

Sermon: Introduction to Beatitudes

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 10 January 2021

Preacher: Dr. Wes Feltner

[0 : 00] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[2 : 34] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Remember that Jesus taught the first is going to be what? Last, and the last is going to be first. That is, whatever you tend to think is normal probably isn't consistent with the kingdom of God.

And what you think is weird actually is more in line with what God values in the kingdom. You remember Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 1.

He said, consider your calling. Not many of you are wise according to worldly standards. Not many of you were powerful. Not many of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise.

God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong. God chose what is low and despised in the world, even the things that are not, to bring to nothing the things that are.

[3 : 45] So that no human being might boast in the presence of God. So most of what we see as valuable isn't valuable in God's kingdom.

And so what I want us to do over the next few weeks, specifically with the Beatitudes, is we're going to try to understand what does God value? And what are really the characteristics of the things that belong to God's kingdom and not the kingdom of man?

Because I don't know if you've noticed lately, but we tend to be pretty obsessed with the kingdom of man on all sides. And so the Beatitudes really helps us, and the Sermon on the Mount really helps us understand what is consistent and valuable in God's kingdom.

So let's begin by looking at Matthew 5, verse 1, and I'm going to read down through verse 12. But really tonight, and this is not uncommon for me in starting a new series, it's really going to be an introduction.

So we're going to wait and dive into the first Beatitude next week. I'm just going to introduce them to you tonight. This is a little bit more teaching than preaching tonight, and so I want to just set a proper framework before we dive in.

[5 : 01] So let's, if we're able to stand, please do so as we read God's word, Matthew 5, verses 1 through 12. Verse 12.

Blessed are you when others revile you and So would you just pray with me, not only for tonight, but over these next few weeks as we journey through the Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount.

And may our prayer just be, God, teach us your ways, teach us your kingdom. We want to know the kingdom of God, not the kingdom of man, so let's pray. God, tonight, pray that you by your Spirit would come and guide us into truth.

This is such a familiar passage to many of us, and yet I don't think we often fully understand all that you are teaching us as you taught the disciples on that mountain.

So begin tonight by reshaping the way we think about the world around us, including the culture of many churches that we see. And God, we just pray that in each of us we would value what you value to the glory of Christ, we pray.

[7 : 20] And we pray it in His name and God's people said, Amen. Amen. You can be seated. God and man at Texas A&M.; God and man at Texas A&M.;

That was actually the title of an article that was written by an English professor at Texas A&M.; Her name was Virginia Owens. And what Professor Owens did was she assigned her group of English students to do a paper, a response paper, on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.

Now, she assumed that this assignment, doing a response paper, on the Sermon on the Mount, would be very well received by these students because most of the class was made up of middle class, conservative, Bible belt families from Texas.

But what she was shocked by was when she read the students' responses to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, it was entirely the opposite of what she thought.

Let me give you just a few examples that she shared that she read in these student papers. The very first paper she picked up to read said this, quote, In my opinion, religion is one big hoax.

[8 : 40] Well, that's a response. To the Sermon on the Mount. Another one said this, quote, There's an old saying that you should not believe everything you read, and that certainly applies to the Sermon on the Mount.

Another student wrote, quote, I didn't like reading the Sermon on the Mount. It's hard to read and makes me feel like I have to be perfect. And nobody's perfect.

One final one I'll share is this. This is pretty straightforward. The Sermon on the Mount is absurd. To look at a woman lustfully is adultery?

That's the most extreme, stupid, and unhuman statement I've ever heard, close quote. Tell me how you really feel. Okay? Now, what was shocking to her was that these weren't just a few negative responses to the Sermon on the Mount in just a couple of papers.

It was like the entire class responded that way to the Sermon on the Mount. And by the way, Faith Family, this happened 25 years ago. Can you imagine what the responses would be today?

[9 : 49] Professor Owens said she was shocked because she had grown up in church, and her memory of the Sermon on the Mount was, quote, a pastel poster of Jesus sitting like Mr. Rogers on a green hillside surrounded by pink children.

To her, the Sermon on the Mount was anything but controversial. Professor Owens concluded the article by saying this, quote, In a way, though, I found it strangely encouraging that the Bible remains offensive to the honest, ignorant ears, as it certainly was in the first century, close quote.

I wonder what comes to your mind, Faith Family, when you think of the Sermon on the Mount.

Pastor Wes is starting a new series on the Sermon on the Mount.

What comes to your mind? We're going to be studying over the next couple of weeks the B attitudes. What comes to your mind? Now, for some of you, maybe nothing comes to your mind because you've never studied or read this before, and that's perfectly fine.

But if you're like me and you grew up in church, oh, things come to mind. It's like the bookmark that you have in your Bible. That's the B attitudes. Or it's the scripture on the coffee cup that you have at home.

[11 : 13] It may be a picture that's hanging on the wall in your home somewhere. But let's be honest. Most of us, when I say I'm going to talk about the B attitudes, are thinking this is going to get controversial.

That's probably not your response at all because we've not really understood just exactly how countercultural Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount really is.

And so over the next few weeks, what I want to do is I want to peel back these famous verses, and I want to see what they really mean. What is Jesus really teaching?

What does he really mean as he preaches this famous sermon? Let me begin by this. And again, I told you tonight it's just going to be introduction, just going to kind of set a framework.

I want to address three common mistakes to interpreting the B attitudes because that's what we're going to focus on mainly in the Sermon on the Mount is these statements known as the B attitudes.

[12 : 14] So three wrong approaches that I think people often make to the B attitudes. Here's the first one is minimizing the B attitudes, minimizing the B attitudes.

The first mistake people make in trying to understand what Jesus is teaching here is you treat these verses or these phrases like they're little proverbs. Okay?

They're like the Christian fortune cookie type thing, you know? They're pithy little statements that don't really mean all that much. You know, the nail that sticks out gets hit the hardest or whatever. It's almost like, you know, yeah, they're just kind of, you know, these little proverbial statements. We don't really know what they mean. You know, we just kind of toss them around and put them on a

coffee cup. That's not at all what Jesus is doing here.

This is not the equivalent of a Hallmark greeting card. As I thought about this, there's a scene, I can't help but get it out of my mind as I was preparing for this, but there's a scene in *Mighty Python*. Forgive me.

[13:16] There's a scene in a *Mighty Python* movie where there's a large crowd. Some of you already know what the scene is. And they're listening to Jesus teach the Beatitudes. And they're trying to understand what Jesus is teaching.

Take a look. How blessed are those who hunger and thirst to see right prevail. They shall be satisfied.

How blessed are those whose hearts are pure. Let them see God. Please. What was that? I don't know. It's too busy talking a big nose. I think it was blessed are the cheesemakers.

What's so special about the cheesemakers? Well, obviously, it's not meant to be taken literally. It refers to any manufacturers of dairy products. See, if you haven't been going on, we'd have heard that, big nose.

Hey, say that once more or I'll smash your bloody face in. Better keep listening. Might be a bit about blessed are the big noses. Hear that? Blessed are the Greek. The Greek? Well, apparently, he's going to inherit the earth.

[14:17] Did anyone catch his name? We're not going to thump anybody. I'll thump him if he calls me big nose again. Oh, shut up, big nose. Oh, what? I warned you. Or in it we'll slug you.

So on. Oh, it's the meek. Blessed are the meek. Oh, that's nice, isn't it? I'm glad they're getting something. All right, I apologize. I just couldn't do this message without that clip, right?

And that last line, oh, blessed are the meek. Well, I'm glad they're getting something. That kind of, you know, just surface level, just, oh, it's so cute, and, you know, blessed are the cheesemakers or whatever, you know.

Like, that tends to be how a lot of Christians think about the Beatitudes. They're nice and cute and poetic. Jesus is being anything but nice, cute, and poetic when he teaches the disciples the Beatitudes.

So it's a wrong approach to minimize the Beatitudes. Secondly, and this is just as dangerous, is when we moralize the Beatitudes.

[15:20] And what I mean here is that we turn the Beatitudes into rules you need to live by. This would have been the predominant way the Beatitudes would have been taught when I grew up in the tradition that I grew up in.

It's almost like the Beatitudes are the New Testament version of the Ten Commandments. These are the things that good Christians do, whatever good Christians do.