

# The Beatitudes: Foundational Call of the Sermon-on-the-Mount Lifestyle

Matthew 5:3–12

## A. Introduction

1. The Sermon on the Mount is the “constitution of God’s Kingdom”. It is the clearest and most comprehensive teaching on what it means to be a Kingdom people and on how we can live and walk out the true Kingdom lifestyle.
2. It is a “roadmap” to cooperating with God to receive His grace and become Kingdom people.
3. The Sermon on the Mount is the litmus test to measure spiritual development and ministry impact.
  - a. We measure our ministry impact by how much the people we minister to seek to walk out the Sermon-on-the-Mount values, and not by the size of our ministry.
  - b. These values are what we are to emphasise most in our ministries.
4. The Sermon on the Mount, taught by Jesus Christ, is the greatest sermon ever given. All the epistles of the apostles in the New Testament are built upon the principles that were taught in the Sermon on the Mount.
5. These values should be the most emphasised themes in the teaching ministries of the Kingdom. These are weighty yet unpopular themes that describe the entry-point lifestyle of all new believers.
6. This is a quote from John Wesley about the Sermon on the Mount:  
*“The Son of God who came from heaven, is here showing us the way to heaven; to the place which He hath prepared for us; the glory He had before the world began. He is teaching the true way to life everlasting: the royal way which leads to the kingdom; and the only true way, — for there is none besides; all other paths lead to destruction. From the character of the Speaker, we are well assured that He hath declared the full and perfect will of God.”*

## B. The Beatitudes — The Core Values of the Kingdom

1. The foundational call in the Sermon on the Mount is to live out the 8 Beatitudes described in Matthew 5:3–10.
2. The Beatitudes are like the 8 fruits in the “garden of our heart” that God wants to fully mature. They define the love, godliness and spiritual maturity that please God. They

describe the lifestyle that is the core reality of God's Kingdom.

3. These 8 fruits need to be carefully and continually cultivated. Matthew 5 – 7 describes the process that allows the 8 Beatitudes to mature.
4. "Beatitude" means supreme blessedness. Jesus is making declarations of blessedness according to Kingdom principles.
5. The Beatitudes are the character traits of God and His Kingdom.
  - a. The Beatitudes are the communal and redemptive qualities of the people of God.
  - b. Jesus began by laying forth the virtues of the Kingdom of God that are to be both cultivated as an inner attitude and displayed through good deeds.
  - c. Jesus set forth the blueprint for His image bearers in order to produce longing in the human heart that can only be satisfied by the reception of divine grace.
6. Jesus is inviting us into the personhood of God and His Kingdom. It is an invitation to blessedness and superior pleasure. It is also an invitation to the beauty of God.
7. What does "blessed" mean?
  - a. The word "blessed" in the Greek is "*makarios*". This word is often translated as "happy" or "fortunate," but in Greek, it means a state of spiritual well-being and prosperity.
  - b. It denotes a deep, abiding joy and contentment that comes from being in right relationship with God. The term is frequently applied to those who are in God's favour and who experience His grace and favour in their lives.
  - c. Thinking about "*makarios*" in this way helps us to see these blessings not as temporary feelings or worldly successes, but as a description of true flourishing under God's care — having a fiery and vibrant spirit, and a tender heart that is full of life in God.
  - d. Being "blessed" is conditional upon the required response and obedience that are laid out in Matthew 5:3–10.

### C. Defining the Beatitudes (Matt 5:3–12)

1. "*POOR IN SPIRIT*" (Matt 5:3)
  - a. In the first Beatitude, Jesus blesses the "*poor in spirit*" (Greek: *ptochos to pneumatic*). The word "poor" could be misleading, as it frequently refers to material poverty. However, in Greek, the word "*ptochos*" means one who is destitute or beggarly – a person in absolute dependence.
  - b. Used in conjunction with "*to pneumatic*", which means "in spirit," this phrase refers not only to economic poverty but also to a deep sense of spiritual humility and dependence on God. The "*poor in spirit*" are those who recognise their spiritual need and their total dependence on God for salvation.

- c. Those who have poverty in spirit have a sincere recognition of our bankruptcy before God. Our total dependence is upon Him. We have no righteousness of our own. It is an attitude of repentance that agrees with Paul in Romans 3:10, 23.
  - d. To be “*poor in spirit*” is to acknowledge our spiritual poverty — indeed, our spiritual bankruptcy before God. For we are sinners under the holy wrath of God and deserve nothing but the judgement of God.
2. “Those who MOURN” (Matt 5:4)
- a. The second Beatitude is directed toward those who mourn (Greek: *penthountes*), a term that in Greek refers to an intense emotional response.
  - b. Though mourning is typically used for grief related to loss, it can also carry the meaning of being sorrowful over one’s own sin and lack in one’s spiritual walk, and over the broken condition of the world.
  - c. The mourning has multiple meanings:
    - i. It is the mourning over our personal grievous sin, over the corporate sin of humanity, and also for breakthroughs.
    - ii. This is not worldly sorrow. It is the groan of a broken heart over the weakness of our frame and our lack in the fullness of God. It is the basis of intercession (Ps 119:136; Jer 9:1; Ezek 9:4; Dan 10:2–3; Joel 1:13, 2:12,17; Ezra 10:1; Phil 3:18).
  - d. The mourning also flows from our perception and recognition that we do not have the strength in ourselves, after having been forgiven by God, to reach the heights to which God has called us.
  - e. Just as poverty of spirit brings us to saving or justifying grace, so spiritual mourning brings us to sanctifying grace, whereby the believer now depends on God alone for the grace to walk out the following virtues described.
3. “The MEEK” (Matt 5:5)
- a. The Greek word for meekness is “*praos*”. “*Praos*” does not imply weakness or passivity. On the contrary, it describes gentleness and lowliness, coupled with, as understood in Greek, a strength that is not overbearing or proud but chooses restraint and patience.
  - b. Meekness is the primary virtue of the kingdom. It is associated with gentleness and humility.
  - c. Meekness is power under control. It is the restraint of power for the accomplishment of a higher cause and the willingness to bear reproach for the sake of love.
    - i. This is not to be confused with weakness. Weakness is the absence of strength and power. Meekness is the possession of power, yet restraining it for redemptive purposes.

- ii. This is also not to be confused with personality traits. A laid-back personality is not to be equated with meekness.
  - d. Meekness is the cultivation of a spirit of servanthood in which Jesus is the ultimate example.
    - i. It is the cultivation of a servant spirit whereby we think of others more highly than ourselves.
    - ii. It is the use of our strength to serve instead of to overtake, control, or self-preserve.
  - e. The promise is that the meek “*shall inherit the earth.*” This is a foreign concept to the world. In the world, power is exerted to ensure one’s rule, and the display of strength is the surest way to protect one’s interests and material goods.
4. “Those who HUNGER AND THIRST FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS” (Matt 5:6)
- a. The fourth Beatitude is those who “*hunger and thirst for righteousness*” (Greek: *peinōntes kai dipsōntes eis dikaiosynēn*). The verbs “*peinō*” combined with “*dipsō*” describe deep and urgent longing, similar to the physical needs of man for food and water.
  - b. Righteousness (*dikaioynē*) here is not just moral uprightness, but a strong desire to see God’s justice established in the world.
  - c. This righteousness is not only a personal virtue, but an ache for the world to line up with God’s justice and order. The promise of being filled speaks to a hope of divine intervention and transformation, where the longing for righteousness will be satisfied.
  - d. This refers to a sustained faithfulness in seeking God wholeheartedly through the changing circumstances and seasons of our lives.
5. “The MERCIFUL” (Matt 5:7)
- a. Mercy in Greek is “*eleēmōn*”. The Greek word implies not only kindness or compassion, but also a deeper sense of compassion and action to alleviate suffering.
  - b. Being merciful, in this text, means actively showing kindness, compassion, and forgiveness for others, reflecting God’s mercy for humankind. The connection between mercy and receiving mercy (*eleēthēsontai*) is reciprocal.
  - c. God gives mercy to the merciful. Jesus will reiterate this later after the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew 6 by stating, “*If you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses*” (Matt 6:14–15).
  - d. The poor in spirit are acquainted with their sin. The merciful cover the sin of others and extend kindness to all persons, even those considered undeserving.

- e. The merciful one is tender in dealing with the weaknesses of others. This refers to having a tender spirit in our treatment of others in light of having received God's mercy in our many failures (Ps 18:35, 130:3–4).
6. "The PURE IN HEART" (Matt 5:8)
- a. Purity of heart (Greek: *katharoi tēi kardia*) involves more than moral cleanliness; it implies an undivided loyalty to God. The word "*katharos*" means unadulterated, unmixed, or unsoiled.
  - b. This would suggest that purity consists of both inner integrity and sincerity. The heart (*kardia*) in Greek refers to the centre of one's thoughts, desires, and will.
  - c. Purity of heart is about aligning one's inner life (i.e., our heart, thoughts and motives) with God's will and maintaining singleness of purpose in one's devotion to Him. Those who have pure hearts will ultimately see God.
  - d. It is the focused gaze of love. It is the purifying of the inward places from fleshly desires that corrupt the heart. It is the formation of truth in the inward places.
7. "The PEACEMAKERS" (Matt 5:9)
- a. Peacemakers (Greek: *eirenopoioi*) are not just those who avoid conflict, but rather those who actively work to restore harmony. The Greek term "*eirēnē*" refers to a peace that is more than the absence of war.
  - b. It is a holistic sense of wholeness, well-being, and relational harmony. A peacemaker, in this sense, is someone who works toward reconciliation between individuals and communities.
  - c. Peacemaking is not passive but active. Peacemakers are people who take the initiative to effect peace through their actions, following the example of Christ, who reconciled humanity to God.
  - d. Now transcendent from this world, owning nothing but God alone, the believer is able to speak peace and become an ambassador of reconciliation. They partner with God in the redemptive process (Col 1:20; Eph 2:15; Jas 3:17; 2 Cor 5:20–21; Rom 12:18).
8. "Those who are PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS' SAKE" (Matt 5:10)
- a. Being persecuted (Greek: *diōkomenoi*) for righteousness' sake is the final Beatitude. The verb "*diōkō*" means to pursue with active hostility. The persecution described here is not simply passive suffering, but an ongoing, aggressive action against those who pursue righteousness.
  - b. The Greek term for "righteousness" (*dikaiosynē*) highlights the idea that persecution results from a commitment to living life according to God's will. The promise of the Kingdom of heaven for those who endure such suffering connects their faithfulness with the ultimate fulfilment of God's Kingdom.

- c. These virtues are costly because they come from another world. If we are persecuted for them — good! There is a parallel between the attainment of virtue and the level of persecution we endure.

#### **D. Conclusion**

1. Poverty in the spirit is the first and foundational Beatitude. All the following 7 Beatitudes build on this. Our journey in the Christian faith starts with this first virtue/value.
2. Having this foundational fruit will determine how far we go in our walk with God and in our pursuit of Him. We will keep returning to this foundational Beatitude because we will never “graduate” from realising our need for God and from asking for more of Him (Jn 10:10, 17:3).
3. There is an order, sequence and progression to the 8 fruits of the Beatitudes as laid out in Matthew 5 – 7. The 8 Beatitudes start with poverty in the spirit, with the other fruits following and building upon it.
  - a. The first three Beatitudes (i.e., poverty in spirit, spiritual mourning, meekness) constitute the emptying process.
  - b. The fourth Beatitude (i.e., hunger and thirst for righteousness) is the bridge and the turning point in the process of cultivating the Kingdom lifestyle.
  - c. The final four Beatitudes (i.e., showing mercy, pure in heart, being a peacemaker, embracing persecution) are the process of being filled by God.