

This chapter begins Jesus' sermon on the mount, a discourse that spans chapters 5-7 in which Jesus describes the righteousness that will be required in the kingdom that He will establish on earth after the tribulation. Our Savior begins with what has been called the "Beatitudes," a list of characteristics and behaviors that please God when they exist in our lives.

¹ And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: ² And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

"And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain" – The fame of Jesus was spreading and as a result multitudes of people had come, both to hear Him and to be healed of their diseases. In this instance, Jesus saw an opportunity to teach the multitudes and so He chose an elevated position from which they could both see and hear Him as He taught. Jesus took similar steps at other occasions, such as boarding a ship that was anchored just offshore so that His voice would carry across the surface of the water (Mark 4:1).

"and when he was set [seated], his disciples came unto him" – It was customary for Rabbis to sit while teaching. Once Jesus did so, the disciples saw that He was ready and they came took their positions to listen. These "disciples" were not just the twelve men handpicked by the Lord but also included the multitudes who were following Jesus around in order to hear His teaching. The people in this multitude likely included everything from genuine believers to the merely curious.

"And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying" – Once He had sat down and the multitudes had positioned themselves so that they could listen then Jesus proceeded to teach them.

³ Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed [happy]" – Jesus uses the word "blessed" 11 times (vs. 3-11) in the next verses to describe people who possess the characteristics He lists in these verses. These people have a source of joy that others do not have because of the benefits of pleasing God. These verses (3-11) are collectively called "The Beatitudes" and the word "beatitude" comes from the Latin word for "blessed."

"are the poor in spirit" – Being "poor in spirit" speaks of being humble before God in the realization that we are destitute without Him. In reality we are all poor in spirit, but Jesus here is speaking of those who recognize their spiritual poverty and look to God for their spiritual needs rather than trying to earn it on their own. There are many scriptures describing how God is against the proud.

"for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" – Those who recognize that they have no righteousness of their own and look to God for mercy and forgiveness will be the ones who will allowed entrance into God's kingdom. Those who ignore God's provision (Christ and His sacrifice for sins) will be excluded.

⁴ Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

This is not mourning in a general sense but Jesus is specifically speaking about those who mourn over their sin and how they have displeased God because of it. These people will be repentant and God will comfort them as He forgives and cleanses them of their sin.

⁵ Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

The Greek word for "meek" means "gentleness" or "mildness." Rather than forcing their will upon others as the wicked do, meek people instead do not take matters into their own hands because they trust that the Lord will provide for them. They do not seek vengeance for wrong doing but leave that in the hands of the Lord. Jesus is drawing the idea of the meek inheriting the earth from Psalm 37, a psalm which encourages the righteous to not do as the wicked but to trust in the LORD (**Psa. 37:11** "*But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.*"). Jesus is speaking to Jews and is promising that those who humbly yield themselves into the Lord's will rather than seeking their own intentions will have a place in the Messiah's kingdom.

⁶ Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Righteousness is the state of being acceptable to God, and Jesus promises those who yearn for that righteousness as they would for food and drink will be satisfied as if by a good meal. The Greek word for "shall be filled" refers to being fed. The Lord will satisfy their yearning by providing them with His righteousness (based on Jesus Christ), making them right and acceptable to God.

⁷ Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

Our sinful human nature naturally wants to see someone who has wronged us get their "just desserts." We want to avenge ourselves, feeling that we owe it to them. However, Jesus tells us that we will have joy if we are merciful and show compassion toward others because then the Lord will also show us mercy. **Heb. 6:10** "*For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.*" **James 2:13** "*For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.*"

⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

This blessing is not on those who have only outward purity, such as the Pharisees, but on those whose purity comes from the heart. Only those who have been cleansed by the blood of Christ can have such purity of heart because it would otherwise be someone with a sinful heart attempting to appear pure on the outside but still under the bondage of their sinful heart. Those with a purified heart will see God, not just through the eye of faith but also by being able to enter heaven.

⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

The Lord blesses those who attempt to make peace with their enemies. Our flesh wants to return “an eye for an eye” and continue the conflict but if we seek peace with our enemies then God will proclaim us as His children. Children reflect the nature of their parents and we are reflecting the nature of our heavenly Father when we seek after peace.

Romans 12:17-21 *“¹⁷ Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. ¹⁸ If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. ¹⁹ Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. ²⁰ Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. ²¹ Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”*

¹⁰ Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

We naturally try to avoid persecution for the same reason we avoid things that cause us physical pain or discomfort. However, this blessing is on those who choose righteousness despite the persecution they may suffer for doing so. This choice is evidence that Jesus Christ has done a work in their heart to cause them to prioritize righteousness no matter the cost and shows that God has made them a citizen of the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹ Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. ¹² Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Jesus expands on the idea of being persecuted for the sake of righteousness by pointing out our motivation for choosing righteousness and the motive behind the persecution. He says we can take great joy when people revile us (insult us to our face or behind our back), persecute us, or tell lies denigrating us because of our association with Jesus Christ. Christ will reward us when we get to heaven for taking a stand for Him while here on earth and that knowledge should be a source of great joy. It also puts us in good company because the OT prophets of God who spoke for Him were also persecuted because of the message they preached.

¹³ Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

“Ye are the salt of the earth” – Salt was used in food as both a seasoning and a preservative. Describing His people as the “salt of the earth,” God is saying that He has placed us here to “season” the world – that is, to be a Godly influence on the culture around us. We are also to be a preservative because our influence can preserve society from its self-destructive tendencies as well as postponing the judgment of God as we help others come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

“but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted?” – Salty flavor is inherent to salt, but if salt has lost that flavor then what can you use to give salt its flavor once again? The salt has lost the very quality that makes it salt. If we are the salt of the earth and we have lost the flavor of Christ in our influence on others, what then?

“it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men” – In that day, when salt had become diluted or contaminated so that it was no longer good for seasoning or preserving food, it was considered useless and was cast out. Frequently it was cast onto paths and walkways in order to provide traction or to prevent weeds from growing. If we have ceased being a Godly influence in our world then we have lost the reason that God has left us here. Only God can restore our “saltiness” and make us an influence for Him once again.

¹⁴ Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. ¹⁵ Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

“Ye are the light of the world” – Jesus makes a similar comparison between God’s people and light. We are to shine the light of Christ into this world that has been darkened by sin. **John 1:4-9** (speaking of Christ) *“⁴ In him was life; and the life was the light of men. ⁵ And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. ⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. ⁸ He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. ⁹ That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.”*

“A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid” – A city on a hill that has lights burning at night is easily seen from a distance. We should shine with the light of Jesus Christ in this dark world so that the lost cannot help but see that light and recognize that Jesus is its source.

“Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel [basket], but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house” – The purpose of lighting a candle is not to hide it under a basket and thus prevent it from doing anyone any good. Instead, the candle is placed on a candlestick so that its light may shine as far as possible so that everyone in the house can benefit. God did not save us and leave us on this earth to be “secret agent” Christians. He wants us to share the light that has been given to us with others so that they can all benefit from the light of Jesus Christ.

¹⁶ Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

We should not be embarrassed or ashamed to let people know that we are Christians. We should live our lives in a manner that will glorify God through our good works so that others will notice and see the goodness of God. Too many times our behavior reflects poorly on our Savior and does not give people a reason to glorify God because of us.