

Matthew 5:1–12

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[0 : 00] Stand with me for the reading of God's word. Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him.

And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you, and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

[1 : 13] Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. This is the word of the Lord.

You may be seated. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

The heaters are coming on. I hear them. I encourage you to keep your Bible open, and as we will make our way through these 12 verses.

Father, we ask for your help in these next moments. We don't want to follow cleverly devised tales or fables or the words of mere men, but we want to hear the voice of the living God.

And so would you disclose yourself through your spirit and your word for your people. We ask these things for Jesus' sake. Amen. How is a Christian life supposed to look?

[2 : 31] What is its makeup, its consistency? What are its distinctives? What shape should it take? This morning we commence eight weeks in the Gospel of Matthew, chapters 5 to 7.

We've titled it A Vision for Christ's Church. Commonly it's called the Sermon on the Mount. It is the closest thing you'll get to a manifesto from Jesus.

If you have one of those Bibles that colors text or the words of Jesus in red, you'll find that red ink runs through chapters 5, 6, and 7.

It is a compilation of sayings from Jesus directed to those who would follow him. In other words, these next eight weeks are a portrait of a Christian painted by Christ.

The portrait of a Christian painted by Christ. And since we've parachuted into chapter 5, it's helpful to get our bearings as we make way.

[3 : 42] Jesus has just begun preaching and teaching. It has been accompanied by miraculous and powerful signs. And as a result, according to the previous verse, chapter 4, verse 25, his popularity and fame were spreading in the region.

Large groups were coming to him in Galilee. Throngs were seeking him from afar in Jerusalem, from Jerusalem.

Crowds were gathering from the whole region. And this first, this morning, we focus in on these first 12 chapters of chapter 5, known as the Beatitudes.

Derived from the Latin, Beatitudo, corresponding to the Greek makarios, which our translators have translated blessed.

Some translations have translated it happy. Happy. And I hope in our time this morning, this will be made clear. The Christian life is a blessed life.

[4 : 51] The Christian life is a blessed life. Your life is blessed by God. Yes, it may be one of these statements that are currently misappropriated in all sorts of ways.

You might hear it. I'm blessed of God when someone has fallen upon favorable circumstances or monetary success or is holding up a championship trophy.

But I hope to retrieve and recast the notion of what it means to be blessed by God in this passage. Because for the Christian, the blessed life takes on an elevated and even a transcendent shape. An eternal shape. The origins of this word blessed are likely, likely stem from ancient Egypt. It's where it's, it's used, and I'll just read here, where the use pertains to the state of a divine God, little g, that's awarded to humans.

[5 : 57] It is this idea, the Beatitudes are an idea of this pronouncement from divinity onto humanity. It's declarative by nature. It's a divine life bestowed upon human life.

Another way of thinking of the meaning of this word blessed would be to substitute it for the word approved. The Christian is the recipient of a grand declaration made by God that they are approved.

What Jesus is doing here in these first 12 verses is Jesus is pronouncing and declaring what a blessed life is. One who is approved by God.

It is the normal Christian life. For the Christian, if you sit in these seats or if you're watching online, you might, it might be helpful to see this as a diagnostic test.

In a previous life, I served as a technician for Apple. That was how I applied my engineering degree.

[7 : 11] And people would come in with computers that weren't working correctly or properly. And they would give you the computer and you would hook up all the lifelines and the IVs to it and you would run a diagnostic test.

There would be about 16 checkboxes that would populate. And they would go check green, check green. They would tell you about battery life, about keyboard response, about colors and schemes, everything.

And this is what, this is a diagnostic for the Christian. It helps us understand what the Christian life is supposed to take, look like.

It is Jesus shaping his people for his kingdom. Well, one manner of working our way through the text is simply just going line by line and verse by verse, explaining each beatitude and methodically defining all of them.

I won't do that. We don't have much time. Instead, I've chosen, I've attempted to synthesize them. And to help us through our text, I'm going to hang my sermon on three observations.

[8 : 27] Three observations. The posture of the Christian. The promises to the Christian.

And the persecution against the Christian. Posture, promise, persecution. The posture of a Christian.

I'm not referring to the way you stand or to sit or sit. But I'm referring to this internal position that you and I take. You may call it an inner disposition.

You may call it an attitude or an orientation. It is the demeanor with which one navigates life before God. Jesus has ascended to a mountaintop nearby.

It may have been his intentional move to flee from the crowds as they were pressing in on him. And some have expressed that Jesus is now patterning his movement similarly to Moses.

[9 : 30] Moses, you may recall, a prophet of God, received the word of God on top of a mountain. As God spoke to him. And the parallel here may lie in the fact that God would once again speak from the mountaintop and not shrouded in a cloud, but now shrouded by human flesh and his son.

And he begins to paint this Christian portrait. Maybe short, pithy, memorable statements. And they are marked in a very distinctive way.

Poor in spirit. Those who mourn. Those who are meek. Those who are hungering and thirsting. Unsatisfied. Those who are in need of mercy.

Those who are pure in heart. Peacemakers. And these would be all qualities that indicate a Christian's life.

You see, in modern eyes, it's a very unimpressive list. No mention of education. No mention of positions of power or places of influence. Instead, the emphasis lies on this posture, this impoverished posture before God.

[10 : 47] We are to hold this internally and the purpose of God We are to hold this internally bankrupt account before God, so to say. We are in need of mercy.

The posture that is being sketched out is one largely of penitence and contrition. And it's certainly sensible given how the kingdom starts.

The first words of Jesus in the gospel to the crowd are found in chapter 4, verse 17. It reads this, From that time, Jesus began to preach, saying his first words in the gospel, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. The opening utterance from Jesus is a call to repentance. It's a call to repentance. It's a call to turn from one's waywardness and to turn toward a kingdom.

It's a call to turn from one's rebellion to turn towards righteousness. And this is how the Beatitudes start, with this posture of repentance.

[12:03] It's a very distinct posture for the Christian. It's not self-reliance or self-achievement that are indicators of blessing or favor.

Rather, it's being poor in spirit. Mourning over the brokenness of the world and the brokenness in our hearts. Blessed is the one who bears this posture.

These postures. The prophet Isaiah would put it this way, this is the one to whom God's speaking, whom I will look. The one who is humble, contrite in spirit, and trembles at His word.

This is the divinely approved posture. If you would like God's attention, take on this posture. If you want God to hear you, take on this posture.

Unless we think that these are only postures before God, we are reminded that these are postures we hold before others as well. We are to be merciful to one another.

[13:15] We are to be bearers or makers or bringers of peace. The Christian life is before God and before men. And this certainly unfolds as the Sermon on the Mount will open up for us.

The Christian life is not intended to be in isolation, to be in seclusion, to be in hiding. We are to live out the Christian life. There is a public demonstration of a private disposition.

The domain of the Sermon on the Mount is the heart of the Christian. But it must extend outward. It must extend outward. The Beatitudes are opening up for us and understanding that the Christian life will be all-pervasive.

It will seep into the crevices of our hearts, commanding and demanding the entirety of an individual. There is no compartment in your life Jesus will not take hold of.

As some have observed, the Beatitudes are this posture that God is making a claim for all of you. Well, it is odd when, you know, Christian manifest traits that are so contrary to this, isn't it?

[14:36] It's so off-putting when you encounter a Christian that is proud, self-reliant, unbroken over the affairs of the world or inside, one who doesn't hunger and thirst for righteousness, one who extends no mercy, one who is impure, one who doesn't seek peace but creates division.

That's a strange, strange Christian. We are people who are to possess a particular posture before God and others.

Secondly, you'll notice the postures lead to promises. The postures lead to promises. There are a whole host of promises to the Christians.

The Beatitudes hold out for the Christian great promises to possess. Each statement comes with a promise. The kingdom of God. Comfort.

The earth. Satisfaction. Justice. Righteousness. Mercy. The sight of God. Belonging to God's family.

[16:03] The promises are extraordinary and certainly desirable and they're gifts to the Christian. They are our comfort. They are for you and I the great assurance that the deficiencies and the longings that we experience in this life will one day be reversed and removed.

It is worth noting that only one is offered in the present tense. You'll see it in verses 3 and again in verse 10.

It's the offering of the kingdom of God. Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake for theirs is the kingdom of God.

And here the Beatitudes are sandwiched between I like to think you could think of it as a sandwich I like to think of it as a burger of two buns and in between you get everything.

You get everything. According to Five Guys you get all the fixings. If you go to Culver's you get a deluxe burger. If you go to the Sunday bar you get everything.

[17:08] It is as to say when the kingdom of God is yours the buns you get everything inside of it. Everything in between.

Nothing is left out. No one enters into the kingdom only to be rejected because God is unmerciful. No one enters into the kingdom and enters no one is going to walk into the presence of God one day and feel dissatisfied.

The promises are yours. They belong to the Christian and as the kingdom of heaven continues to progress and advance not only in Matthew's Gospel but through the period of the New Testament you begin to see that these promises are being taken hold of.

There's a sense that they are given to you and you won't get the full until the end. but they are being fulfilled in the present. That you and I receive comfort in ways that we would never have imagined lest it for Christ.

We are sons and daughters of a king right now and experiencing some of the pleasures of being in the household of faith.

[18 : 30] And we know in part that one day we will know in full. This is the grand inheritance of the Christian. What is the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven like?

It is comfort for the afflicted. It is dwelling in a new heavens and a new earth. Justice and righteousness fully satisfied. Mercy in the presence of a holy God.

The sight of God in all His beauty. Sonship. Daughtership. The fruition of a faith family under a good and righteous father. It is what the Apostle John will paint for us in the final chapters of our Bibles.

These are the promises to the Christian. The Christian does not follow Jesus in vain.

We are not athletes that compete and never obtain the prize. We are not investors that expend to suffer loss.

[19 : 39] We are not students who study and don't pass. The Christian life be assured is a rewarded life.

We do not do these things to achieve or to attain. we do these things in response to God's call on our life.

Don't ever fall into this lie that your best life is somehow now. The Beatitudes show for us as a Christian that our earthly experience, your earthly experience, is the worst you can ever have.

This is the poorest you'll ever be, thank God. this is the most unsatisfied you will ever feel. This is the most injustice you will ever undergo.

These are the darkest days you will walk. The greatest joys and the greatest pleasures in this life are specks of dust compared to what the kingdom of heaven holds for you.

[20 : 47] be reminded you do not follow Jesus in vain. There's a posture. There are promises.

And finally, persecution. Finally, persecution. It's striking that the Beatitudes are framed by verses 3 and 10. The kingdom belongs to the poor in spirit and the persecuted for righteousness.

Persecution closes the Beatitudes and its significance can't be missed. The text turns from the indirect third person to address us in the direct second person.

Blessed are you when others revile you. I can only imagine Matthew writing this certainly under duress of some sort.

We often think of persecution as the seizing of physical property, the incurring of physical harm, the prevention of worship of God. And here it is, absorbing insults, enduring false accusations, experiencing public shame on account of Jesus.

[22 : 10] In other words, it is the onslaught of opposition by others because of our faithful allegiance to Jesus and his words, these Beatitudes, so to say.

The text implies that when heaven meets earth, there is an intense collision. We are not to be naive. The Christian life is an opposed life.

Do not be alarmed if you have detractors. Do not be surprised by opposition. Do not be caught off guard by off-putting comments. They are to be expected.

In my youth ministry days, I had a great, I encountered phenomenal students, and I remember there was one high schooler who was, she was emerging as a great leader in the group, and she was growing in faith, vibrant in service, dynamic in personality, a Christian by profession.

at one of our youth group gatherings, I recall it so vividly. It's a larger youth group, and you can tell she was out of sorts. She was not herself. And as we conversed, I asked her, hey, why are you so down?

[23 : 23] And she went on to share that she was being mocked by various athletes in her high school for not engaging in promiscuous activity.

she was a very attractive girl. She shared with me the line that was eating away at her. And she looked at me in tears, and she said, Bing, they are telling me I am a waste of beauty.

A waste of beauty. And as tears came down her face, she bore the marks of the Lord Jesus.

Blessed are you when others revile you.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. She embodied an ethic that transcended earthly expectations.

She was opposed by the world and approved by heaven. And the beauty of the Beatitudes is this, that there is an inner posture that you can self assess. I can sit down, am I poor in spirit?

[24 : 33] am I meek? Am I merciful? But the beauty of the Beatitudes is it can not only be acknowledged internally, it can be affirmed externally through persecution.

Do you want to know if you're a legitimate Christian? Am I poor in spirit? Am I broken inside? Am I longing and hungering for righteousness? am I experiencing the onslaught of persecution, whether lightly or heavily?

Affirmed on the inside, acknowledged from the outside. Your opposition, your persecution, your rejection is indicative of the authenticity of your faith.

posture promises persecution. So how did you do on this diagnostic test this morning? What's interesting is when I would get a computer and if this computer passed 15 of the 16 tests, it still failed.

I could have 15 green lights and one yellow light and I would not be permitted to return the computer to its owner. the Beatitudes work in the same way.

[26 : 02] We aren't given the freedom to say, I got eight or I got, it's debated how many are here. Let's just say there's eight.

I got six out of eight, 75%, C, not bad. We aren't permitted to do that. This is all of the Christian life for all of the Christian.

And for some of us this morning, you didn't experience this passage as a diagnostic test. You read it far more as a list of demands that need to somehow be met.

They're foreign. They go against every attribute that you've been brought up with. They're qualities that you've never cultivated. and you're not quite sure what to do if the kingdom of heaven actually belongs to these.

You sense that the kingdom of heaven at this moment is not in your possession. These great promises are elusive. What are you supposed to do?

[27 : 06] Well, I only need to point you to the earlier chapter where Jesus summons to his kingdom, repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand, and there about where these professional fishermen going about their day, and they are interrupted by the call of Jesus.

And I expect if you find yourself here in this room this morning, or in front of your computer screen, that you may be a student, you may be unemployed, you may be a teacher, you may be in the neighborhood, and you've landed in this space, and what I tell you now, is Jesus is interrupting you, and he's calling out, repent, the kingdom of heaven is at hand, and it is being offered to you.

It is being offered to you, and as you give yourself to following Jesus, you may find, to your surprise, that your heart is becoming poor in spirit.

You may find that you may mourn over things you've never mourned before. You may find yourself meeker, and apparently weaker, than ever before.

You may find yourself hungering and starving for righteousness. You may find yourself extending mercy, purifying your heart, and as you find those things taking place, you may find yourself becoming a Christian.

[28 : 58] May it be so. May it be so. Father, we come to you, and we desire that we would see that this is the most blessed life.

There is no life that will be more eternally extravagant than this life. There is no life more applicable than this life.

You don't call the two percent. you call the hundred percent. And Father, we look to you, and we ask for your help, that the vision of this congregation is to bear this posture before you and before one another.

So embedded upon us, we pray, we ask these things for Jesus' sake. Amen. Amen.