

This Present Kingdom
Week 2 – Kingdom Attitudes Part 2
Matthew 5: 7-12

The Beatitudes are the “how to be’s” of Christ-like character. The Sermon on the Mount is Christ’s philosophy of life. “Philosophy focuses on character traits and habits that, if practiced, will result in a flourishing life and society” (*Jesus the Philosopher* by Jonathan T. Pennington, p. 22). Thus, the one who practices these traits will be blessed, happy, and will experience inner flourishing or well-being.

“It is hard to be happy. If it weren’t, we wouldn’t have 577,000 mental health professionals, 15 million people suffering from depression, and a \$10 billion industry in bibliotherapy (self-help books). This is just in the United States alone” (*Jesus the Philosopher*, Jonathan T. Pennington, p. 191).

Here is a brief outline review of the beatitudes we studied last week:

- Blessed are the poor in spirit – Redemption
- Blessed are those who mourn – Repentance
- Blessed are the gentle (meek) – Restraint
- Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness – Ravenous

The first four beatitudes focus on our relationship with the Lord. The next four focus on our relationship with our fellow man.

Christ’s concern is that we be changed from the inside out. He was always focusing on the heart. Jesus said, “Do you not understand that everything that goes into the mouth passes into the stomach, and is eliminated? But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man” (Matthew 15:17-20).

Jesus made it very clear that outward conformity to the law did not cleanse the inner man. Jesus saw into their hearts, just as He sees ours. How is your heart?

A changed heart produces a transformed life. It is not about outward conformity to the law, but about an inward change of heart.

Everything grows from the inside out.

“So here’s what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don’t become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You’ll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what He

wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you” (Romans 12:1-2 MSG).

Paul, the great apostle and church planter, followed Christ’s example. In his letter to the Galatians, he said, “My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you” (Galatians 4:19). Paul’s greatest desire was for people to be saved, but he did not stop there. He labored earnestly that they might grow in spiritual maturity. He would not stop “until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13). Their spiritual maturity was of great concern to Paul.

When we see ourselves in light of Christ’s holiness and grace, we will mourn over our sin and become humble in the sight of God and man. We can honestly say that if there is any good thing in me, it is Christ! I will abhor the rebellion and vileness that is within me. This awareness and repentance leads to humility or meekness. This humility awakens a hunger within for His righteousness.

For many years I prayed Psalm 42:1 – “As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God.” I prayed this verse daily for several months, until one morning I realized that I could not get enough of God’s Word. I remember the joy I felt as I recognized the Lord had answered my prayer! I was hungering and thirsting after Him.

We move from our focus on the heart attitudes that lead to an intimate relationship with Christ to the attitudes of heart that bless our relationships with our fellow man.

I. **Blessed are the merciful – Reconciliation (v. 7)**

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who **reconciled** us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of **reconciliation**, namely, that God was in Christ **reconciling** the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of **reconciliation**. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be **reconciled** to God” (2 Corinthians 5:17-20).

We now have the ministry of reconciliation.

“Reconciliation in community will always cost us something, and in Christ the barriers that separate us can come down in His name” (*The Deeply Formed Life*, Rich Villodas, p. 52).

II. Blessed are the pure in heart – Righteous (v. 8)

Who is called righteous?

Abel (Matthew 23:35)
Noah (Genesis 6:9)
Abraham (Genesis 15:6)
Job (Job 1:8)
King David (1 Kings 14:8)
King Asa (1 Kings 15:11)
King Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:3)
King Josiah (2 Kings 22:1-2)
Zacharias and Elizabeth (Luke 1:5-6)
John the Baptist (Mark 6:20)
Joseph (Matthew 1:19)
Simeon (Luke 2:25)
Cornelius, the Centurion (Acts 10:22)

A pure heart is a cleansed heart. A heart that loves the Lord fully and completely. “This pureness of heart, therefore, corresponds to ‘singleness’. It means, if you like, ‘without folds’; it is open, nothing hidden. You can describe it as sincerity; it means single-minded, or single-eyed devotion. One of the best definitions of purity is given in Psalm 86:11, ‘Unite my heart to fear thy Name’” (*Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, D. Martin Lloyd-Jones, p. 94).

“For with the heart a person believes, resulting in **righteousness**, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation” (Romans 10:10).

“For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but **righteousness** and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Romans 14:17).

III. Blessed are the peacemakers – Restoration (v. 9)

“Before you can be a peacemaker you really must be entirely forgetful of self because as long as you are thinking about yourself, and shielding yourself, you cannot be doing the work properly. To be a peacemaker you must be as it were, absolutely neutral so that you can bring the two sides together. You must not be sensitive, you must not be touchy, you must not be on the defensive. If you are, you will not be a very good peacemaker... The peacemaker is one who is not always looking at everything in terms of the effect it has upon himself” (*Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, D. Martin Lloyd-Jones, p. 104-105).

“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me” (Galatians 2:20).

“Pressure is put on us by a world that does not want to say no to self – not just for a minor reason, but out of principle, because they are determined to be the center of the universe” (*True Spirituality*, Francis Schaeffer, p. 19).

“But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall,” (Ephesians 2:13-14).

IV. Blessed are the persecuted – Reviled (v. 10)

“If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you;” (John 15:18-20a).

“Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Timothy 3:12).

We find that the first four beatitudes are parallel to the last four –

Those who are poor in spirit will be merciful.

Those who mourn over their sin will be pure in heart.

Those who are meek will be peacemakers.

Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be persecuted.

Christ’s philosophy of life and perspective is a very different perspective from the world. It is absolutely counter-cultural. The only way we can live in the Kingdom of Heaven is to die to the kingdom of this world.

“Spiritual transformation is the process by which Christ is formed in us for the glory of God, for the abundance of our own lives and for the sake of others” (*Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*, Ruth Haley Barton, p. 15).

Spiritual disciplines – this week’s emphasis is on guidance. Spend an hour alone with the Lord and His Word at least one day this week. Lift before Him your relationships and issues where you need His mind and His guidance. Lean on Him, not your own understanding and He will make your path straight (Proverbs 3:5-6).

“But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (Galatians 6:14).