

THE STUDY OF THE BEATITUDES

Intro: In our lessons last week we began a study of the famous mountain message of Jesus recorded in Mt. 5-7. We began with an overview first of the whole sermon (intro, body, conclusion), the chapter (The victory, the vitality, and the virtue of kingdom life). The first section called the beatitudes contains a list 9 important attitudes that a kingdom citizen must have to be in God's favor and receive the attending blessings. The first four lead us into the kingdom. They emphasize our relationship with God (the formation of a kingdom citizen. The remaining 5 emphasize perhaps more our relationship with others.

How does a citizen in God's kingdom conduct himself toward others? And how might others conduct themselves toward the kingdom?

Merciful

The O.T. word for mercy comes from a word meaning "the bowels". The Hebrew associated certain feelings with certain parts of the body. Feelings of compassion and sorrow often seem to come from within us. The Greek word conveys the opposite of justice. Just as justice means the due payment in strict accord with law. Mercy refers to the foregoing of punishment and the suspension of law, or compassion or feeling for another.

The terms mercy and grace are often connected. Mercy might be distinguished from grace in that it seems to look more at the pain, misery, distress, or helplessness of another. Grace answers to the undeserving; mercy to the miserable.

We are able to show such mercy to others because of what the Lord has done for us!

We are the product of a love which self-sacrificingly meets the demands of justice and then moves infinitely beyond the confines of courtroom equity. Because we are experiments in mercy, we can become agents of mercy!

This mercy manifests itself not in sentimental feelings but real deeds of charity. Ps. 37:21

This mercy enables us to:

Forgive others--Mt. 18:33

Labor to help others in their pain and distress--Jas. 1:27;

Jd 22-23; Gal. 6:2

Those who show mercy will obtain mercy:

From others--Mt. 7:2

From God--Mt. 18:33; Jas. 2:13

Pure in heart

From the beginning man has made a distinction between the profane and the holy, between the pure and the impure. God sought to distinguish that purity first through regulations that concerning food & drink (clean and unclean foods), the body cleanliness (regulations having to do with

unhealthy conditions and diseases). All of these were not merely ends in and of themselves but means to an end, to symbolize the purity or cleanness necessary to approach God!

In Jesus' day the Pharisees had invented elaborate rituals to insure "purity", making sure pots and pans were properly washed, and hands were carefully washed before eating lest one be defiled and thus be unclean. In this beatitude Jesus gets to the "heart" of the issue. Real defilement does not come from without in the form of dirt, disease, etc. but from within the man himself. Thus, blessed are the pure in heart! Jesus commands a righteousness that is more than skin deep!

Outward conformity to God's law is important.

But inward conformity is more important. Ps. 24:4; Jas. 4:8

Jesus' beatitude calls upon us to address not how we appear to others but what we really are inside!

Mt. 23:25-28

Some questions that will help us:

What do we think about when our mind slips into neutral?

How much sympathy do we have for shady humor or deception?

To what do we pay consistent allegiance?

What do we want more than anything else?

What and whom do we really love?

To what extent are our words and actions accurate reflections of what is in our hearts?

Purity of heart then refers to an untainted and single purpose to know God and to be like Him! To not only clean up the outer man but also the inner. To rid ourselves of mixed motives and be a single sincere person who wants to go to heaven! Ps. 17:15

And you know what? Such people will get to do that! They shall see God! 1 Jn. 3:1-3; Heb. 12:14

Peacemakers

Note the word carefully: Not blessed are the peacable, peaceful, money-makers, policy makers but blessed are the peace-makers!

Within the total Biblical framework, the greatest peacemaker was God, working through His Son Jesus Christ!

The Prince of Peace--Is. 9:6; Lk. 1:79

Preached Peace--Eph. 2:13 (Here we see the Person, Preaching, Price, and Place of real peace)

Christ removed the ultimate ground of all alienation!--Sin! Show me any human conflict and I'll show you sin at work! It may be somebody's greed gone to seed! It may be envy or selfishness! Sin is the at the root of all conflict!

Christians then, like God, are to be peace-makers and as they do they'll prove their likeness to their Father God in heaven! They shall truly be

called His Sons because they bear his likeness! (The word child emphasizes relationship; the word son emphasizes character!)

The world searches in vain for a means to end the conflict of the world. Efforts to multiply national restraints have been formed, United Nations (more like the ignited nations).

So then the true peacemakers in the world are the peace-preachers of the world! Is. 52:7 And, every Christian is one! As he teaches the whole truth of God he leads the way into peace with God and with all who fear Him. The true peacemaker does not bend the truth or withhold part of the truth to create a false peace based on human standards; he preaches the whole counsel in love resulting in a peace that is based on God's word!

Such a desire to live for what is right leads him away from every tendency that leads to conflict. His attitude will be: Rom. 12:17-18

Persecuted for righteousness & Reviled & Persecuted for His name's sake

Several unusual features in the last two beatitudes.

They are duplicates! It is as if the Lord wanted to truly impress upon us this one! He switches from the third person to the second person (from "they" to "you"! He wanted his audience to know and all of us to know that we might be persecuted for His name's sake!

It seems so inconsistent with the rest! How could people who are so good be so ill-treated? How could people who seek to be "peace-makers" be in such conflict with the world? The answer is: Though teaching the word of God is the way to peace in the world as a whole, the world as a whole will not accept it; but will reject not only the message but the messenger! This beatitude reveals one of the true paradoxes of the gospel. Those who seek to spread true peace will be opposed.

So this points out several things about persecution:

The inevitability of it--It is not blessed are ye if but blessed are ye when!

The occasion of it--for righteousness, on account of me!

1 Pet. 4:15-16

1 Pet. 2:19

The manifestations of it--persecution (to pursue or follow after another to cause harm)

Physical harm (Cf. Paul, 2 Cor. 11)

b. Emotional distress (Reville means to reproach, upbraid, to shame or seek to defame or disgrace; Speak against you falsely (misrepresent your character, tell lies)

The response to it

We need to not return evil for evil, nor quit serving God, or develop a martyr complex.

Rejoice and be exceedingly glad--cf. Ac. 5:41 For great is your reward--2 Cor. 4:17

The results of persecution

The kingdom is ours

Be glad that there is enough of your Savior in you that the world opposes you for doing right! It shows that he is ruling in you and if so the blessings of His rule are enjoyed by you!

Conclusion: Thus ends our brief exposition of these wonderful gems of truth. What encouraging words these are! Let us be all that the King would have us be, so that His blessings will be upon us!