

## **THE BEST SERMON EVER – THE FIRST OF THE 8 BEATITUDES.**

**Scripture: Matthew 5:1-12**

This Sunday we are looking at the first of the 8 beatitudes which form the Sermon on the Mount. This is



about doing the will of God as revealed by Jesus. The 8 beatitudes are not multiple choice – you can't just choose a few and ignore the rest. They are to be taken as a whole as they describe how we should live.

**Background:** The beatitudes are found in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke and Jesus was saying that God's kingdom is different – wealth, power and authority are unimportant. Kingdom people seek different blessings and benefits.

**Are your attitudes a carbon copy of the world's selfishness, pride and lust for power or do they reflect the humility and self-sacrifice of Jesus, your King?**

Jesus gave this sermon in the first year of His ministry, shortly after choosing the 12 disciples. His earlier announcement that the Kingdom was near left people asking – how do I qualify to be in God's kingdom? The beatitudes are the original draft of essential Christianity.

In the Old Testament God gave Moses the first laws, the 10 commandments on Mt. Sinai. Jesus also went onto a mountain near Capernaum to set forth the new law. Jesus identifies Himself as the true interpreter of the Old Testament Law and the one who fulfills its purpose.

**What does it mean to be blessed by God?** Some translations use the word "happiness" but this only refers to something fleeting, a feeling you have in one moment and disappears the next, dependent upon your

situation. Blessedness that comes from God is not dependent upon our situation. It is true no matter what. God blesses us; we have His approval; He loves us and sees us as His children.

**Take a moment to honestly consider this – the God of all the Universe, lives in you and lives in me.** This truth should cause us to be rejoice that God approves of us. But being blessed by God goes so much deeper - being blessed by God comes when we follow Jesus no matter what. Then we will experience hope and joy, independent of outward circumstances.

***The Message Bible says: “You are blessed when you are at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and His rule.”***

***The New Living Translation says: “God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him”***

***The closest to what the original language said is: “God blesses the poor in spirit”***

The beatitudes do not tell us how to be saved; nor are they guidelines for world peace; or a checklist so we can evaluate others. The person who is poor in spirit accurately recognizes that they do not deserve God’s favour. Jesus is saying that those who will go to Heaven are those who recognize they can do nothing to earn it.

Luke 18:13 - the story of the tax collector and the Pharisee. The tax collector knew that he was undeserving and did not even lift his head up – he humbled himself and was honest before God. Unlike the Pharisee who was filled with his own self-importance. I am guessing who would have God’s favour in that situation.

None of us can earn God’s favour. Becoming poor in spirit starts with understanding our place before God. We must understand that God’s

law demands perfection in order to have right standing before Him. Anything less than perfection is not good enough.

And there is no one who is perfect. The person who believes that they are “good enough” or that God should be pleased with the things they’ve done is not poor in spirit. They are prideful and misunderstand God and themselves.

True poverty of spirit begins with the understanding that we have nothing to offer God and that the only reason we can be blessed is because of what Jesus Christ alone has done on our behalf.

**How do we see ourselves as wholly dependent upon God and in need of His forgiveness?** It is a matter of perspective. This teaching goes against everything our society teaches. The world tells us to believe in ourselves. The world says that we should never admit defeat or ask for help. Our society admires those who seem to be self-confident and self-assured. We compare ourselves to the people around us, focusing on their failures and conclude that since we don’t have the same kinds of failures as they do, we must be pretty good. We look at the good things we do and think that God should be really pleased with us, because after all, we are really pretty good people!

The problem is we are comparing ourselves to other sinful people. It is only when we begin to focus on the Lord and compare ourselves to Him and to the standard He has set that we begin to realize how far we are from being anything even close to a “good person.”

The person who thinks they are a basically good person does not understand the gospel for they are not recognizing their need for a Saviour. Unless you have come to understand that you are hopelessly

sinful and that you have nothing to offer God, you cannot possibly go to heaven.

Jesus is saying that when we feel the weight of our own sin, when we understand just how helpless we really are, that is when we are truly blessed—because it is at that moment that we are finally ready to turn to Jesus as our Saviour.

Being poor in spirit is not a one-time thing. It is an understanding that cuts to the core of who we are. The person who is truly poor in spirit realizes that they have no reason to be prideful, no reason to look down on other people. This is the kind of attitude that should categorize every aspect of the Christian life.

We must never lose sight of the fact that apart from the grace of God, we would be eternally lost. Anything good that comes out of us is a result of the work of God within us.

***How does being poor in spirit change how we live?*** We become gentle in our dealings; gracious to others; humble in attitude; open to correction; do not brag about our accomplishments; and always point others to Jesus, because we know they need Him just as much as we do.

The teachings of the Sermon on the Mount are a reminder that unless we are poor in spirit, we cannot inherit the kingdom of Heaven. So today, I challenge you to change your focus. Instead of focusing on the world around you and comparing yourself to them, instead of focusing on the priorities that others deem important, choose to focus on God.

When we see Him clearly, everything else comes into focus. When our eyes are opened, we see the futility of clinging to the lie of self-sufficient and are freed to accept the help which comes only from God.