the pure in heart would see God.

This is not just referring to the afterlife. This is referring to life on earth. When our hearts are pure and we become Christ-like, we see God at work all around us.

Illus: An elderly relative once asked me if I thought "awesome" was an appropriate word to describe God. I knew what they were getting at; they didn't like singing the song, "My God is an Awesome God." I thought to myself, if you would commit to living for Christ, you too would be shouting "My God is an Awesome God."

When we become active in the ministry of Christ, we see God working and it is an awesome thing to observe.

4. As we grow, we long for others to experience Christ.

⁹ *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.*

To the peacemakers, Jesus promised glorious recognition as “sons of God.” Throughout Scripture, we see individuals described as someone’s son.

In our culture, your last name or Social Security Number provides identification, but in this time, people were identified as being someone’s son.

To be recognized as God’s Son is one of the highest honors ever experienced. You may recall the Pharisees attempted to kill Jesus when he claimed to be God’s son (John 8: 48-59).

Peacemakers receive this special honor because they participate in the same mission as Christ by sharing the gospel with those who are lost.

The term peacemaking requires the pre-existing condition of conflict. Souls without Christ are at war with God. The Bible describes the unsaved as *“enemies of God”* (Rom. 5:10) and *“children of wrath”* (Eph. 2:3).

As we grow in our relationship with Christ, we desire to help others who so desperately need Christ in their life.

Illus: The ladies are about to start another Beth Moore Bible study next week. A few nights ago my daughter-in-law was telling my wife about some of the people she knows that she has invited to the study. As I listened, I thought to myself, “that is an unlikely group to attend.” Then I realized she is doing exactly what we are called and inspired to do; help others discover the peace that comes in knowing Christ.

She may very well see God work in the life of one of these ladies for she is being a peacemaker.

5. As we grow, we learn to endure.

¹⁰ *Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

When we become an active part of the ministry of Christ, we are bound to encounter resistance and even persecution. Christ did and so will you.

But remember by being merciful, pure and being peacemakers we will see God. Even though we face difficulty, we experience the reward of seeing God work and we are encouraged to continue to serve Him.

Our ultimate reward will come in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Notice that the first of the Beatitudes promises the Kingdom of Heaven and the last promises the Kingdom of Heaven.

That is to say, that promised in the beginning is that which we will receive when He has done His work in us.

See God and you will find God. Live for God and you will experience God.

Conclusion

Someone once said, “Let us be grateful for the mirror for revealing to us our appearance only.”

The Beatitudes reveal to us the status of our relationship with God.

It is my prayer that you will never read the Beatitudes the same again. Never look at them and ponder which one of these describes your personality.

Instead, look at the Beatitudes and ask which one describes where I am in my spiritual journey.