



This Week in the Word

Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens. Ps 119:89.



Jesus Teaches about Right Attitudes

Study Scripture: Matthew 5:1-12

Lesson 5, June 29, 2019

Key Verse

Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Matthew 5:12

INTRODUCTION

Jesus had now begun His official ministry. He had called His twelve disciples, “the called out ones”, had started preaching, teaching, and healing, and His fame had spread all over the area. Many multitudes followed Him, fascinated with His miraculous powers and His preaching that called them to repentance. These people certainly had their needs but they were uncommitted.

His fame had spread so much throughout, that all kinds of sick and diseased people were brought to Him, even those possessed with devils and Jesus healed them all. His fame had spread so far that the multitudes came not only from Syria, but from all parts of Galilee, Decapolis, Jerusalem, from Judea, and from beyond the Jordan, (Matthew 5:23-25).

John the Baptist had been arrested recently and Jesus was now openly preaching about the Kingdom of God from His base in Capernaum. Jesus had survived many attempts directed by Satan and His agents to prevent His coming to begin His ministry, but they had failed.

Jesus was teaching extensively about some great themes such as who God is, what God made us for, how we could be people of character, the proper perspective on prayer, money, worship, relationship, marriage, and more. Jesus would of necessity have to show

His disciples, potential disciples and the great multitudes of Israel who were following Him, how God expected them to live.

These teachings translated into how His followers should live on a daily basis, as opposed to living according to the mistaken and hypocritical teachings that were current at the time. The defectiveness of Judaism and the prevailing paganism was so extensive, and Jesus' Declaration of the Kingdom principles were necessarily so radically different from the immediate political and material blessings of Messiah's rule, (these were the things that the nation of Israel was looking for), that the spiritual implications were immense.

We find it easy to criticize the Pharisees and religious leaders of Jesus' day for their hypocrisy and worldly walk, but the church today is generally guilty of the same sins. Professing Christians easily fall into that old evil, which today we call secularism, for we do the same as those ancient disobedient people when we think and act like the world around us, doing the 'work of God' in the world's way, adopting the secular attitudes, values, and goals of the world.

It is interesting to note that there are several different ways in which people have interpreted the portion of Text that we study today. But in looking at them briefly we should note that unbelievers, though they have probably never read the Text completely, they think that it's high standards applies to them, and so they try to live by what they call the "Golden Rule" found in the Sermon on the Mount. On the other hand many Christians seem to try to avoid leading according to its teachings, justifying themselves in one way or another.

VARIETIES OF INTERPRETATION

Some view the Sermon as revealing the model for the ideal society, and they struggle to establish the kind of society that would allow living in the way that Jesus emphasized. The viewpoint, which ignores the true nature of humanity, is that the Sermon is for the salvation of society. But only the saved who we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit have a hope of appreciating these Beatitudes.

Others look at the Sermon as describing the kind of works that must be produced to attain eternal life, earning eternal salvation. They do not understand that it is only those who are already true believers that can live as outlined in the Sermon.

Still others view it simply as an 'exposition of Christian ethics'; the setting up of a "Golden rule" for all men to live by.

Some ignore the Jewish context in which the Sermon was delivered and apply it directly to the church.

Others set aside the entire Sermon by saying that it was given as a kind of Constitution for the Kingdom of God. They argue that since this is a Law of the Kingdom given to Israel, believers in the church age (believers now are a different and completely separate group altogether), are not under its requirements. One writer regards this position as teaching

that the Sermon teachings belong not to the saints of the present dispensation but to believers during a future millennium.

Of course, in adopting that position, they ignore the fact that Jesus spoke of the Kingdom as being also in the future "for they (the Blessed) shall inherit the earth", and that those that He is speaking to would suffer persecution and rejection.

We see here the dispensational type of evasion, which isolates and then interprets individual verses and ignores the fact that though the Sermon was preached to the Jews, it applies to every Christian. It lets us know what our attitudes and actions should be. It warns us about false religions that affect belief and practice, challenging us not to be like everybody else, but to live counter to the culture.

It is to be noted a little that the Sermon on the Mount does not use the terminology surrounding salvation at all and does not address a way of hope we can come to know Christ through faith in His finished work. It does not deal with the matter of salvation through faith, or justification by faith, and so it is clear that the Sermon was given to those that have already received the message of the Lord Jesus Christ concerning salvation and so it was not really for the world.

One writer summarises the view of many who do not regard the Sermon as not dealing with our salvation per se, but showing and instructing believers and unbelievers, the disciples as well as the great multitude of people. He states it speaks:

"About those who belong to that kingdom, and upon whom Christ pronounced its highest form of benediction. Christ came once in the flesh, and He is coming yet again. Each advent has a special object as connected with the Kingdom of heaven. The first advent of our Lord was for the purpose of establishing an empire among men and over men, by laying the foundations of that empire within individual souls. His second coming will be for the purpose of setting up that empire in glory. It is therefore vitally important that we understand what the character of the subjects in that Kingdom is, so that we may know whether we belong to the Kingdom ourselves, and whether its privileges, immunities, and future rewards are a part of our present and future inheritance. Thus one may grasp the importance of a devout and careful study of these Beatitudes. We must examine them as a whole; we cannot take one alone without losing a part of the lesson they jointly teach. These Beatitudes form one portrait.

When an artist draws a picture, each line may be graceful and masterful, but it is the union of the lines that reveal their mutual relation; it is the combination of the various artistic delineations and minute touches that gives us the complete portrait. So here, though each separate aspect had its own peculiar beauty and grace, and shows the hand of a master, it is only when we take all the lines in combination that we get the full portrait of a true subject and citizen in the Kingdom of God (Dr. A. T. Pierson paraphrased)."

JESUS PREPARES TO INTRODUCE HIS SERMON

He went up into a mountain, and as was the custom of the Teachers of the day, he sat down to teach His disciples. Note that it was the custom of the rabbis to sit when they taught officially and so we use the expression of that practice in our educational institutions, colleges and universities when we speak about a Professor occupying a Chair

of Philosophy, History, Theology or other subjects. Even the Roman Catholic church has adopted the practice for they teach that when the Pope speaks *ex cathedra*, which means literally in Latin 'from his chair', the claim is being made of speaking infallibly as the voice of the apostles when talking truth.

Even though His teachings were probably directed toward the group of disciples who followed Him, which of course would include the twelve disciples, the crowds would also hear Him teach. But as we would expect Jesus would instruct His disciples on the principles of life that they were delivered by now that they belong to Him It is recorded at the end of the sermon that the crowds were amazed at Jesus' teachings.

There is some argument as to whether or not the teachings recorded in Matthew 5-7 were given on perhaps two occasions instead of one, with Matthew simply putting them together in one composition to put Jesus' ethical teachings in one place. But there is really nothing to rule out Jesus giving this comprehensive sermon, and then on other occasions teaching on particular part of the topics covered. It is probably to be expected that Jesus would have to repeat these teachings on several occasions, to ensure that His disciples remembered them.

Remember therefore that it is really impossible to separate doctrine from practice and even to suggest that practice is more important than doctrine. But here Jesus teaches and it is authoritative teaching for He is the King.

THE TEXT

Verse 1. Some considered that Jesus' act of going up "into the mountain" was significant, since the mountain was a place of revelation. They argue that God had revealed His Law on Mount Sinai and now Jesus, who is God, was revealing His law, or new ethical teachings on a mountain. But this is probably overdoing things, for much of what Jesus taught can be traced to Old Testament Scriptures. There is tremendous continuity in the ethical and moral teachings of the Old Testament and New Testament Scriptures.

Still it must be recognized that Jesus, very God himself, is now revealing in a clear, direct, concise, blunt, subject to no misinterpretation, and in an unmistakable way, what must characterize every true believer.

Clearly though Jesus sees the multitudes gathering, then deliberately withdraws Himself to the mountaintop, gathers His disciples to Him, preparing to instruct and challenge His disciples.

Verse 2. The phrase "He opened his mouth" is a solemn and distinctive way of telling us that Jesus was about to give divine revelation. He was clearly about to say something weighty. These words were clearly stated to be teaching from Jesus Himself. As such, they must be treated as a most serious matter.

They are more important than we think, for there are many who argue that these teachings are not for us today, but are for people who will be living at some time in the distant future. They might even be for people in the Kingdom, for they cannot be obeyed in this present world. There is however no such indication, and neither the crowds nor the disciples appeared to have treated the "Sermon on the Mount" that way.

THE TEACHINGS

Note that the teachings, which we call the nine Beatitudes, are simple, direct and to the point. They address the hearers directly and tell them what those who would be in the kingdom of the Messiah would be like.

Jesus had to present these people with the true standard of righteousness, so that they could compare it with the traditions laid down by the current religious leaders.

There is no indication that Jesus was presenting a 'way of salvation', or of giving a new "Constitution" for the kingdom of God.

What the Sermon on the Mount does show is the standard of righteousness that God expects from His people. Anyone who is in a right relationship with God should conduct his or her life in the way indicated by the Sermon on the Mount. The people listening should have been aware of these things, for they had the Scriptures before them.

Of course, the standards will not sit well with most people, for most people have no intention of obeying God and living according to His commandments and instructions. They prefer to do their own thing, establish their own righteousness, and sometimes worship Yahweh and Baal at the same time.

The standards demanded by God of His people, are certainly high standards, and they cannot be achieved by mere human endeavour and will power.

These standards can only be met by those who are led by the Spirit and who have committed themselves to Christ, and rejected the siren call of the world.

The qualities called for in this Sermon, are qualities internal to a person. Anyone primarily concerned with an external show, will probably miss the point of the Sermon. It is only when a person comes to God through faith, puts their complete trust in God, and is properly related to God, that the teachings of the sermon will make sense.

Note carefully also that the teachings of Jesus emphasize that the conveniences and pleasures of this life, are not the things that would bring true joy and happiness. True joy and happiness is reserved in Heaven, only for those that keep themselves in the will of God, and do the things that please Him.

In so doing they will serve men, but they would inevitably be treated cruelly and persecuted by the world. Because those who serve God will not be doing the things, or behaving in the ways that the world regards as acceptable, they will be troubled by the people of the world.

But in each of the nine Beatitudes, Jesus pronounced a blessing on all those who had the characteristics He would outline.

The word "Blessed" means "happy" or "fortunate" in a lofty sense, indicating that blessedness is obtained from God, and not from earthly things. One writer defines this word:

“The word comes from the Greek *makarios*, which was used to describe the celestial bliss of the gods, a life free from the work and worries of the world. Used of men, initially, it suggested the same kind of bliss, of being removed from the cares of life. Thus it was used of the dead who were thought to have passed to a better existence. Here ‘blessed’ refers to the blessing and joy of a man who is self-contained, independent of external circumstances... Divine blessedness is the inner joy, serenity, and composure which come from knowing that we are right with God, that our contentment and well-being are not the product of chance but of infinite grace.”

In these nine Beatitudes, only seven character features are mentioned, and probably these are meant to depict a complete character to which perfect blessedness is attached. The eighth Beatitude does not refer to a character trait, but simply tells us what will happen to the people that possess the previous seven character traits. Those people would be “persecuted for righteousness’ sake”. They would certainly receive the first promise, namely, the kingdom of Heaven.

Notice that Jesus promised things that were closely related to the kind of character that God prized. The rewards fitted their character, and were not just plucked out of the air.

In addition, we note that the Beatitudes are so structured that they resemble Old Testament teachings, and in fact stress teachings about true spirituality found in the Old Testament. The Kingdom that Jesus taught about was clearly not different from what the Scriptures had always spoken about. The problem was that the corrupt teachings had hidden the real essence of true religion from the people.

But the remnant of God had always known what true religion was all about. Jesus now had to strip away the false and corrupt traditions, and show the people what God really wanted.

Verse 3. The Scriptures had always labelled the true people of God as “the poor”, “the oppressed”, “the afflicted”, “the needy” or a combination of these. (See Psalm 40: 17, and Isaiah 41: 17.) The Scriptures generally teach us that it is the poor of this world that is rich in faith, while the ungodly are the ones that generally prosper.

This Beatitude does not necessarily stress material poverty, but refers to people who are deeply conscious of their need. Actually there are two Greek words that can be used to describe poverty. One word *penes* means a person that has nothing at all. But Jesus chose the one that meant the most destitute, the absolutely worse *Off*, the one that meant being beaten down to one’s knees. Obviously, such a person would be most humble, and demonstrate always a spirit of utter humility. They would see themselves as not having anything with which to commend themselves to God and so they would be fit people for the reception of justification by faith. Hence we can look at the lesson of the incident in Luke 18 where Jesus speaks of the contrasting attitudes of the Pharisee and the despised Publican.

Most of the world are not humbled by their need, for they do not regard their condition as one in which they do not have true riches. Most focus on their temporal possessions, or their lack of it. But the "poor in spirit" are aware of their poverty and want in every sense, and are humbled. They know that nothing that they have is really theirs, and what they do have does not commend them to God. They sense that judgment is near, and they fear God, so they go to God for mercy, watching and waiting for the smallest favour from God.

This of course gives rise to all kinds of arguments as to whether or not Jesus is commending material poverty. In our prosperous and materialistic society, the thought that Jesus would be implying anything great about material poverty, is generally rejected. But everyone agrees on the woeful implications of spiritual poverty.

The "blessed" however know that they have nothing that is valuable enough to please God. They do not have a false view of themselves, but have a contrite and a broken heart. These people have no self-esteem as defined by the world, but know that they are simply 'unprofitable servants'.

They look reality in the face, and without guile, rest completely in, and depend on God alone. There is no spiritual pride, but their hearts and spirits simply obey God.

Jesus would simply invite these "Blessed of my Father" to come to Him and fully enjoy the Kingdom that He had long prepared for them. They would come into their inheritance.

Verse 4. Mourning is not simply a feeling that we experience when the pressures of life hurt or when we feel sorrow at a sin we have committed.

When people understand and feel their spiritual poverty, they will mourn after God, and lament with continued grief for the indwelling sin that always works in them. This is the emotional counterpart to the intellectual recognition that they are "poor in spirit". They understand the many times when there is unbelief in their hearts, they will remember the many declarations of commitments to God and promises to God which they have broken. They will remember the many infirmities and sins they have committed, and then they will remember the many acts of grace and Mercy that God had shown them, despite their grieving of the Spirit and the dishonouring of the gospel of Christ.

These people will mourn at the sins and wickedness all around them in the pagan world, and the sins of those who profess to follow Christ and do not. They will mourn at the troubles they will encounter and hands of others, which they have to endure for the sake of Christ.

Like Isaiah, they will lament "Woe is me! I am undone". The lamentation followed his recognition of the true state of affairs in which he lived. We note that these mourners in Zion, who are described in Isaiah 61:3 and 66: 2, are very different from the false mourners who pretended that they understood sin, but who hypocritically kept on sinning themselves. These people have the intellectual convictions that they are poor in spirit, and they show their emotional feelings by mourning. They shall be comforted.

Isaiah 61 describes it well that the Messiah will: "Appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified."

The heirs of promise have a great consolation. God had told the Messiah to speak comfortably to them, and they will be comforted, eventually freed from the troubles of life and placed in unbroken communion with the Father, the Son, the Spirit, the angels, and glorified saints. One day the days of mourning would be ended, and God would wipe away all tears from their eyes.

It is interesting to see what one writer says:

"The philosophers have sought to understand the secret of happiness. There are 80 different ways in which the philosophers have sought to introduce us to happiness, and probably a few have been invented in the last decade or so since men stopped counting. It's very striking that Mr. Gladstone was one of the first to point this out, that in the Greek language, and also in the Latin language, there was no form for true humility. Those languages, with the richness of vocabulary, have no word that could adequately describe true humility. All of the words that are related to humility in both Greek and Latin were words that have about them a sense of meanness or contempt. The humble was the contemptible man. And it was not until Lord Jesus came, or the biblical revelation came with the idea, blessed are the poor in spirit that we have true humility set forth in the light of the presence of God".

It should be remembered that Jesus was speaking about something far deeper than the happiness that we experience when we win the jackpot or get a big inheritance. Scholars point to that English word 'happiness' is from an old English word hap that means 'chance'. And this is found in "perhaps". But we are not dealing with good times or perhaps when we do have a financial windfall for when it goes so goes our happiness. The blessedness Jesus speaks of is the blessedness of complete satisfaction.

We must warn however that it is possible for us to be proud of our humility. That is not a very good characteristic.

Verse 5. This promise to the meek repeats Psalm 37: 11. This Psalm verses one through 11 gives excellent advice. The word for the 'meek' has often been translated as the 'poor', showing us how both characteristics are related. They are humble, gentle and really appreciate the position they are in. This is a grace given by the Holy Spirit. It is a fruit of the Spirit.

Note how the meek behave. They are not proud and ambitious, fighting to succeed in this world, but instead are mild and gentle. But they are strong, with their strength under control. Titus 3: 1-3 describes how this meekness is applied, and shows up in the real world. "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to ever good work, To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men. For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish,

disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.”

Jesus, in calling us to Him, described Himself in another passage.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your soul”. (Matthew 11: 29)

1 Peter 3: 4 describes true adorning as that of “a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price”.

This type of personality trait is not prized by the pagan world, or even in the Church, and indeed cannot be prized in the world, for the world, and the people of the world, cannot understand or obey the things of God. Many think that ‘meek’ means ‘weak’.

Part of the problem is that Jesus has been represented by the church as weak, accepting everything that we do, and was somewhat as the pictures show sad looking and slightly effeminate in how He behaved. The world's concept of meekness is spinelessness, of subservience, with nice guys finishing last. For the world the blessed are the mighty, the strong, the colourful, the outgoing, the loud radical, the ostentatious who show off what they have.

True humility and meekness comes when one understand that we are created beings, a dependent being and that we have come from the hand of God who is the only self-existent being in the universe

Those that are meek will submit and work under the authority of God. They accept control by God and so the word means the ability to accept submissiveness to the divine control. One's right and privileges will not stand in the way of service. So David in Psalm 25:9 writes:

“The meek will he guide in justice, and the meek will he teach his ways”.

The meek will inherit the “land”. Those would delight themselves in the Lord, who commit themselves to him will quite naturally be where God is. They will be with God when He establishes His kingdom on earth.

2 Corinthians 10:1 tells us that meekness is a characteristic of the Lord Jesus. He was God, possessing life in Himself and was self-existent, yet at a point in time the Lord Jesus accepted the control of His Father and came to complete the redemptive work that would save us, and lead into the messianic kingdom on the Earth.

“Inherit” means “to receive by lot, and then, possess.” It “points to a firm possession”. (Morris)

Hendriken states:

“The most complete fulfillment of the promise is reserved for the future, when at Christ's return in glory the meek will inherit the new heaven and earth, the rejuvenated universe from which every stain of sin and every remnant of the curse will have been removed and in which righteousness will forever dwell.”

When we are with Christ we will see what humanity was always intended to be. We will be exactly where we were intended to be. When we are with Christ, that will be heaven, there will be complete perfection as your perfect possession.

Verse 6. These people who have poverty of spirit, who mourn for sin, and are meek, will find themselves having a spiritual appetite that makes them continually desire personal righteousness. They are not seeking after riches, honour, and the pleasures of the world, but they have a great hunger or want that comes from their intense desire to be found righteous by God.

Hunger and thirsting are probably the most intense of the human appetites, and the saints are here shown as having deep cravings for spiritual blessings. See Isaiah 51: 1; Genesis 49:18; Psalm 17: 13-15, and Psalms 119: 20, where the people of God have expressed their longing for righteousness, conscious of their need for salvation, knowing that God approves of this (see Psalms 11: 7, 23: 3, 106: 3; Proverbs 12: 28; 16: 31; Isaiah 64: 5).

The saints have this intense, vehement desire, precisely because the Holy Spirit places the holy requirements of God before them day by day. The Spirit creates this deep hunger, causing the repentant sinner to realize continually that only God can help, and that person is thus forced to focus on Christ. This craving continues until the day the believer dies.

Note that on the basis of the work of Jesus Christ there is an “imputation of righteousness” to believers and the new birth, something that is reckoned to us. But the “impartation of righteousness” is something as far that is the work of sanctification by the work of the Holy Spirit who is bringing those who are perceived as standing in righteousness to as one writer puts it:

“a state in which righteousness characterizes their thoughts and their actions. That's the doctrine of sanctification. That incidentally is the work the Holy Spirit carries on in the life of every one of us, even little children, who have believed in the Lord Jesus, and stand just before God and are the recipients of the sanctifying ministry of the Holy Spirit. And incidentally, he does not stop his ministry. He is just as sovereign in his activities and in his workings”.

The believer when he was a sinner, longed to be saved, and now that longing is replaced by the craving to be like Christ. That renewed heart pants after God, longing to walk with Him closer and closer.

Note that these who hunger for righteousness realize that they do not possess righteousness in themselves. They know that they lack it, but they earnestly desire it. Clearly, they will always be humble, for they recognize who and what they are. The proud cannot be people of God.

One writer states that hunger is the kind that cannot be satisfied by a snack. It is a longing that can never be satisfied on this side of eternity. This is a hunger for complete righteousness.

Note carefully that this Beatitudes says nothing about achievement but this is the very opposite for the people who are blessed are those who hunger and thirst after something that they do not have. They lack achievement for they know that they are empty. This is in contrast to some of the other Beatitudes such as those that are "poor in spirit" for that represents an achievement. Those that "mourn" and those that are "meek" represent an achievement, but here we have a continuing action which always continues. We can always hunger and thirst after righteousness and so there is no excuse by saying that we cannot be like those in the other Beatitudes. In a sense we can therefore say that this is the best Beatitude of all. Unfortunately, we see Christians hungering for the things of the world, the power, authority, success, comfort, and happiness. They indulge in 'junk food'. They are definitely in counter-culture eating.

We know of course, that when God puts something in the heart of His people, He always provides an answer for it. When He gives His people a strong and intense desire for righteousness, He will always speedily provide the salvation, so that they will be well fed. The saints know that God will provide, and fill them, so that they would be satisfied. The blessings of the new Covenant will be theirs.

This is a strange kind of filling for it both satisfies us, and keep us longing for more. But eventually, when Jesus comes to be with His saints, they will be truly satisfied.

Note that the next Beatitudes show those described by the first four Beatitudes will walk throughout life in a proper way. One writer says these next three statements are positive statements, not popular statements. He states:
"The world cheers the ruthless not the merciful. It cheers hypocrites and effective liars not the pure in heart. It cheers the winners not the peacemakers.
However, having learned of our need, we are made new and sent out into the world with a godly purpose. It is these lives that will be remembered with wreaths not just 50 years from now, but in eternity, with the approval of God and all that goes with that. The merciful, pure in heart, and peacemakers, who challenged their world, are people who have found out what life is really worth living for."

Verse 7. This next Beatitude is closely related to Psalms 18: 25. God first taught us how to be merciful, for He showed Mercy and compassion toward us first. It is because God had pity when He looked at sinful, suffering men, and He feels kindness, and thus wants to relieve the suffering of men. He thus sent His Son to die, in this supreme act of mercy.

Remember the parable of the unmerciful debtor. The Lord had first forgiven the unrighteous steward an immense debt, and expected him to forgive his fellow servant a measly one hundred pence debt. The Lord was indignant when the unrighteous steward imprisoned the fellow for the small debt. The steward was supposed to be a vessel of mercy, reflecting the mercy his Lord had shown to him. But instead he had ill-treated the servant for a small debt. He therefore was treated as a vessel of wrath.
(Matthew 18: 23-35)

The people of God have received mercy, and still need mercy. There is no question that they should exercise mercy themselves. They are being transformed into the image of God's Son, and therefore they will of necessity show mercy. As a matter of fact, it seems that God is required to give His people mercy continually, so that they will be reminded always that they must show mercy.

Our mercy, the pity, kindness and benevolence for others, is produced by the new nature implanted by the Holy Spirit. This is our new spiritual nature that we have once we have received the new birth. The child is now like the parent. The new man will show that he is new by the trait of being merciful.

We remind ourselves of how the saints of old set the example of mercy for us.

Abram showed mercy to Lot, for despite Lot's bad behavior, Abram spent much time, resources, and energy to deliver him, (Genesis 14).

Joseph showed mercy and freely forgave his terrible brothers.

Moses showed mercy to Miriam when she rebelled against him, for despite her behaviour and the danger she posed to his life, he asked God to heal her, (Numbers 12).

David refused to kill Saul when he could, showing mercy, 1(Samuel 24:1-22 and 26:1-25).

But on the contrary Judas showed no mercy. Psalm 109:15-16 reflects the biblical attitude to those who show no mercy: "Let them be before the Lord continually, that he may cut off the memory of them from the earth.

Because that he remembered not to show mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man, that he might even slay the broken in heart."

Note that this is only the beginning, for in that Day when we stand before God He will call us to inherit the kingdom, since we had fed the hungry, gave water to the thirsty, helped the stranger, the naked, the sick, and those imprisoned. If we cannot show mercy, He will disown us.

This principle is reflected in the teaching in Galatians 6 that "for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap".

In Proverbs 11:17 we read: " The merciful man doeth good to his own soul: but he that is cruel troubleth his own flesh."

In Proverbs 21:21 we read: "He that followeth after righteousness and mercy findeth life, righteousness, and honor."

Micah 7:18 declares that God regards mercy as a source of satisfaction.

" He delighted in mercy."

We must love mercy. This shows that we are redeemed.

Remember mercy is closely connected to pity. That heart with mercy always responds to the pain, suffering, misery of others.

Verse 8. The heart must be pure. What you are on the outside must be the same person that you are on the inside. Men may constantly think they are thinking pure thoughts, act in what seems to be pure ways, speak words that seem to be pure, but inside there is impurity. God knows the difference.

This Beatitude has always been perverted, for men always say they are the champions of truth while they are not. Other are deluded enough to claim that the old man in them has been entirely wiped out, with God so renewing them completely that their carnal nature is gone. They say that they have no sinful desires or thoughts, and they commit no sin. They deny the plain and clear truth of 1 John 1:8.

The Scriptures teach that the heart of man is naturally unclean, and man is never able to make it clean by his own efforts. In Psalm 32:1-2 it is stated:

“Blessed is he whose transgressions is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.” (See also Psalm 51:10 and 73:1.)

It has always been known that it was only through the blood of the Covenant that there was ever any hope of being with God. The heart must be “sprinkled from an evil conscience”. It is only the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus that can cleanse the heart, and keep on cleansing it continually. (See 1 John 1; Hebrews 10: 22; 9: 14.)

Then communion with God will be possible. Those with pure hearts will see the beauty, power, and glory of God, and will taste of his graciousness. They will live in communion with God, and will be satisfied.

This does not mean sinlessness of life, but when we have a pure heart we will discern and be always conscious of the remaining impurities and draw closer to Christ, so that He will continually cleanse us. When a person passionately loves Christ, purity of heart makes Jesus clearer and clearer, until we see Him face-to-face without the veil. 1 Corinthians 13.

Verse 9. The children of God will automatically radiate peace, and show a life that reflects an inward peace with God. They will be peacemakers, and will work to reconcile the world to God. (See Hebrews 13:20 and 2 Cor. 5: 19-20). The people of God will spread this peace of God.

Note carefully however that “unity of the Spirit”, or the peace that the Spirit brings, is not the same as the “spirit of unity”. There is a ‘spirit of unity’ that brings together worshippers of Baal and worshippers of Yahweh. But there can be no unity or peace between the people of God, and enemies of God. There can be calm, but once the people of God begin to bring the “peace of God” to the world, there will be trouble. But the Sons of God must be peacemakers in the ‘godly’ sense of the word, because this is the peace that the world really needs. They show the world how to have inward peace with God.

Confidence in God, that God is our Father will make us peacemakers. Jesus is not here referring to truce-makers, for they are just skilled negotiators who balance opposition so that a “cold war” can continue and marriages continue in an “unholy deadlock”, as one writer puts it. This is a peace of apathy and acquiescence, peace at any cost, says one writer.

The peace that God speaks about is not appeasement, but sharing the peace that Jesus' blood brought to men. This is the peace of our reconciliation with God. One writer reminds us:

“A peacemaker is someone who knows the answer to the turmoil inside the individual. He has a message of love from God that can grant real freedom, real change and renewal, and peace on the inside, so that for the first time the individual doesn't have to fight back.”

Peacemakers are linked to God and they are called children of God. Their character is such and their interest in the salvation of sinning men is such, that they are given the great privilege as ambassadors of peace. They know that there is no peace for the wicked, and they know that it is only when men come to for Christ that they find peace. Their feet are therefore called beautiful in Romans 10:15. These feet are as Ephesians 6:15 puts it: “shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace.”

The children of God are instrument in the hands of God to reconcile those that are fighting against Him.

Often people will sneer at them and call them foolish, fanatics, narrow minded, but God regards them as his children and will one day hold them up proudly to the entire world, and witness to the world that they are the true children of God.

Remember that now you might be humble, lightly regarded, despised, misrepresented, laughed at, and regarded as of little value, but one day you will shine as the sun in the Kingdom of the Father. (see Matthew 13:43 and Romans 8:19.)

Verse 10. When people display the seven features of character mentioned above, they will be doubly blessed by God. They will not have committed crimes, or deeds of unrighteousness, but they will suffer all forms of enmity and hostility. They will be hated by the world, which will be filled with wrath against them and persecute them in all kinds of terrible ways.

Jesus had to remind these followers that the kingdom of Heaven would belong to them.

Why would the world ill-treat such beautiful people. One commentator gives the reasons: “Poverty of spirit runs counter to the pride of men's heart; a pensive disposition, in the view of one's universal deficiencies before God, is ill relished by the callous, indifferent, laughing, self-satisfied world;

a meek and quiet spirit, taking wrong, is regarded as pusillanimous and rasps against the proud, resentful spirit of the world;

that craving after spiritual blessings rebukes but too unpleasantly the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life;

so too does a merciful spirit the hard-heartedness of the world;

purity of heart contrasts painfully with painted hypocrisy;

and the peacemaker cannot be easily endured by the contentious, quarrelsome world.

Thus does “righteousness” come to be “persecuted”. But blessed are they who, in spite of this, dare to be righteous. For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

As this was the reward promised to the poor in spirit-the leading one of these seven Beatitudes- of course it is the proper portion of such as are persecuted for exemplifying them.”

Those been changed into the image of God will run into the spite of the enemy. Persecution is a very natural reaction to righteousness says 1 Peter 4:3-4. Christians should therefore be careful that they made the right enemies.

Persecution means there will be a relentless pursuit to hurt and destroy. So when people are at school or at work and everyone embraces anti-God practices, false philosophies, foolish ideas, and pagan religions and customs in our multicultural environment, but will not tolerate anything connected with Christianity or the Bible, Christians should not be surprised but should expect ridicule and false accusations.

Verse 11. The sons of God are told to consider themselves fortunate when men accuse them to their face instead of simply suffering from backbiting. They are warned that as long as they are righteous and doing righteousness, they will be persecuted and evil spoken of.

Notice that the evil and disgrace come on them, for Jesus' sake. Righteousness and Jesus are bound up together. Jesus is righteousness incarnate, and so to do what Jesus and His Apostles commanded, which is righteousness, will not bring pleasant rewards from the people of the earth. The attacks will be based on falsehoods, for the people will invent all kinds of evil things, and seek to bring all kinds of malicious lies, which they invent to bring the people of God and Christianity into disgrace.

They did the same to Jesus, and they would do it to His followers. The day would come however when those who are reviled and persecuted will be the happy ones, and those that did persecution will be the unhappy ones.

Verse 12. At every indignity, they should be rejoicing or "exulting", a very strong word. When there is participation in the suffering of Christ, there is the certainty of a great reward. The prophets had all been persecuted, hunted, and killed. The lot of the servant of God would never change in this world. The reviling and persecution was nothing new. Those who live godly this world must suffer persecution. When you choose to stand by the word of God, you will not be liked. Those who love the world, will never like the word of God, and will always persecute the servants of God.

Derision, reviling or verbal abuse, hunting down, oppression, defamation will bring compensations in the Great Day of the Lord. Those who suffer are in great company, for they are with Christ, the prophets, and all the saints who had ever lived..

CONCLUSION

Christians are to be genuinely different. They are to inhibit corruption and dispel the darkness. The Christian lifestyle is distinctive, and these Beatitudes show that the man or woman of God cannot conform to the standards of the world. It is strange to note that the Beatitudes show that the circumstances facing the people of God which will lead them to God's blessing, are the very same circumstances that will lead other men to curse God.

Meditate on the Beatitudes and realize that they are intended to turn our thoughts to the Person of Jesus. We are being conformed to the person of Jesus and we must always look on him for he is the perfect pattern or model.

He was rich but he became poor for our sake. See 2 Corinthians 8 :9. See also how Jesus is described in Luke 9:58, Psalm 69:29, 86:1, 109:22. There is no better description. Jesus was the Chief mourner according to Isaiah 53: 3. See His mourning and grief in Mark 3:5, 7:34, 15:34, John 11:35, Matthew 23: 37, Hebrews 5:7.

See the beauty of the meek Christ in Matthew 11:19, and His coming into Jerusalem on an ass, riding in lowly fashion in John 12:14. He did not seek the limelight, or sought the company of the learned and great, or proclaim His miracles loudly, or encouraged the crowd to make Him King.

Righteousness was the girdle of His loins as Isaiah 11: 5 had predicted. Jesus exemplified righteousness. He was about His Father's business as Luke 2:49 stated. He came to do the will of God as Hebrews 10:9 declared. His meat was to do the will of Him that sent Him and to finish His work, says. John 4:34. So He is called according to Jeremiah 23:6 "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Jesus was mercy personified, for He exchanged the glory of Heaven to become a slave and to go to the cross to be made a curse for His people.

He was without spot or blemish and so the pure and heart is perfectly exemplified in Christ. 1 John 3:5 tells us in Him was no sin, and 1 Peter 2:22 we are told He did no sin. See 2 Corinthians 5:21, Luke 1:35, Hebrews 7:26.

He was the supreme peacemaker who made peace through the blood of His cross as Colossians 1:20 declares. He is the Prince of peace. See Ephesians 2:11-18, Isaiah 9:6-7, and 2 Peter 3:13.

He was the Righteous One who was most persecuted for righteousness sake. So the Beatitudes point.us to Christ into whose image we are being transformed. One writer can therefore rightly say:

"Each of the promises attached to the Beatitudes finds its accomplishment in Christ. Poor in spirit He was, and His supremely is the Kingdom. Mourn He did, yet He will be comforted as He sees of the travail of His soul (Isaiah 53:11). He was meekness personified, yet He is now seated upon a throne of glory. He hungered and thirsted after righteousness, yet now He is filled with satisfaction as He beholds that the righteousness which He worked out has been imputed to His people.

Pure in heart, He sees God as none other sees Him (Matthew 11:27). As the Peacemaker, He is acknowledged as the unique Son of God by all the blood bought children. As the persecuted One, great is His reward, for He has been given the name above all others (Phil. 2:9-11). May the spirit of God occupy us more and more with Him who is fairer than the children of men (Ps. 45:2)