

The Gospel of Matthew

SERMON ON THE MOUNT: BEATITUDES (5:1-12)

The Sermon on the Mount is perhaps the most comprehensive message on the Christian life in all of Scripture. Here Jesus establishes the principles and practices upon which He desires us to build our life (the rock, not the sand). The setting of this sermon is on the hills of the Northern shore of the Sea of Galilee. The sermon was preached after He spent the night in prayer on a mountain and came down and ordained His 12 apostles. This might be considered the organizational sermon of His newly established church. The bridegroom is providing leadership for His bride. He is redeeming her from the old life of sin and death and showing her the new way she is to walk in with Him.

Begin by reading the Sermon on the Mount in its entirety in chapters 5-7 of Matthew. What are some of your general thoughts on this message? **This message deals extensively with the Christian life and attitudes. He upends many of their traditional teachings and reestablishes them upon Christian principles and a deeper revelation of God's will and intent. This was a groundbreaking sermon!**

After reading the conclusion to the sermon in Matthew 7:24-27, what is the rock that Jesus urged His listeners to build their life upon? **Jesus was urging them to build their life upon the fullness of His teachings from this entire sermon. His Word was the rock. It would endure forever, allowing the life they built upon it to endure as well. We need to take heed to this message!**

Overview of the Beatitudes (5:1-12)

The word, "Beatitude" is a transliteration of the Latin word for "Blessed", the most common word found in the Beatitudes. Examine the subject matter of the Beatitudes. What types of attitudes and actions are portrayed here? Why does Jesus go to the trouble to tell us that we will be "blessed" by adorning these virtues? **These attitudes and actions are atypical. They are not behaviors commonly exhibited by fallen man. In fact, many of these attitudes appear to be self-defeating. Yet, Jesus tells us that we will be blessed by adorning them.**

THE MEANING OF BLESSED – PART 1

Blessed (makarioi)... The Greek word here (makarioi) is an adjective that means "happy" which in English etymology goes back to hap, chance, good-luck as seen in our words haply, hapless, happily, happiness. "Blessedness is, of course, an infinitely higher and better thing than mere happiness" (Weymouth). English has thus ennobled "blessed" to a higher rank than "happy."... The Greek word is as old as Homer and Pindar and was used of the Greek gods and also of men, but largely of outward prosperity. Then it is applied to the dead who died in the Lord as in Revelation 14:13... Jesus takes this word "happy" and puts it in this rich environment. "This is one of the words which have been transformed and ennobled by New Testament use; by association, as in the Beatitudes, with unusual conditions, accounted by the world miserable, or with rare and difficult" (Bruce). It is a pity that we have not kept the word "happy" to the high and holy plane where Jesus placed it. "If you know these things, happy (makarioi) are you if you do them" (John 13:17). "Happy (makarioi) are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29). And Paul applies this adjective to God, "according to the gospel of the glory of the happy (makariou) God" (1 Timothy 1:11).

- A.T. Robertson's *Word Pictures of the New Testament*

THE MEANING OF BLESSED - PART 2

Both Homer and Hesiod spoke of the Greek gods as being happy (makarios) within themselves, because they were unaffected by the world of men – who were subject to poverty, disease, weakness, misfortune, and death. The fullest meaning of the term, therefore, had to do with an inward contentedness that is not affected by circumstances. That is the kind of happiness God desires for His children, a state of joy and well-being that does not depend on physical, temporary circumstances (cf. Philippians 4:11-13)... Because blessedness is fundamentally an element of the character of God, when men partake of His nature through Jesus Christ they partake of His blessedness. So it becomes clear at the very beginning of the Sermon on the Mount that Jesus is speaking of a reality that is only for believers.

- *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, Matthew 1-7, p. 142*

Now that we have considered the meaning of the word, “blessed”, why was it so important for Jesus to establish that those who adopted the attitudes and practices listed in the Beatitudes would be blessed? **Because they appear to be self-defeating attitudes, Jesus wanted to clarify that they were actually a pathway to great blessing. This isn’t intuitive at all (not discerned by worldly wisdom), but is a spiritual insight made available by God. True prosperity is determined by our measure of holiness.**

As we look at the subject of each verse in the Beatitudes (poor in spirit, mourn, gentle, hunger and thirst for righteousness, merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers, persecuted for righteousness), we notice a gradual transition from attitude to action. What does this teach us? Consider also that this is the introduction to the entire Sermon on the Mount.

- God is most concerned with matters of the **heart**.
- Right **actions** are built upon right **attitudes**.

Finally, Jesus sat down to bring this message. In our culture, bringing a message from a sitting position is more casual than delivering the message while standing. It was different back in Israelite culture. Sitting as He began the message meant that He was assuming a position of authority. He climbed the side of the mountain and sat down. They came to Him. He was the teacher; they were the students. It probably isn’t a coincidence that the Law of Moses was given on a mountain and Jesus picks a mountain to preach this pivotal sermon. We should approach this sermon with reverence and receptive hearts. These teachings were meant to become the very foundation of our life.

Blessed are the Humble (5:3)

Each Beatitude is a directive and a promise. The first Beatitude instructs us that those who are poor in spirit are blessed because they will receive the kingdom of God. Read Mark 10:13-16 and consider why the Lord placed this Beatitude first. **Humility is necessary to entrance into the kingdom of heaven. No one comes to God unless they humble themselves before Him. This sermon is for the saved, those who have at least once been humbled before God. The emphasis is on retaining that attitude.**

THE MEANING OF POOR IN SPIRIT

The word “poor” used here literally means to crouch, cringe, or shrink away. It is used of a beggar or pauper. We see this same word used in Luke 16:20, referring to Lazarus. This goes beyond just being poor (having few resources or being underpaid). This word refers to a beggar who has nothing if they don’t receive it at the hand of someone else; that is their livelihood.

The word “spirit” literally means a current of air, breath, or breeze. It is used of the human spirit/soul, our inner attitude, or of a spiritual being like God, an angel or a demon. It is sometimes used to exclusively refer to the Spirit of God, the third person in the trinity. In this context, it refers to our inner attitude, much like the familiar passage in John 4:24.

Bringing both words together, we see a picture of a person who has a beggarly attitude. The most appropriate synonym for this phrase would be, “humble”.

To better understand the concept of being poor in spirit or humble, read Luke 18:9-14 and Isaiah 66:1-2. Further describe the true beggarly attitude that Jesus endorses.

Humility is the attitude that embraces a right view of both God and self. The publican was broken before God because of his sin. He knew of God’s worthiness and his own personal unworthiness. He simply asked for mercy because he had no basis to demand anything of God. The Pharisee did not have this attitude and was stilling exalting self. The truly humble lean desperately upon the Lord for strength and have a healthy fear of Him.

This parable seems to be modeled upon Isaiah 57:13-16. Read this passage and discuss the similarities. The Lord promises a land to those who trust in Him, those who are humble in spirit. In the Beatitude, Jesus promises to grant the blessings of His kingdom to those who are humble in spirit.

What is the blessing for those who are humble? Read Colossians 1:12-13 and Matthew 11:25-30. Those who humble themselves receive the kingdom of God. They are made subjects of Christ, changed by His grace and brought under His reign. By consistently humbling ourselves, we align ourselves with His will and allow Him to more freely reign over us. His reign is good and a blessing to us and others. This true repentance yields a godly fruit that is not repented of (2 Corinthians 7:10).

Why is it that God’s kingdom consists only of the humble?

They are the ones who have submitted themselves to His reign and His authority. They have seen the reality of their sin and the righteousness of God and fled to Him for refuge. Those who reject Jesus believe they are the captain of their own destiny but are startled to discover that they do have one father and ruler who is exceedingly cruel and despises them, namely Satan (John 8:31-45).

What can we do to become more humble? Read Romans 14:9-11.

From this passage in Romans we see that those who stand before God are humbled. We need a greater vision of God to better understand our place before Him. No tongue will boast of self in the revealed presence of Almighty God. All will bow and worship Him. May we have such a vision!

Blessed are the Mourners (5:4)

The concept of mourning is familiar to us. It means to grieve, be in sorrow, or weep. It is the outward expression of inward sorrow. It is the context of this mourning though, that is sometimes elusive in this passage. We often see it associated with mourning over death or loss. Truly, Jesus can give comfort to those who mourn for these reasons. When harmonizing this passage with other Scriptures, we see that the reason for mourning that Jesus is talking about goes beyond the temporal realm into the spiritual.

What are other reasons for mourning in Scripture? Read James 4:8-10.

We are instructed to mourn over sin in our life. When we see sin the way that God sees sin, we will have a sorrowful heart over the things we are drawn to.

Are all types of mourning good? If not, what types of mourning are wrong and harmful? Read 2 Samuel 13:1-2, 18:32-19:7 and 2 Corinthians 7:10. Mourning for loss is understandable, but when it leads us into sin it becomes very destructive. This is how depression works. Amnon mourned over his lust for Tamar that was unfulfilled. David mourned to such an extent over the death of his rebellious son that he did not appreciate those who stood by him to deliver him and his kingdom from destruction. The sorrow of the world brings death (further destruction). We must be careful not to allow our sorrow to cross that line.

What is the extent of the comfort that the Lord promises those who mourn? Read John 16:20-22.

The comfort that God can provide is so complete that it eclipses the pain of mourning. Psalm 30:5 says, “weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning”.

What are the benefits of mourning? We see from Scriptures that the benefits of a godly sorrow are numerous and abundant.

- Like being poor in spirit, mourning for the right reasons shows that we are in touch with reality, and not living in the delusion of sin. (Read Ecclesiastes 7:2-4)
- Biblical mourning brings us to God while ease tends to draw us away from Him. (Read Psalms 119:67 and Luke 6:25)
- The comfort brought by Christ is a “new song”, a new revelation of God to us. (Read Psalms 40:1-3)
- Biblical mourning brings forth the fruit of righteousness which endures. (Read Psalms 126:5-6 and Hebrews 12:11)
- We are able to share the comfort we receive with others. (Read 2 Corinthians 1:4-7)

Is there danger for those who do not properly mourn? Read Ezekiel 9:4-6.

Absolutely! Those who do not mourn over sin will never come to salvation. This passage is an illustration of those who mourned and were thus saved from the destruction that the Lord brought upon Jerusalem. Those who mourn now will rejoice later; those who laugh now will mourn later.

Blessed are the Meek (5:5)

Jesus quotes this Beatitude directly from Psalm 37:11, which says, “But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.” The meaning of the word, “meek” isn’t well understood today. It might best be described as a blending of strength, self-control, and compassion. The meek are not weak, but rather restrain their strength out of compassion for others. Though a meek individual may have much to boast of, they will not seek the applause of men. Though a meek individual may have the power to harm another for a personal injustice, they will instead seek to use their strength for the good of the other. There are two individuals in Scripture who are personally referred to as “meek”, Moses and Jesus Christ.

How do you see the quality of meekness in Moses? Read Numbers 12:3, 11:24-29, and Exodus 32:7-14.

Moses appears to have had the opportunity to agree with God in destroying Israel and allow God to make a new and great nation from him. However, he uses his standing with God to intercede for them rather than to destroy them. Likewise, when others in the camp began to prophesy, he rejoiced in sharing the ministry with them rather than objecting. Both of these actions demonstrate meekness.

How do you see the quality of meekness in Jesus? Read Matthew 11:29, 21:5, 20:28, 26:53, and Luke 23:34. Jesus is the preeminent example of meekness. He came and served men rather than exercising His right to be served. He could have called 12 legions of angels to free Him from the cross and destroy His accusers but withheld this power. Instead, He used His standing with God to pray for the forgiveness of those who crucified Him. He was not weak at all, He was meek.

What is the significance of the meek inheriting the earth? Who will bestow the earth to the meek? Read Psalms 24:1-2 and Matthew 19:28-30. The earth belongs to the Lord and everything that is in it. The Lord will bestow the earth to the meek. Those who are meek do not assert themselves for personal gain but use their power and strength to the help and benefit of others. Though they do not seek their gain in this world, the Lord promises them great gain in the next, making those who put themselves last, first and those who put themselves first, last.

The idea of inheriting the earth appears to be consistent with God’s commitment to grant the earth to the descendants of Abraham. Read Romans 4:13 and discuss the passage. This passage states that the promise to Abraham that his descendants would inherit the earth was not specifically to the physical descendants, but to those who are related by faith. Those who are spiritual children of Abraham will inherit the earth.

Read Numbers 20:7-12. How would you describe Moses' actions? What did this cost him? How does this correlate with this Beatitude? **Moses' behavior was the opposite of meek when he struck the rock out of anger. His tone and actions were in defiance to God and were an abuse of his power and standing. This cost Moses a trip into the Promised Land. The meek shall inherit the earth. By abandoning the attitude of meekness, Moses lost the Promised Land.**

Blessed are the Spiritually Hungry (5:6)

In his commentary on Matthew, John MacArthur speaks of this beatitude and says, ““The strongest and deepest impulses in the natural realm are used to represent the depth of desire the called of God and redeemed have for righteousness.”

It is natural for men to crave food, especially when they are truly hungry. This desire motivates men to go to great lengths to obtain sustenance. So should our desire be for the righteousness of God. Jesus promises that those who hunger and thirst after righteousness will be filled. What does it mean to hunger, thirst, and be filled?

Hunger – Read the context of Matthew 4:2, and 12:1-3. This goes beyond a growling stomach to a deep craving and need for food (to be famished).

Thirst – See the similar context in Psalms 42:1-2. Again, this thirst surpasses wanting to have your lips moistened, but implies a deep need for water.

Filled – This word means to gorge by supplying food in abundance. It supplies beyond need to the point of excess.

Jesus teaches us to seek righteousness. What righteousness are we seeking? Read Isaiah 64:6, Romans 3:10, John 6:35, and Philippians 3:9.

We are not seeking our own righteousness. We have none. We are seeking to receive His righteousness. Truly, there is not righteousness apart from the righteousness of God. He is righteousness.

A key to living out this passage in real life is to develop a spiritual hunger for the things of the Lord. How do we grow in this area?

1. Have a taste for **spiritual**. Read Psalms 34:8 and 42:1-2.

Christianity goes beyond a set of doctrines and principles. It is centered on a person. He is a person with whom we may have a relationship. This relationship does not exist in theory but experientially. We are exhorted to taste and see that the Lord is good. This is why an experiential salvation is necessary for godliness. It is this taste that draws us back to the Lord.

2. Become dissatisfied with the **world**. Read Psalms 63:1-2. Why did the psalmist say he lived in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water?

He lived on this earth, where nothing created can truly satisfy us, unlike a perfect world where the infinite creator himself dwells and is the light of that land.

A great illustration of this principle is the Parable of the Prodigal Son in 15th chapter of Luke. The prodigal had to hit rock bottom before his eyes were spiritually opened to see that even a servant in his father's house was better off than he. John Darby said, "To be hungry is not enough; I must be really starving to know what is in God's heart toward me. When the prodigal was hungry, he went to feed on the husks, but when he was starving, he turned to his father."

Many saints are still sitting in the mire with the hogs and don't realize that life could be better. They think the only thing available to them are husks and forget the table of their Father's house. Like the prodigal son, when we are truly hungry, we will come without conditions. Proverbs 27:7 says, "The full soul loatheth an honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet." To the soul hungry for God, even His discipline and reproof are joyous.

To what degree has God promised to fill those who crave righteousness? Read Psalm 23:1,5. **He promises to fill us to the point of abundance. He will comfort us with sufficient comfort that we will be able to comfort others with the comfort we ourselves have received.**

Two great examples of this principle in action are the Apostle Paul and Moses. Read Philippians 3:9-14 and 2 Corinthians 12:1-4. What was Paul's attitude about righteousness? Was he filled?

Paul hungered and thirsted for righteousness by continuously pressing for the prize, putting every effort and energy in his life into being what the Lord would have him be. He was blessed with a great level of revelation from the Lord himself, filling Paul to the point of overabundance.

Read Exodus 33:11-19 and discuss Moses. How did he hunger and thirst after God. Was he filled?

Moses' all consuming passion was to know more about the Lord. The burning bush wasn't enough for him; neither was the mountain and the giving of the law on the mountain. He wanted to see God's glory. God rewarded his hunger by giving him all he could stand at that time.

Consider this lesson. Does your hunger for the Lord pass beyond the pew? In his commentary on Matthew, John MacArthur said, "A hungry man does not have to be begged to eat". I hope we all are hungry!

Blessed are the Merciful (5:7)

The prior attitudes endorsed by the Sermon on the Mount, with the exception of meekness, deal largely with our attitude before God. This beatitude, however, turns our attention to our interaction with men. We find though that our interaction with men plays a large role in how the Lord interacts with us.

What is mercy? Read Psalms 86:15-16.

According to Easton's Bible Dictionary, mercy is compassion for the miserable. Its object is misery. The one who is merciful uses their power to bring comfort and consolation to one in misery.

What is the motivation behind Biblical mercy? Read Lam. 3:21-23, Psalm 145:8, and Matthew 14:14.

Broadly, it is love; specifically, it is compassion. Compassion is something we feel within our hearts, a pity and kindness that moves us to be of help to another.

One of the challenges we face when contemplating whether or how to show mercy is how our mercy will be received and used by the recipient. For example, should we give money to someone who has a history of making bad choices with money or may use it for evil purposes? Should we stand by someone who is heading down the wrong path in life? Where does mercy cross the line and become enabling? Read Romans 2:1-6 and Galatians 6:1-2. Clearly, to stand back and judge others who are falling into sin and fail to show them mercy is wrong. God is working in the life of the rebel, showing them goodness in order to lead them to repentance. We can become a co-laborer with God by showing mercy with the same intent. God hasn't called us to throw money or resources at a bad situation, but to intervene, showing compassion and instruction.

What does mercy require of the recipient? Read Matthew 5:43-48 and 1 Peter 2:9-10. It doesn't require perfection or even friendship. Compassion is demonstrated on those who are in misery. Sin and misery go hand in hand (Romans 3:10 and 16).

The parable of the Good Samaritan may best illustrate this point. Read Luke 10:25-37. What did the Samaritan have in common with the injured man? What did he require of him? How far does the definition of "neighbor" expand? Culturally, they were enemies. Yet, he saw a man in need and stopped to show compassion to him. This definitely put him out and cost him time, comfort, and money, but he did it anyway. He received nothing from the injured man but showed him compassion anyway. There appears to be no limit to the boundaries of the definition of "neighbor".

Does mercy consist of feeling alone? Read Matthew 15:32, 20:34, Mark 6:34, Hebrews 10:34, and 1 John 3:17-18. No! In every one of these examples, mercy went beyond feeling compassion to action. If we hold back this feeling of compassion and fail to take action, we have not shown mercy. To feel is not enough, we must act to bring aid to those who are suffering.

Do we need mercy? If so, why, and in what context? Read Psalms 6:2, 9:13, 31:9, 51:1. Whenever our way becomes difficult, we stand in need of mercy. We desire God to have compassion on us in our sorrow, whether it is a result of illness, oppression, grief, or our own sins.

What happens when we shut off the flow of compassion and mercy in our life? Read James 2:13, Daniel 4:27, and 1 Peter 3:7. When we fail to show mercy, we jeopardize our receipt of God's mercy. It is a very dangerous game to play because the Lord has promised a specific cause and effect relationship between the two.

The parable of the indebted servant is an excellent illustration of how withholding mercy will affect us. Read Matthew 18:21-35. How does the mercy we are asked to share compare to the mercy we receive? It is but a small portion compared to what we receive from the Lord. When placed side by side, our lack of compassion appears to be absolute lunacy. May God's light illuminate our perspective!

Does God's promise of mercy for those who are merciful make the receipt of God's mercy a work, something that we earn? Read Psalm 41:1-4 and Romans 9:13-16. No, not at all. The very origin of mercy is compassion and not indebtedness. Showing mercy toward others doesn't guarantee us forgiveness of sin or an easy life. Yet, the Lord promises to allow an abundance of His compassion fall upon us if we are faithful to share compassion with others. We need this compassion extended from Him. We gain much in comparison to what we dispense.

To what extent does God desire mercy to be a part of our life? Read Micah 6:8 and Ephesians 4:28-5:1. He requires of His people that mercy characterize their life. He admonishes those who stole to stop stealing and instead labor so that they may have something to share with those who have need. This was to actually become an object of their labors! To the saints, he calls us to show mercy to them as the Lord has shown mercy to us.

Hebrews 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."

Blessed are the Pure in Heart (5:8)

Each beatitude seems to challenge us in new ways. This one is no exception. To have a pure heart before God should be the great goal of our life. No man will see God or please Him for that matter without a pure heart. We would do well to give great attention to this teaching and its application.

What does it mean to be pure?

It means to be without defect. Other synonyms in Scripture are clear or clean.

What is the heart in the context of this passage? Read Proverbs 4:23.

The heart is the center of our being. It is the seat of our thoughts, emotions, and actions.

Why does Jesus focus on the heart? Read 1 Sam. 16:7, Matt. 12:34-35, Matt. 15:18-19.

God is able to look past actions and get see the actual heart of men. He knows where they are really at and what they really think. This is why we see God bless and save so many that are found in difficult and desperate conditions. He looks at the heart. When our heart gets right, the Lord will bless and use us.

Is it natural to have a pure heart? Read Genesis 6:5, Psalm 58:3, Jeremiah 17:9.

No, quite the opposite. It is unnatural to have a pure heart. We are naturally bent toward sin and wickedness. Without Divine intervention, man became exceedingly evil.

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A parallel passage that further correlating purity and spiritual awareness is found later in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6:19-24. Read this passage and answer the following questions.

What is tied to our treasure? **Jesus tells us that where our treasure is, our heart will be also.**

What is the consequence of having a treasure located outside the gates of heaven? **If we have our treasures on earth, our eyes will be full of darkness. We will be lacking in our spiritual awareness. If our heart is in heaven, we will have perception to see the Lord's will and ways.**

How does this passage relate to Matthew 5:8? **Those who are pure in heart (have their treasure in heaven) have the spiritual perception to see God in all things and will behold Him in heaven.**

Jesus speaks in the positive voice in the Beatitudes. He promises blessing to those who are characterized by specific godly qualities. A negative promise is also implied. Read Hebrews 12:14 and Revelation 3:14-19. What happens to those who do not have a pure heart?

The word "holiness" in Hebrews 12:14 means, "cleanliness", "purity", or "sanctification". Without purity, no man will be able to behold God in an enduring way. None can approach Him who are not first washed clean. Those who cannot endure before God are cast into hell. When saints fail to remain centered and focused on the Lord, we lose our perspective and can go far astray.

How does a pure heart affect our life tangibly? Read 1 Chronicles 29:17-19 and Matthew 23:25-28.

When the inside is cleaned, the outside will follow suit. The Pharisee's problem is that they were too focused on the outside and completely neglected the inside. They didn't even perceive that they had a problem. They were the "blind leading the blind".

How can our hearts be cleansed? Read Psalm 119:9-11, 33-40, and John 15:3.

We were given a living word that is transformational when we receive it the right way. It is a powerful tool in the hands of the Spirit to teach, reprove, correct, and instruct in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16).

A great illustration of a heart set in the right direction is David. God considered him to be a man after his own heart (1 Samuel 13:14). Read the following psalms written by David. What do we learn about his heart? Read Psalms 19:14, 26:2, 27:8, and 51:6, 10.

David's heart was not always right, but it was something he was constantly concerned about. He faltered just like we all do, but he constantly desired and sought to get right with God.

Does a pure heart limit or liberate us? Read Titus 1:15-16.

It does not limit us in any way except that we will hate sin. Truly, it liberates us. When we are free from idolatry, we can enjoy the blessings of God without guilt. When our hearts begin to love the creation more than the Creator, we corrupt even pure things and have to withdraw until our hearts are purified.

1 Timothy 1:5 – "Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned:"

Blessed are the Peacemakers (5:9)

Among all the beatitudes, this particular passage is probably the most frequently misunderstood. The word, “peacemaker” is usually applied in a very broad sense that completely misses the point. In fact, it is often misused in a dangerous way. The Bible sternly warns us against declaring peace where there is no peace (Jeremiah 6:11-17). Our desire is to understand God’s intention and apply this truth to our life that we might be known as His children.

What is peace? **Peace is a state of quiet or tranquility, freedom from disturbance or agitation. It can be used in context of an individual, a group of people, or a whole society in general.**

What is a peacemaker? **No, it isn’t a Colt 45. A peacemaker is one who strives to bring peace to a situation where there is conflict. A peacemaker is usually an intercessor or mediator between two parties that are at odds.**

The best way to understand the meaning of this passage is to look at it in its entirety and at the surrounding passages. What blessing is promised to peacemakers and what does this mean? Read Luke 6:35, Ephesians 5:1-2 and 1 Peter 1:14-16. **Peacemakers will be called, “the children of God”. In each of these passages we see that being a child of God is not only positional but behavioral. An obedient child of God follows the example of their Father and elder brother, Jesus. We are to be holy as He is holy. We are to love our enemies as He loves His enemies. We can apply this principle to this passage. By being a peacemaker, we will be like our Father and be recognized as His children.**

To inherit this blessing, what principle must we apply to correctly interpret “peacemaker”? **We must be peacemakers like our Father is a peacemaker. We must first understand how He works to bring peace and work alongside Him. In this way, we will be recognized as the children of God.**

How does God the Father and His Son work as peacemakers? Read Luke 2:13-14, Ephesians 2:11-17, Colossians 1:20, and Romans 5:1. **God seeks to bring peace to the relationship between Himself and man due to the chasm of sin that separates us. Jesus came to make peace by the blood of His cross and draw men to Himself to experience that peace.**

In our culture, peacemakers are seen as mediators who can broker a compromise between two or more parties. A compromise is considered a “middle way” between two extremes, an accommodation in which both sides make concessions. Politics is often called the art of compromise. Some say, “nobody will get everything he wants; we all must compromise.” To what degree does God compromise in His work as a peacemaker? Read Matthew 5:10-12, 10:34-37, and John 7:40-52. **Jesus did not come to make peace by way of compromise. God does not compromise His character. He came to extend the opportunity for peace by repentance and faith. Those who reject Christ are divided from those who are accepted by Him. God did not bring peace by condescending to man’s moral level but by condescending to his physical level to offer Himself a sacrifice and therefore bring man up to God’s level morally. God made this amazing gesture without an ounce of compromise.**

From the example of Jesus, the “Prince of Peace” I want to offer two maxims that will apply to our work as peacemakers for the Lord.

1. True peace will never require **moral** sacrifice. – True peace is built upon the common ground of the truth and righteousness of God. No other “peace” will abide.
2. True peace may require great **personal** sacrifice.

I believe it is important to take a moment and step back to see the landscape before we go further. Answer the following questions:

What are the situations most prevalent in our society today that need peace? **Any number of answers may be appropriate here.**

What is the source of this strife? **All of these evils can be traced back to original sin.**

To what degree does the work of God as a peacemaker address these issues? **It addresses them at the root level and not just on a surface level. A true and abiding peace can be built when sin is abated. The only solution for sin is the blood of Jesus Christ!**

With what parties are we as peacemakers charged with making peace? Scripturally, there appear to be many situations into which we may work as peacemakers.

- We are to seek peace between **God** and **men**. Read Romans 10:15, 2 Corinthians 5:20, and Ephesians 6:15 – **The gospel of peace is part of the armor because peacemaking is warfare against sin and Satan.**
- We are to seek to live peacefully with **all** men. Read Romans 12:18.
- We are to seek to **create** and **preserve** peace within the **church**. Read Romans 14:17-19, 1 Corinthians 6:6-8, and Ephesians 4:1-3.

To conclude this beatitude, we must ask, how do I become a peacemaker? The work of peacemaking is really the culmination of godly attitudes working in our heart. Read the following passages and list the virtues that good peacemakers must possess.

- Philippians 2:1-3 – **An overflowing fellowship with Christ and a spirit of humility**
 - James 3:13-18 – **Meekness, purity, mercy, sincerity, righteousness**
 - James 1:19-20 – **Patience**
 - Hebrews 12:14-15 – **Holiness/Purity**
 - 2 Timothy 2:24-25 – **Patience, Meekness, Instructive**
- Ultimately, being a peacemaker is the culmination of the virtues of the previous beatitudes. Those who are poor in spirit (humble), mourn over sin, meek, hunger for righteousness, merciful and pure will express these attitudes toward others by seeking God’s peace with all men.**

Blessed are the Persecuted (5:10-12)

Each of the Beatitudes challenges us by redefining the term, “blessed” or happy in our vocabulary. None may be quite as radical as this beatitude. We are taught here that those who are persecuted are blessed. This may cause us recoil both mentally and physically. Nevertheless, God’s Word is sure and we see several examples in Scripture of those who found strength to not only endure but even to rejoice in the midst of persecution.

What is the context of the persecution Jesus speaks of? Read Matthew 10:16-25 and 1 Peter 3:12-17. Jesus speaks of persecution for both “righteousness sake” and “my sake”. These are synonymous because He is Jesus Christ the Righteous (1 John 2:1). This distinguishes the persecution of the obedient Christian from every other form of persecution that exists. There are many persecuted unjustly by evil men, but this passage does not apply to all forms of persecution. It applies only to those persecuted because of their unwavering allegiance to Jesus Christ and His teachings.

The persecution we are warned of here is serious. To what degree will persecution be a part of the Christian experience? Will this be a constant struggle, intermittent, or rare? Read 2 Timothy 3:10-13 and 1 Peter 4:12-16.

The word, “when” is used in verse 11. This isn’t generally a constant struggle, but one that will occur for different durations and different periods of time. We are told that oppression will occur in 2 Timothy, but we also get the sense from 1 Peter 4 that it wasn’t a constant occurrence. For example, Jesus enjoyed a year of popularity prior to a year of opposition that resulted in His crucifixion.

It is important to be clear that suffering is not to be sought as an end, neither is it a sought-after means. Suffering is sometimes a necessary byproduct of living in accordance with the law of Christ without compromise. The Lord may use our suffering as a means of achieving His ends, but it is something that He must orchestrate. Throughout history, misguided men have purposely put themselves in harm’s way or even participated in self-flagellation thinking that this in some way made them a partaker of Christ’s sufferings. This is contrary to God’s will. Read the following passages and discuss the principles we learn about the timing of persecution from them.

Luke 4:28-30, John 8:58-59, 11:53-54 – There were several times when Jesus was about to be killed by a crowd that He escaped because it was not yet His time. Another illustration is Peter in prison.

Matthew 10:14-17, Acts 13:50-52, 18:6-11 – When people reject the message, we are instructed to move on. There are many who need to hear this message and the Lord will open the right doors.

Matthew 10:18-20, 26:45-46, 2 Timothy 4:6-8 – Both Christ and Paul had a clear sense of God’s timing. Those who endure persecution receive a special grace to know and obey God’s will.

Acts 5:41 – The apostles rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for Christ. They did not take this honor upon themselves but it was bestowed upon them by the Lord.

The Gospel of Matthew

SERMON ON THE MOUNT: BEATITUDES (5:1-12)

Fear of oppression and a lack of faith in God's promise preempt much good work of the kingdom that will prove costly to us. Read Matthew 26:31-35, 26:69-75, Luke 9:26, 22:31-32, John 19:38-42, Acts 15:36-39, 2 Timothy 4:11 and answer the questions below.

How common is it for God's people to fear persecution? Do authentic Christians ever fail here?

This is not at all uncommon. Peter, Joseph, Nicodemus, and John Mark all are notable examples of failure in this area. These were all true Christian men. In fact, all of the apostles scattered when Jesus was taken.

Are true Christians comfortable to remain in this state?

I don't believe this is a state that Christians can remain in with any degree of comfort. To deny the One who gave Himself for our sins is to deny our very life and being. Each of these brethren that failed also repented and returned with a greater humility and boldness for the Lord, some even eventually offering their life for Christ.

This beatitude speaks of three types of suffering experienced by Christians at the hands of evil men. They are (1) reviling, (2), persecution, and (3) speaking all manner of evil against you falsely. Define each of these terms below and discuss examples from Scripture, history, and contemporary situations that demonstrating these very trials prophesied by Christ.

Reviling – verbal contempt, hateful and wicked speech

What are scriptural examples of the righteous being reviled? Read Matthew 27:39-44, John 9:26-34. Christ was reviled by many throughout His trial and crucifixion. Their mocking and disrespectful words were all meant to belittle Him and point out His perceived weaknesses. Little did they know that His willingness to remain on the cross was their only hope of salvation. Likewise, the blind man healed by Jesus was reviled for being a follower of Jesus.

Historically, Christians have been reviled for their social status, education, convictions, and devout practices. Sometimes, the very name of Christian groups and sects was given to them by their enemies, for example, "Anabaptist" means re-baptizer and was given as a name to Christians who would re-baptize adults and children after their conversion, even though they were baptized by the Catholic Church as infants. A wonderful piece of early Christian literature, called The Octavius of Minicus Felix, written in the 2nd century AD, contains a discourse between a Christian man and an unbeliever who levels the common ridicules and false accusations of the day against him. Octavius, the Christian, responds to each accusation with the truth. Read the Charge of "Poor and Lower Class" in the adaptation of this piece of literature included with this lesson.

What are some examples of current day "hate speech" leveled against Christians?

Persecution – to chase after, make to flee

What are scriptural examples of the righteous being persecuted? Read Matthew 23:34-36, Acts 7:51-53, 59, 8:1, and 12:2-3. There are too many examples to list. Jesus speaks of all the righteous blood that was shed from Abel, who simply lived his life as a witness, to Zechariah, the last of the Old Testament prophets martyred. As Stephen later said, who wasn't persecuted and even killed? He himself was stoned after this sermon and James the Apostle was the first of the apostles to die as a martyr. The early church was made to flee because of the great persecution that arose against them.

Throughout the past 2000 years, thousands of Christians were persecuted and even gave their life for the sake of the gospel. One of the most persecuted groups of Christians was the Anabaptists. Roman Catholics and Protestants alike tortured, abused, and even murdered Anabaptists to try and stop the movement. They were persecuted primarily because they questioned many of the main Catholic and early Protestant beliefs. They believed in baptism after conversion rather than infant baptism. They also rejected the mixture of religion and politics. King Ferdinand of Spain declared drowning (called the third baptism) "the best antidote to Anabaptism". The Tudor regime of England, even those that were Protestant, persecuted Anabaptists as they were considered too radical and therefore a danger to religious stability.

MODERN DAY PERSECUTION

One of the most famous martyrs of 20th century America was Jim Elliott, an evangelist who arrived in Ecuador on February 21, 1952, with the purpose of evangelizing Ecuador's Aucas Indians. He first devoted himself to learning Spanish and working with the Quichua Indians, in preparation to reach the violent Huaorani Indian tribe which were known at the time as the Aucas.

He and four other missionaries, Ed McCully, Roger Youderian, Pete Fleming, and their pilot, Nate Saint, made contact from their airplane with the Huaorani Indians using a loudspeaker and a basket to pass down gifts. After several months, the men decided to build a base a short distance from the Indian village, along the Curaray River. There they were approached one time by a small group of Huaorani Indians and even gave an airplane ride to one curious Huaorani whom they called "George" (his real name was Naenkiwi). Encouraged by these friendly encounters, they began plans to visit the Huaorani, without knowing that George had lied to the others about the missionaries' intentions. Their plans were preempted by the arrival of a larger group of 10 Huaorani warriors, who killed Elliot and his four companions on January 8, 1956. Elliot's body was found downstream, along with those of the other men, except that of Ed McCully. Jim Elliott's journal entry for October 28, 1949, expresses his belief that missions work was more important than his life. "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose."

- Taken in part from the wikipedia.org article on Jim Elliott, July 20, 2010

Say all manner of evil against you falsely – false accusations

The third classification of difficulties Jesus predicts for Christians is borne out in Scripture. Jesus was personally acquainted with the reality of false accusation. In some ways, this may be the most difficult to endure because it is both a lie and completely antithetical to what we are trying to be in this world. In his commentary on Matthew, John MacArthur says, “Because they bring righteousness and truth wherever they go, peacemakers are frequently accused of being troublemakers and disturbers of the peace – as Ahab accused Elijah of being (1 Kings 18:17) and the Jewish leaders accused Jesus of being (Luke 23:2, 5).”¹ Read Matthew 11:16-19 and 26:59-62 and discuss how both Jesus and John the Baptist were falsely accused. The Jews were unhappy with both Jesus and John the Baptist. John was accused of being possessed and Jesus of being a drunkard. Ultimately, Jesus was accused of treason against the Roman government and was crucified as a sinner. Note that God was the One who set the record straight on both of these men. All those who truly listened knew that these men were of God.

Examples of false accusations are found in the Octavius of Minicus Felix discussed earlier in this lesson. Read the charges of “Cannibalism” and “Gross Immorality” leveled against the Christians of that day.

Today in America, we are increasingly seeing this form of oppression leveled against Christians. We are hearing their voices becoming stronger and the possibility of retaliatory action against practicing Christians is becoming more and more likely. Below are a few of the more prominent charges:

- Being labeled as **divisive**, narrow-minded, and **brainwashed**
- Accused of practicing **hate speech** for speaking out against sin
- Called **child-abusers** for religiously educating our children based on God’s Word

We are ending much as we began. The poor in spirit were promised the kingdom. Likewise, the persecuted and offered the same reward. Perhaps this unity is a lesson in itself, further demonstrating that these beatitudes are tied together and are progressive, beginning with humility and ending with enduring persecution. All of these attitudes and actions of godliness lead us uniformly toward one great goal, to know the Lord in His fullness and enjoy His great bounty. May God bless us with growth in these attributes, assurance of His presence, and the manifestation of His glory.

¹ Matthew 1-7, p. 217, John MacArthur.