

## **This Present Kingdom**

### **Week 1 - Kingdom Attitudes**

#### **Matthew 5:1-6**

As we join the disciples on the hillside above the Sea of Galilee, we watch with rapt attention as our Lord sits down-perhaps with His back against a boulder or in the shade of a sycamore tree-and begins to bring *The Disruptive Message of The Sermon on the Mount*.

John Phillips notes, “We have now come to the famous Sermon on the Mount. There is nothing to compare with it in all the literature of the world. Even the greatest of the world’s moral, religious, and philosophical statements blush and stammer in the presence of this sublime declaration” (*Exploring the Gospel of Matthew: An Expository Commentary*, p. 84).

In *The Divine Conspiracy*, Dallas Willard writes, “The Sermon on the Mount is a concise statement of Jesus’ teachings on how to actually live in the reality of God’s present Kingdom available to us from the very space surrounding our bodies” (p. 111). That is, the Kingdom of God is right here, right now!

The scribes and Pharisees had an artificial external righteousness based on the Law. They concerned themselves with the minute details of conduct and strict adherence to an external set of rules and rituals. Jesus brings an entirely different message. True righteousness is imputed through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ by grace through faith. His words are soothing. His voice is kind. His delivery is impeccable. His message is revolutionary.

In His discourse, Jesus does not set forth the laws of salvation, rather He states the laws of behavior for those who have been saved. He sets forth a new way of life based entirely on a new way of thinking. It is in fact based on a new way of being. The stunning result is blessed happiness experienced through a fulfilled and satisfying life. I suppose it goes without saying that this life is impossible without having His new life within.

The Sermon on the Mount opens with a series of conditional blessings commonly referred to as the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12). These are attitudes that ought to be present in the lives of the redeemed!

#### **I. Our Attitude Toward Self - Matthew 5:1-3**

John MacArthur writes, “The Beatitudes are progressive. They are not in a random or haphazard order. Each leads to the other in logical succession. Being poor in spirit reflects the right attitude we should have to our sinful condition, which then should lead us to mourn, to be meek and gentle, to hunger and thirst for righteousness, to be merciful, pure in heart, and have a peacemaking spirit. A

Christian who has all those qualities will be so far above the level of the world that his life will rebuke the world—which will bring persecution from the world (5:10–12) and light to the world (vv. 14–16)” (John MacArthur, *Matthew*, p. 145).

Jesus said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven” (Matthew 5:3). There are several words translated “poor” in the original Greek language. MacArthur shares insight on the one Jesus uses here:

*Ptōchos* (poor) is from a verb meaning “to shrink, cower, or cringe,” as beggars often did in that day. Classical Greek used the word to refer to a person reduced to total destitution, who crouched in a corner begging. As he held out one hand for alms he often hid his face with the other hand, because he was ashamed of being recognized. The term did not mean simply poor, but begging poor. It is used in Luke 16:20 to describe the beggar Lazarus (MacArthur, *Matthew*, p. 145).

The poor in spirit are those who recognize their absolute spiritual destitution and their utter dependence on God. Having discarded any vain effort to gain God’s favor, those who are poor in spirit cast themselves upon the Lord and beg for His mercy and grace. Galatians 2:16 says, “A man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus...since by the works of the Law, no flesh will be justified.” Titus 3:5-7 says, “He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to *the* hope of eternal life.” Those who come to the Lord recognizing they are a sinner in need of a Savior will find eternal life in Christ. In Luke 12:32, Jesus said, “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the Kingdom.”

Entrance into the Kingdom of God is facilitated by being poor in spirit. A correct assessment of ourselves, awakened by the Holy Spirit, allows us to recognize ourselves as spiritual beggars in need of a Savior and grants us a proper Biblical view of God as our only hope and help. By repentance and faith (Acts 20:21), we enter into a relationship with Jesus Christ. Maintaining that attitude in our daily walk assures our absolute dependence of the Lord. Paul wrote, “Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him” (Colossians 2:6).

## **II. Our Attitude Toward Sin - Matthew 5:4**

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted” (Matthew 5:4). Those who are sincerely “poor in spirit” (Matthew 5:3) will mourn over their sins. The word used here for *mourn* carries the idea of inner agony, the deepest, most heart-felt grief. Blessedness does not come in the act of mourning itself. It comes because godly

sorrow works repentance and repentance brings God's forgiveness! Second Corinthians 7:10 (NKJV) says, "For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death."

David wrote of his experience of brokenness over his sin and the divine forgiveness which followed. Psalm 32:1-5 says, "How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit! When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was drained away *as* with the fever heat of summer. Selah. I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I did not hide; I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD'; and You forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah."

Those who recognize the weight of their sin and spiritual bankruptcy will (should) grieve over their sin, recognizing it is an affront to the Holy God. Genuine repentance will be met with forgiveness and divine comfort. James 4:8-10 says, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you." First John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

The mark of spiritual maturing is not sinlessness, an impossibility this side of Heaven. The presence of our indwelling flesh sees to that. Permanent victory over sin is reserved for Heaven, but growing awareness of sinfulness and an attitude of intolerance for it in our lives is evidence of Kingdom living. The faithful child of God is continually broken over his sinfulness and readily comes to the place of repentance, confession, forgiveness, and reconciliation. This is Kingdom living! While nothing can sever **our relationship** with God (John 10:27-29), sin spoils **our fellowship** with Him (Psalm 66:18). A woman (or man) who is seeking to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord" (2 Peter 3:18) will grieve over sin, earnestly seek to be forgiven, and will be comforted. Hallelujah! What a Savior!

### III. Our Attitude Toward Strife - Matthew 5:5

Jesus said, "Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5). The Jews were looking for a Messiah who would overthrow their Roman oppressors. They were looking for a strong leader, one marked with miraculous power and military might. The idea of a meek Messiah leading a meek people could not have been further from their concept of the Messianic kingdom:

**Gentle** is from *praos*, which basically means mild or soft. The term sometimes was used to describe a soothing medicine or a soft breeze. It was used of colts and other animals whose naturally wild spirits were broken by a trainer so that they could do useful work. As a human attitude it meant being gentle of spirit, meek, submissive, quiet, tenderhearted (John MacArthur, *Matthew*, p. 170).

Gentleness or meekness is the opposite of violence and vengeance. The believer marked by meekness is surrendered, submissive, and steadfast in the knowledge that God is in control and ultimately Sovereign over all. This attitude of Kingdom living will result in sharing the rich inheritance we have in Christ now and in the ages to come.

#### **IV. Our Attitude Toward the Savior - Matthew 5:6**

Jesus said, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied” (Matthew 5:6). Hunger and thirst are the most basic and demanding felt needs of the physical body. Our physical life depends on food and water. Likewise, our spiritual life depends on righteousness. Happy is the one who finds satisfaction in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and the intentional aggressive pursuit of personal holiness and practical righteousness through Him.

Jesus is the Door to salvation and He is the Way to the progressive process of sanctification, whereby we become conformed to the image of Christ. In John 6:35 Jesus says, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst. When we “taste and see that the Lord is good” (Psalm 34:8) we will find our deepest needs met in Christ and we “shall be satisfied” in Him.

Beloved, beware of reducing salvation to getting out of hell and getting into Heaven. Heaven is a by-product of our conversion experience, a glorious one to be sure, but the greater reality is the Christ-life in us and the life which we now live is lived “by faith in the Son of God, who loved [us] and gave Himself up for [us]” (Colossians 2:20). John Phillips said, “The genius of the gospel lies in the fact that as Christ once gave His life *for* us, He now gives His life *to* us” (John Phillips, *Exploring the Gospel of Matthew: An Expository Commentary*, p. 85). Major Ian Thomas said, “To be in Christ—that makes you fit for Heaven; but for Christ to be in you - that makes you fit for earth! (Major Ian Thomas, retrieved from Major Ian Thomas, retrieved from <https://quotefancy.com/quote/1762326/W-Ian-Thomas-To-be-in-Christ-that-makes-you-fit-for-heaven-but-for-Christ-to-be-in-you>).

Beloved, consider these attitudes: being poor in spirit, being grieved over sin, being gentle especially in the face of conflict and strife, and hungering and thirsting for the Truth of God’s Word. These are the attitudes that ought to be present in the daily lives of the redeemed. This is Kingdom living!