



THE JOURNEY THROUGH THE
SERMON *on THE* **MOUNT**
SESSION 2: MATTHEW 5:1-12



LifeGroups
Do Life Together

New Hope Church

THE JOURNEY THROUGH SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

SESSION TWO: MATTHEW 5:1-12

FOLLOW ALONG

Jesus is _____ through it all.

The _____ are _____.

Jesus _____.

INTRODUCTION:

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 5:1-12.

If you could travel back in time, where would you go and why?

How has God blessed you in regards to hungering and thirsting for righteousness, being merciful, being pure in heart, and being a peacemaker? Is there an area where you need to improve?

Are you able to offer support and blessings to someone who is mourning or low in spirit? Have you personally experienced God's blessings during a time of mourning?

Did the calm and intentional manner in which Jesus spoke and interacted with people make an impact on you when you first read this section of scripture?

Is there someone you think you can help understand the truth about Jesus?

Going Deeper

Each Beatitude begins with the word "blessed." Jesus began with this word in every formulation of His introductory statement because it was His main point. As a side note, when we see a word repeated in a single Scripture passage, then we should take note. In this instance the word "blessed" is repeated nine times.

How do Jesus' words in the Beatitudes contrast with modern conceptions of blessing? Why is it better to be blessed in the way Jesus said, even if it's not easier?

Has your understanding of blessing been wrong? Why or why not? How does the biblical view of blessing change the way you think about your circumstances?

Christians are continually and personally sanctified by the same power of the Spirit dwelling in them and the application of God's Word to their lives. Christians are freed from slavery to sin, and the various desires that are rooted in their old nature are more and more weakened as they grow in faith and grace. Further, their desire to be obedient to God's Word increases more and more. That's why Jesus could address Christians by using the characteristics that true Christians exhibit. Their increasing holiness is sure.

What in the Beatitudes gives evidence that Jesus was speaking specifically of His followers and not of all people in general?

Why is it important to make the distinction between Christians doing good works to earn their salvation compared with living in accordance with their true identity in Christ?

In what specific areas is the Lord sanctifying you? Where is He currently convicting you of need for change?

The Christian's future hope that is secured by Jesus' work on the cross is a great encouragement to Christians to stay faithful to God's Word. In fact, God's promises to His beloved are one of the mechanisms that God uses to keep His children from falling away.

What promises did Jesus make to Christians in the Beatitudes?

What was Jesus' purpose for expressing these great promises to Christians?

In what areas of your life do you need encouragement? If you are a Christian, how does the assurance of eternal life in heaven with your good Father help you? If you are not a Christian, how are you drawn to the hope of these promises?

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

How does your understanding of blessing need to change based on today's study?

Do promises of heaven encourage you? Why or why not? How can you let those precious promises of God have more influence over the way you see the world?

PRAYER

Thank God for the blessed state in which His people live no matter what is happening in life, good or bad. Ask God to continue the good work that He started in you by continuing to conform you to the image of Jesus Christ. Praise God for the good future that He has promised to those who trust in Him, and ask Him to continually remind you of this as you seek His face.

COMMENTARY

MATTHEW 5:1-12

5:1-2 Jesus ascended a mountain when he saw the crowds because he deemed the mountainside to be a better setting for teaching a large group. As the new Moses, his delivery of God's message from a mountaintop provides yet another parallel with the ancient Moses. The Greek words translated he went up on the mountain are used three times in the Greek OT (Ex 19:3; 24:18; 34:42), and all three fall in the section describing Moses's ascent of Mount Sinai. This fits with Matthew's repeated theme of drawing out parallels between Moses and Jesus. For instance, Jesus's birth paralleled several events surrounding Moses's birth. Herod attempted to kill the infant Christ by ordering the slaughter of Bethlehem's boys (Mt 2:16-18) much as Pharaoh ordered the execution of newborn male Israelites (Ex 1:15-18,22). Furthermore, the angel's pronouncement that danger had passed ("those who intended to kill the child are dead," Mt 2:20) is a clear echo of Ex 4:19, "All the men who wanted to kill you are dead."

5:3 Since Matthew introduces the Sermon on the Mount by highlighting the connection between Jesus and Moses, the Beatitudes (Mt 5:3-12) should probably be read against the backdrop of Moses's teachings. The only time the Septuagint (ancient Greek translation of the OT) used the adjective "Blessed" (Gk makarios) to translate Moses's words was in his blessing on Israel (Dt 33:29): "How happy [or "blessed"] you are, Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD? He is the shield that protects you, the sword you boast in. Your enemies will cringe before you, and you will tread on their backs." Israel's blessing had both a historical and future focus. "Saved by the LORD" referred to Israel's exodus from Egypt. The remainder of the blessing assured the Israelites of success in their conquest of the promised land. Against this backdrop, the blessings of the new Moses identify Jesus's disciples as the new Israel who will enjoy a new exodus and conquest. The new Moses is a spiritual deliverer rather than a political one, and his promises must be understood in that light. In the Beatitudes, the new Moses pronounces spiritual salvation (exodus from slavery to sin) and promises spiritual victory (conquest and inheritance of a new promised land) to the new Israel. This background is confirmed by the allusion to Israel's exodus and conquest in the promise that the meek will "inherit the earth" (5:5).

In the OT, the poor were those who cried out for God's help, depended entirely on him for their needs, had a humble and contrite spirit, experienced his deliverance, and enjoyed his undeserved favor (Ps 86:1-5). In light of this background, Jesus was describing his disciples as unworthy sinners who depend on God's grace for salvation. Although the promises in Mt 5:4-9 are expressed in the future tense, the affirmation the kingdom of heaven is theirs is in the present tense (5:3,10). This suggests that the kingdom had already arrived through the coming of Jesus but that the fulfillment of many kingdom promises will occur only in the future. This future fulfillment awaits Christ's second coming. The statement "the kingdom of heaven is theirs" appears at the beginning and end of the main body of the Beatitudes (5:3,10). This bracketing device suggests that the Beatitudes constitute promises only to those who belong to the kingdom. Isaiah 61:1 promised that Messiah would bring good news to the poor. This beatitude serves as a fulfillment of that prophecy (Lk 4:16-21).

5:4 This beatitude is also dependent on Is 61: "He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted . . . to comfort all who mourn, to provide for those who mourn in Zion; to give them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, festive oil instead of mourning, and splendid clothes instead of despair" (v v. 1-3). The context of Is 61 portrays mourning as expressive of Israel's sorrow over the exile that their sins had caused. In this light, Mt 5:4 expresses the grief of those suffering the consequences of sin. Theirs is an attitude of repentance.

5:5 Like the preceding Beatitudes, this one parallels Is 61. Isaiah 61:7 (LXX) uses the words "they will inherit the earth," an exact parallel to Mt 5:5b. The first three Beatitudes thus confirm Jesus's identity as the Servant of Is 61. This identification is important for understanding the sacrificial nature of Jesus's death since Is 52:14-53:12 describes the Servant as suffering the punishment that sinners deserved (see Mt 8:17 and 12:17-21 which appeal to Is 53:4 and 42:1-4). This beatitude also echoes Ps 37:11 in which the humble are those who trust God and surrender to his authority even when they cannot make sense of their circumstances. Inherit the earth (land) in the OT refers to inheriting the promised land of Canaan. Thus most of Jesus's hearers recognized that his disciples were a new Israel that would inherit the land promised to Abraham. In the context of the Sermon on the Mount and the Gospel of Matthew as a whole, "inheriting the earth" involves more than the promise of living in Palestine. It refers to living in a recreated earth over which Christ rules eternally. Matthew 19:28 anticipates the renewal of earth and assures Jesus's disciples that they will enjoy great reward in the eternal kingdom.

5:6 Hunger and thirst are metaphors for a disciple's fervent desire for righteousness. The words they will be filled are in the passive voice, indicating that righteousness is not something disciples can achieve by their own efforts. The verb here, like those in the promises of vv. 4,6-7 (and possibly v. 9), is a "divine passive" that describes an act of God. He alone imparts the righteousness for which disciples hunger and thirst. This is crucial to understanding the theology of the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus required his disciples to keep the least of the commandments (v. 19), surpass the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees (v. 20), and to "be perfect . . . as your heavenly Father is perfect" (v. 48). Such demands can be twisted into a false theology in which righteousness is achieved by works, but the righteousness Jesus demands of us is actually a divine gift given to his followers.

5:7 The merciful are those who relate to others with a forgiving and compassionate spirit (6:2-4; 18:21-35). God will show mercy to the merciful.

5:8 The words pure in heart refer to someone who is authentically righteous in the inner person. Righteousness can be faked, as was the case with the Pharisees (23:25-28). Jesus said true purity is attained when God grants it to the person who hungers and thirsts for it. Complete fulfillment of this divine promise will occur at Jesus's return, but the identification of his disciples as those who are pure shows that dramatic transformation occurs even in this lifetime. The promise that Jesus's disciples will see God looks forward to the time when they will literally behold God in all his glory. The words are not to be interpreted figuratively as if they refer merely to special insight into God's nature or to a visionary experience. The new Moses promises his followers access to God that not even the ancient Moses was allowed to experience (Ex 33:12-23).

5:9 The ministry of peacemaking involves resolving conflict by making prompt apologies and acts of restitution, refusing to seek revenge, and humbly serving and loving one's enemies (vv. 21-26,38-41,43-48). The promise that peacemakers . . . will be called sons of God probably means that Jesus's authentic disciples emulate God by undertaking the ministry of reconciliation. Thus at the final judgment they shall be accepted as the sons (and daughters) of God.

5:10 The purest form of righteousness is pursued by disciples who know that their good deeds will demand great sacrifice and will result in pain rather than immediate reward. This is the epitome of the kingdom righteousness demanded by the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus pronounced that the kingdom of heaven belongs to those who suffer for righteousness. In the Greek text, theirs is shifted from its normal position at the end of the clause to the beginning instead. This gives the pronoun a special emphasis indicating that the kingdom belongs to righteous sufferers and to them alone. Those who always endeavor to evade persecution are not true disciples and will not have a share in the kingdom because true disciples follow Jesus even at the cost of their lives (16:24-27). The kingdom of heaven is the reign of God in the person of Jesus Christ. Righteous sufferers are subjects of God's rule through their submission to Jesus's authority. Jesus inaugurated this kingdom during his ministry, but it will be consummated in the end time.

5:11-12 Jesus's words show that persecution is typically either verbal or violent. Verbal forms include insult and slander. The word persecute includes acts of physical violence like the slap of Mt 5:39. Jesus promised that the cost of discipleship will be offset by the enormity of the reward the disciple enjoys in heaven. Jewish leaders rejected and vehemently persecuted the OT prophets, and Jesus repeatedly denounced this persecution (21:34-36; 23:29-37). By treating Jesus's followers in the same way they had treated the prophets, Jewish persecutors unwittingly bestowed on them a prophet's honor.



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