

## A STUDY OF THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

**Intro:** Over the next several lessons we will study together what is without a doubt one of the great sermonic masterpieces of all time--the Lord's famous mountain message called "the Sermon on the mount". This sermon is the most lengthy and complete compilation of the Lord's teaching. The Sermon on the Mount has been called "the manifesto of the kingdom". It derives its name from 5:1 for it appears that his sermon was uttered on the hillside of the eastern shore of Galilee. Great multitudes from every surrounding province were gathered to hear the Lord preach and in that sermon he proclaimed the gospel of the kingdom (4:23), not only preaching that it would come but the requirements of entrance and citizenship in it! Turn in your Bible to Matthew 5-7. As we study you will discover the principles upon which every Christian should build his life. It is a profile of kingdom life and character. There has never been written a greater call or challenge to godly living; nor a more effective exposure of hypocrisy and sham. And as you apply them to your life you will enjoy all the blessings of being in God's favor.

### INTRODUCTION TO THE SERMON AS A WHOLE

*Sometimes we mistakenly think of this sermon as a loosely fitting series of spiritual gems, each to be studied without relation to the other. But actually the sermon is well-organized and can be outlined just like you might do this sermon today!*

*Look at the outline of the sermon:*

**Introduction (5:3-20)** Get attention & announce theme. Jesus begins with a description of the kind of life that will bring God's blessings and will influence the world for good!

**Main message (5:21-7:12)** Contrast the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees with the true righteousness God requires of man. It begins with "Think not that I came to destroy the Law and the Prophets..." It ends "This is the Law and the Prophets".

**Invitation (7:13-27)** Appeals and warnings.

*Look at a suggested outline of the chapter:*

The victory of kingdom living (v. 1-12)

The vitality of kingdom living (v. 13-16)

The virtue of kingdom living (v. 17-48)

### THE BEATITUDES AS A WHOLE

*They get their name from the Latin word "beatus" meaning "blessed".*

*There is no connection between the word "beatitude" and the English word "Attitude". They just sound alike! The Greek word is "makarios"; hence, these are sometimes called "macarisms".*

*So then the beautitudes get their name from the word common to all nine of them. That word is "blessed". Jesus began not by pronouncing anathemas on His enemies but blessings upon his disciples!*

*The word "blessed" here means basically being in the state of divine favor! It is not necessarily equivalent to physical prosperity but rather spiritual prosperity. It means that one is in a state of spiritual righteousness and therefore is the object of God's special consideration and action.*

Some translations use the word happy. I have mixed feelings about that as a synonym for blessed. I believe that those who are righteous will be happy. But our word happy is derived from a root suggesting the element of chance and circumstance. Perhaps we can be happy if what happens to us is what we want!

So let's stay with the more noble word "blessed". It suggests not that by chance we have had circumstances favorable to a positive view of life but rather God has favored us and has acted to meet our needs!

*In these nine beatitudes, Jesus is then defining the qualities of character that will enlist divine favor! They are the characteristics that will, in their exercise, bring us blessings from God and will qualify us as citizens in the kingdom of God! It is important that we realize that. For often we think of happiness or blessedness as couched in physical well-being, but Jesus makes it conditioned upon the state of our spiritual life!*

*As we look at them, we might even begin to see that they follow something of a logical order.*

The first four describe the formation of a kingdom citizen. They qualities that lead us into the kingdom. We surely keep them afterward however!

The second three describe the fruit of a kingdom citizen. They call attention the attitudes by which we relate to others as citizens.

The last two describe the fate of a kingdom citizen. They show that a life modeled after the will of God may bring opposition and persecution!

## THE BEATITUDES ONE BY ONE

### *Poor in spirit*

The attitude in which we recognize that we are sinners and because of it have nothing, are nothing, and can be nothing by which we earn God's favor. It is a recognition of spiritual bankruptcy. Such a person who feels a sense of unworthiness manifests it three ways: humility toward God and others (Often the word humble is used as a substitute); helplessness (dependency upon God's grace); horror at the presence of sin in our lives! Cf. Is. 6:5

Have you ever wondered why the Bible emphasizes that salvation is free? Not merely because it cannot be bought with money; but actually could not be bought by anything that man possesses (Eph. 2:8-9). These who come to God possessing nothing are those who can receive from God what only he can give. Poverty of spirit might be called the negative side of faith! When in unworthiness we come to him seeking his grace, placing our faith not in

ourselves but in His Son, commending not our own righteousness but repenting of our sins, presenting not our own works of righteousness but submitting to his righteousness in baptism, we are blessed to receive from him a possession of ultimate value--the kingdom of heaven. Col. 1:13 We have a relationship with the king that enables us to share in his reign and enjoy the blessings of it! Rom. 5:17 But more than that we will enjoy the blessings of kingdom in its eternal state. 2 Pet. 1:11 The kingdom is not for the proud and self-righteous but for the humble and honest. This poverty spirit should stay with us for life, for throughout life we will always be in need of his forgiveness. Thus, Lk. 17:10.

### *Mourn*

It would not make sense for Jesus to say all those who cry over some problem or misfortune will receive God's comfort. And why should some special divine favor attend someone who mourns loss. Infidels do that! Perhaps it is better to see this mourning as related to our spiritual situation. If the first beatitude emphasizes the intellectual estimation of a life of sin, then the second one emphasizes the emotional impact of a life of sin! Blessed are they that mourn (the strongest possible word) for their sins. It is one thing to recognize and admit sin; it is another to be genuinely disturbed and pricked in heart. One of the saddest conditions of the human heart is mentioned by Paul in Eph. 4:19. 2 Cor. 7:10 Such godly sorrow is a deep regret that grows not out of the prospects of punishment but the nature of the crime. Cf. David's realization Ps. 51:16-17 Such people who show true sorrow for sin will in obedience to the gospel receive comfort from God in the forgiveness of sins. Ac. 2:36-38

### *Meek*

One of the most difficult words to define. It was used of trained horses. Therefore, it has been common to explain it as "gentleness". That seems to fall a little short of the idea of the word. Perhaps it would be better to define it as the ability to hold one's feeling and emotions in check and not give way to them in uncontrolled outbursts. It is devoid of self-will godward and ill-will manward. That quality is of special importance to one seeking salvation. Jas. 1:21 It is so easy to allow our feelings and emotions to interfere with the acceptance of truth. But only those who meekly acquiesce to the will of God will inherit the earth. In this sense "inherit the earth" is synonymous with salvation. Such a person will enjoy the best things of life now. In a sense a Christian possess the world now through Christ! He is joint-heir with him. cf. the man to whom it was said, "You look like you own the world. No! But my

father does". And secondly such a person will possess the "new heavens and earth" in the world to come. Just as the Psalmist spoke of the possession of God's best earthly blessings so the meek will inherit the best of God's blessings spiritually.

In a more general sense the quality of meekness is important to the life of Christian in dealing with others. It is unnatural for sinful men to think of attaining except through the coercion of force of unleashed anger. But Jesus promises that those who control their emotions and keep them properly bound will enjoy God's blessings.

### *Hunger and thirst*

Perhaps in our own day we cannot relate to the deep longing for water characteristic of that place and time. With a fountain available just about everywhere we rarely know anything about thirst and with abundant food supplies we know little about real hunger! (Sure the tummy growls every once in a while, but this is hardly the picture of this beatitude.) Picture rather a man who has journeyed across the desert with nothing more than a canteen or people who have been without food for days.

Such should be our longing for righteousness. Seek it like you do your food and drink. Intensely, regularly. It suggests eagerness and desire. That longing, of course, is manifest by a desire to know the word of God (1 Pet. 2:2) and do it!

Such effort will not go unrewarded. God will satisfy that longing with the righteousness we desire!

This is a good place to remember that all these qualities work together in the formation of a citizen in God's kingdom. As we pursue the word of God with these qualities we will be able to enter the kingdom. For this reason Foy Wallace referred to them as Pentecost pointers! For in a practical way, the qualities of which Jesus spoke established the fertile ground in which gospel seed finds germination and growth. They are not however qualities that we manifest just as we obey the gospel but will continue to manifest throughout life!