

Matthew 5:1–12

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- [0 : 00] Again, that's Matthew 5, 1 through 12. 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. 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. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Well, good morning.
- It's good to see you this morning. I take for a title this morning from our reading, The Kingdom Look.
- [1 : 41] The Kingdom Look. One of my favorite TV shows, by far, is a show called Law and Order. Anybody familiar? In the criminal justice system, the people are represented by two separate yet equally important groups.
- The police who investigate crime and the district attorneys who prosecute the offenders. These are their stories. Boom, boom.
- Whether focusing on the police side or the district attorney side, often you would find that one of the key pieces of evidence used to solve the crime was eyewitness testimony.
- Eyewitness accounts are an incredibly valuable investigative tool, and that testimony can be very compelling at trial.
- [2 : 49] However, experts will tell us that eyewitness testimony can also be one of the least reliable forms of identification. Eyewitness testimony, however, particularly so when describing areas that are totally subjective.
- Average mid-30s or 40s, attractive, strong facial features, well-dressed. What any of these mean to one, they may not necessarily mean to another.
- Eyewitness testimony, however, becomes considerably more effective when there's some distinguishing mark or characteristic that can be identified.
- Yeah, I know it was her because she's got a tattoo of a dragon on her left hand or a scar on the right side of her face. Now, if you would, imagine with me an investigator coming to someone and saying, ma'am, can you identify the person you saw standing outside on the corner on the night in question?
- She says, yes, I can. I believe he was a Christian. Stunned, the investigator says, ma'am, how do you know that?
- [4 : 22] Well, I'll tell you how. I saw him with a cross around his neck. Must mean he's a Christian. Is there anything else?
- Yep. As he was getting into his car, I heard gospel music playing. I think it was Joe Pace. He must be a Christian.

Is that it, the investigator says? Well, look, I saw them coming out of a church. Look, anybody who comes out of a church has got to be a Christian.

The investigator says, well, thank you, ma'am, but you've just described someone that could apply to anybody on the face of the earth.

It does not mean that they're a Christian. Are there no distinguishing marks or characteristics that identify a Christian?

[5 : 32] Well, welcome this morning to Matthew chapter 5. Jesus, at the end of chapter 4, was a bona fide rock star.

Crowds were following him everywhere. But instead of hyping the crowd and signing autographs, as chapter 5 opens, Jesus makes his way up the mountain.

Verse 1, he sits down with his disciples assembling in front of him. No doubt the crowd's still also around, and he begins to teach.

The transition, if you think about it, is really quite remarkable. In the middle of all the paparazzi, the frenzy, the fame, Jesus sits down and says, before you all get all caught up in the hype, let me tell you what my followers really look like.

Our text today serves as an introduction of sorts to what many believe is the greatest sermon ever preached by the greatest preacher to ever live.

[6 : 45] The sermon on the mount. The sermon actually goes all the way through chapter 7, which you'll hear more about from Pastor Helm next week.

But today, we look at this prolific introductory message commonly referred to as the Beatitudes. The Beatitudes, or translated blessings in the Greek, is a set of declarative proverb-like statements in which Jesus himself sets forth the nature, the aspirations, and the privileges of being citizens of his kingdom.

In a nutshell, this passage gives eyewitness testimony as to what a Christian really looks like.

Jesus literally paints a portrait of the ones to whom the kingdom of heaven belongs. To be clear, this text is not Jesus saying, live like this and you will be a Christian.

Rather, it's saying, because you are a Christian, you should live like this. Further, this passage describes the inherent blessings, the divine approval, favor, and covering that comes from living your life the way Jesus describes.

[8 : 16] Now, all of these verses, these prolific statements, could each stand on their own as a rich, full-throated sermon.

For the purposes of our discussion this morning and for the sake of time, I'd like to package this entire passage in three areas of thought for our consideration this morning.

First is the profile of a kingdom citizen. Next are the privileges of being a kingdom citizen. And then lastly, the price of kingdom citizenship.

The profile. First, let's establish citizenship. What is this kingdom of heaven to which Christians can be citizens?

Well, Jesus first mentions it in chapter 4, verse 17, when he starts his public preaching ministry, saying, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

[9 : 21] We then see it again in the present tense here in our text as bookends to the entire passage in verse 3 and then in verse 10, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

This phrase, the kingdom of heaven, that is, by the way, exclusively used in the gospel of Matthew over 30 times, refers to the sovereign rule and reign of Jesus Christ on earth and in heaven.

It is all the blessings and advantages that flow from being a citizen under Christ's rule. It is joy, peace, comfort, justice, hope, mercy, strength, and security that we have right now as children of the king.

And according to Titus, it is looking forward to that blessed hope and glorious appearance of our great God and savior, Jesus Christ.

The kingdom is both now and future. Future, when one day the dead in Christ will rise, every tear will be wiped from every eyes and every knee shall bow.

[10 : 42] This is the kingdom of heaven. So how do we establish citizenship? Citizenship. Well, in its practical sense, citizenship is obtained by meeting the legal requirements of a national, state, or local government.

In this spiritual sense, relating to the kingdom of heaven, it's just three words. Be born again.

Whatever country you're from, generally speaking, if you were born in that country, you're automatically a citizen.

There's nothing else you have to do. Because in reality, your parents did all the work. There are, however, expectations of you because you are a citizen.

Here in the U.S., for example, even grade school children were taught to put their hand over their heart and pledge allegiance to the flag.

[11 : 52] Because that's what citizens do. You don't speed and run red lights. At least you're not supposed to. Because you're expected to obey the law.

That's what citizens do. Well, John, chapter 3, verse 3 says, Jesus answered him, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

When you accept Jesus Christ as your Savior and are born again, which if you are here today and have not accepted him as your Lord and your Savior, I encourage you, I plead with you to do that today.

Today. When you are born again, you are a citizen of the kingdom. There's nothing else you have to do.

Why? Because Jesus did all the work. There are, however, expectations of you because you are now a citizen.

[13 : 02] Your profile, your look, your MO, as they would say on law and order, is now different. It now says, verses 3 through 9, you are one who's poor in spirit, one who recognizes their dire need from God.

You are one who mourns their sin. You're meek with humility and strength under control. You are hungry and thirsty for righteousness.

You are merciful to others. You're pure in heart, meaning you've got the right motives. You are a peacemaker. You pursue peace with others.

This is now the kingdom look. Now, these descriptions are not glamour shop pictures.

Some of you are old enough to remember glamour shop stores that seem to be in every mall in America. Over 350 of them in the 90s.

[14 : 08] For \$29.95, they would do a complete makeover and glamorous photography session right there in the mall.

Most people came out looking nothing like they look when they first went in. Mama, is that you?

But no, Jesus describes nothing glamorous here. Or in spirit and mourning, sin, humility, hunger, and thirst.

Jesus says nothing about education, wealth, social status, political power. In fact, these characteristics are both countercultural and counterintuitive.

And yes, they're exactly what every Christian should look like. Growing up, I used to hear this statement all the time.

[15 : 08] You look just like your dad. I hated it. I wanted my own identity.

I didn't want to be attached to his. Later, I would also hear, you're going to be a preacher just like your dad. I hated it.

I wanted to be anything but. Well, you can see how that turned out. As I got older, I just began to accept and appreciate the truth that I really did look like my dad.

It's who I am. As my dad got older, it began to bless him. And he loves being asked whether or not he's my brother. What a wonderful indictment it would be for all of us to be told, hey, you look just like Jesus.

This is the profile of a kingdom citizen. Not only does Jesus describe the look of contrition, brokenness, humility, and mercy every Christian should have.

[16 : 34] He then has the audacity to divinely declare that everyone who looks like this is blessed. Consider with me the privileges of kingdom citizenship.

Most of you know, my wife and I moved here from Florida. Though I try not to remind her of that too often.

A couple of years ago, I was looking into some tickets to Disney World to take our family. Well, actually, just to take our granddaughter. And the rest of the family was welcome to come along if they wanted to.

And while I was on the phone talking to the agent, something surprising came up. The agent asked me where I lived. I told him.

And he said, oh, well, because you're a Florida resident, there's a different price for you.

[17 : 36] Wow, you mean to tell me because I'm a citizen of the state of Florida, I don't have to pay as much as everybody else? What a blessing.

Jesus says in our text that there are privileges to being a citizen of the kingdom. First, being blessed means Christ stamps his divine approval on you as a citizen of the kingdom.

It's an affirmation of one's value and identity as God's child. Further, he gives divine assurances about rewards and benefits that are for you now and those that are yet to come.

There's comfort, there's inheritance, satisfaction, mercy, the guarantee of seeing him face to face and to be called his sons and daughters.

Blessed assurance. Jesus is mine. Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine. I'm an heir of salvation, purchase of God, born of his spirit, washed in his blood.

[18 : 48] Unfortunately, our culture today has taken the word blessed and devalued it to correlate to prosperity, money, wealth, good fortune, and the like.

But being blessed and the privileges Jesus refers to here in our text transcends all of that. He's describing blessings that are not based on physical circumstances, but on your spiritual status with God.

It's not about what you have. It's about who he is and his promises to you. Why are you worried about position and status when he tells you you're already an heir to the throne?

Why are you worried about wealth and prosperity when the text tells us you're already going to inherit the earth? Why are you concerned about who you didn't get an audience with here when you know one day you're going to have an audience with the almighty God?

Why are you concerned about happiness?

[20 : 28] It's going to have an audience with the throne crowed for God. Brother Edward growing up, we used to sing a song that said this joy that I have.

The world didn't give it to me and the world can't take it away. In some ways, being blessed is really a description of the spiritual attitude and state of people who know they are right with God.

And they are approved citizens of his kingdom. So we looked at the profile of the kingdom. Profile of a citizen of the kingdom.

Some of the privileges that come with citizenship. But there's a startling and amazing turn that happens here in our text at verses 10 through 12.

We need to take a minute to lean into this. Hold on to your seat. Starting at verse 10.

[21 : 33] 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.

Rejoice and be glad. For your reward is great in heaven. For so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. So I see you.

I see what you're thinking. I see it. So you can. Okay. Okay, Pastor Joe. I was with you on all the profile stuff. It's not too glamorous, but I get it.

And then thank God for the blessings that come with that. But now you're telling me that on top of the mourning and the meekness and the hunger and the thirst and showing mercy and pursuing peace and keeping my motives pure, I have to be persecuted as well.

Yeah. Yeah. I think I'm good on skipping that particular blessing. Well, that's exactly what I'm telling you.

[22 : 53] Just because my wife and I reaped the benefits of being Florida residents. It doesn't mean we still didn't have to endure the occasional hurricane.

Jesus is saying here, there is a price for kingdom citizenship. This eighth beatitude in verse 10 really comes as a shock and a surprise in the text.

Jesus is flowing down this list of Christian attributes. And then like doing a polar plunge in Lake Michigan. He shifts to persecution.

Here it is in a nutshell. Righteous people suffer. And the suffering of the righteous is blessed. This final beatitude is unique in that it's not about Christian character, attitude, or behavior.

It is the beatitude that deals with how the world responds to those who live and look like these previous seven characteristics.

[24 : 07] I know there's some debate about eight or nine beatitudes, but it appears taken as a section that verse 10 marks this unique last beatitude and verses 11 and 12 mark Jesus' immediate commentary on verse 10.

It seems that the last two verses of our text both personalize and amplify the previous. Notice the shift in the tenses of the verses.

It goes from third person in verse 10, as do all the other previous verses, to the second person in verse 11. It goes from blessed are those who to blessed are you when.

It's as if a teacher is talking to the entire class and then specifically calls you out by name to further explain. Quickly, these three verses really break down into three areas that are important for us to note.

First is the reality of persecution. Secondly is the reason for persecution. And last is the response to persecution. The reality is found here in verse 11.

[25 : 27] Lest are you when. Jesus does not present persecution as a hypothetical scenario. It may or may not happen.

No, it's a definite reality. Jesus says, if you are righteous, you're going to be persecuted. Well, Gertrude tells us how.

Three ways that it happens. To revile, which means to blame or insult. Find fault. To persecute, which means to actually chase down, pursue with bad intentions.

To say all manner of evil against you falsely, which simply means to slander, to feign. Look, the only way you are going to avoid persecution is to disconnect from the world.

Or to assimilate into the world. That's a whole nother sermon. If you have these characteristics we've been talking about, and you should expect persecution.

[26 : 35] Jesus himself was persecuted. John 15, 18. If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.

If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own. But because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

Remember the word that I said to you, a servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.

My dad would say, if you're going down the road of your Christian walk and don't occasionally bump into the devil, maybe you're both going in the same direction.

The reason for persecution is found in verse 10. It's for righteousness sake. And then again in verse 11, it's on my account.

[27 : 40] Now, there are a lot of reasons you can be persecuted for reasons other than righteousness. Some things we're going through are things we brought on ourselves.

It's not persecution. It's punishment. There's a quote that says, we are punished by good men for doing evil, but we are persecuted by bad men for doing good.

Persecution comes because you walk, talk, and act just like Jesus. And that is blessed. So if you're going to be persecuted, make sure it's for the right reasons.

Now, it doesn't seem like it, but here's the most exciting part. Note the response to persecution found here in verse 12.

Don't get mad. Don't try to get even. Don't just grit your teeth and bear it. Rejoice and be glad.

[28 : 54] This is not a recommendation. This is a command. This is a divine imperative that is also an act of faith. Anyone can rejoice when the sun is shining.

But in those dark days when the clouds are overhead, you need to rejoice. In the midst of persecution, rejoice. When they lie on you, when it looks like they've got you on the ropes, when they're assassinating your character, rejoice.

Rejoice. Why? Just three reasons. Lord, you can look back and rejoice because you're in good company.

Verse 12 says, for so they persecuted the prophets which were before you. You can look ahead and rejoice because, verse 10, the kingdom of heaven is already yours.

And then you can look up and rejoice because great is your reward in heaven.

[29 : 58] This is what kingdom citizens look like. This is what every Christian should look like. These are the benefits, the blessings that come with kingdom citizenship.

And those citizenship will produce persecution. Hold on because there's an eternal promise on the other side.

Thomas Obadiah Chisholm was born in the late 1800s in Kentucky.

He was educated in a schoolhouse where he himself became the teacher at age 16. For a while, he worked as a reporter and the associate editor of a newspaper in Louisville.

Then after becoming a Christian, Chisholm began his Christian walk and later became a pastor. But ill health soon forced his resignation.

[31 : 04] He wrote poetry and is said to have written over 1,200 sacred poems. Many of those poems were turned into hymns.

With perhaps the most well-known hymn being great is thy faithfulness. However, Chisholm would explain in his later years that there was another refrain of a hymn.

He wrote that would become most dear to his heart. And this should indeed be the all-consuming goal of our lives today.

O perfect life of Christ, my Lord, I want to be like Jesus. My recompense and my reward that I may be like Jesus.

His spirit fill my hungering soul. His power, all my life control. My deepest prayer, my highest goal.

[32 : 13] That I may be like Jesus. May it be so for all of us here today. That our highest pursuit is to have the kingdom look and look just like Jesus.

Let's pray together. Father, we thank you for this day. We thank you for what you've done and what you continue to do for us.

God, our desire is to be just like you. And everything we do, everything we say, continue to make us, to mold us into your image.

Thank you for teaching us. Thank you for these promises that you've given us. And may our daily lives be ordered by these blessings.

We give you glory and honor. In your son's name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen.