



STUDY TWO

Beatitudes

Matthew 5:3-12

Introduction

The thought-provoking passage of Matthew 5:3-12 is collectively known as the Beatitudes (from Latin *beatitudo*) because each of the 8 Beatitudes starts with the word “blessed.” The word “blessed” literally means “happy” as used in other Greek works such as Homer’s Iliad and various theologians have offered their own interpretation. Karl Barth, an influential and world renowned 20th century Swiss theologian translated it humorously as “you lucky bum.” Darrel Johnson prefers “in sync” – being in alignment with God.

This guide will lightly touch on each Beatitude due to brevity though each Beatitude could be a fully independent study. Since there is much to unpack in these verses, consider selecting a subset of the Beatitudes and dive deeper into them.

Group Study

1. Slowly read aloud Matthew 5:3-12 and listen carefully to the words of Jesus. Note that “blessed” is an adjective (word that describes a noun), so Jesus is describing a type of person. What are some initial thoughts after reading this passage? How do Jesus’ words align with the culture today on who would be considered blessed?
2. Matthew 5:3 says “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” What does it mean to have a poverty of spirit? How is this quality “in sync” with God? Can a person be rich in spirit? What are the reasons that being poor in spirit is important to have Jesus as the King and be identified with the kingdom of heaven?
3. Matthew 5:4 says “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.” Read Isaiah 61:1-4, Lamentations 1:4 and James 4:8-10. How is this Beatitude

connected with being poor in spirit? What is being mourned? Who provides the comfort?

4. Matthew 5:5 says “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.” How is this Beatitude connected with the previous two? What is the difference between meekness/gentleness vs. humility (perhaps consider what is the opposite of meekness/gentleness vs. humility)? What does inheriting the land mean in Psalm 37 and what does Jesus mean when he quotes from Psalm 37:11?
5. Matthew 5:6 says “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. How is this Beatitude connected with the previous ones? Righteousness is right standing with God. How is righteousness being compared to food and drink? Read Psalm 42. What is the tone of the psalmist?
6. Matthew 5:7 says “Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.” Read Exodus 34:6, Nehemiah 9:17, Psalm 86:15. How is being merciful connected with God? Read Romans 12:16-13:1. How can we find the balance between mercy and justice?
7. Matthew 5:8 says “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.” Read Mark 7:21-23, Psalm 51:10, 1John 1:7. Given the condition of people’s hearts, how can hearts be purified? Reflect on the promise to see God and what feelings arise? Fear, awe, excitement?
8. Matthew 5:9 says “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.” What is the difference between a peacemaker and a peacekeeper? Read 2Corinthians 5:18. A peacemaker is mediating between what two parties in this context? For what reasons would a peacemaker be called a child of God?
9. Matthew 5:10-12 says “Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” Persecution by itself is not something to be desired, but comes from following Jesus. Read John 15:19-20, 2Timothy 3:12 and 2Corinthians 12:9-10. How can Paul’s reflections give us strength to endure and overcome persecution?

Personal Reflection

1. Which Beatitudes do you find most reassuring? Most challenging? What are some ways to continually stay “in sync” or in alignment with the mind of God?
2. From Matthew 5:3 (“Blessed are the poor in spirit...”), how do you sustain a posture of being poor in spirit, knowing that we are spiritually empty without God?
3. From Matthew 5:4 (“Blessed are those who mourn...”), what are the places of pain/mourning in your life and in the world around you? How can you depend on God for comfort?
4. From Matthew 5:5 (“Blessed are the meek...”), how can you model the meekness as exhibited by Moses (Numbers 12:1-13) and Jesus (Matthew 11:29)?
5. From Matthew 5:6 (“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness...”), how can you cultivate that intense sense of longing to be satisfied by righteousness?
6. From Matthew 5:7 (“Blessed are the merciful...”), how might you be merciful to those around you? Who in your life needs mercy?
7. From Matthew 5:8 (“Blessed are the pure in heart...”), what areas of your heart need God’s purification and cleansing?
8. From Matthew 5:9 (“Blessed are the peacemakers...”), is there somebody that comes to your mind who needs to have peace with God? How can you be a mediator in this situation?
9. From Matthew 5:10-12 (“Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness...”), have you experienced persecution due to righteousness? What was your response? Is it possible to rejoice and be glad in persecution?

Prayer

