

# Sermon on the Mount, Part 1: The Beatitudes

The Sermon on the Mount is found in Matthew chapters five through seven. It is perhaps the greatest sermon ever preached by any person. It includes the Beatitudes (Matthew 5), the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6), the Golden Rule (Matthew 7), and many other topics. The main theme is true righteousness. In his book, the *Wiersbe Bible Commentary*, Dr. Wiersbe explains, "The religious leaders had an artificial, external righteousness based on law. But the righteousness Jesus described is a true and vital righteousness that begins internally, in the heart. The Pharisees were concerned about the minute details of conduct, but they neglected the major matter of character. The Pharisees taught that righteousness was an external thing, a matter of obeying rules and regulations. Righteousness could be measured by praying, giving, fasting, etc. In the Beatitudes and the pictures of the believer, Jesus described Christian character that flowed from within."

The word "beatitude" comes from the Latin "beatitudo" meaning "blessedness". To those who lived in Jesus' day, "blessed" was a powerful word indicating divine joy and perfect happiness. "Blessed" implied an inner satisfaction and sufficiency that did not depend on outward circumstances for happiness. Jesus taught that those who live righteously are, indeed, blessed.

Matthew 5:1-12 (KJV) reads:

Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, <sup>2</sup> and he began to teach them. He said:

<sup>3</sup> Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>4</sup> Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

<sup>5</sup> Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

<sup>6</sup> Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

<sup>7</sup> Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

<sup>8</sup> Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

<sup>9</sup> Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

<sup>10</sup> Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>11</sup> Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

In these verses, Jesus set forth four attitudes that Christians should adopt: toward ourselves, toward sin, toward God, and toward the world.

### **Attitude Toward Self**

Verse three tells us that we must humble ourselves before God in order to receive Him. People who are “poor in spirit” realize that they have accomplished nothing that makes them deserving of the kingdom of heaven. The poor in spirit have humbled themselves and repented with deep contrition, and they have come to the Christ recognizing their helpless, hopeless, and sinful state. They are not arrogant or self-righteousness. They are honest with themselves and know that salvation is a gift from God.

### **Attitude Toward Sin**

Jesus explained in verses four through six that we should mourn over our sinful lives and come to hate sin in all forms. Rather than desire sin, we should cultivate a hunger and thirst for righteous living. This is a desire that God will gladly fill. In addition, we should also meekly submit to God’s will. Meekness does not mean becoming a spineless pushover. Rather, it means to be like Jesus – the epitome of unspeakable power under control.

### **Attitude Toward God**

Verses seven through nine address our attitude toward God. Here, Jesus taught that lives characterized by mercy, purity, and peace can be used by God as a witness to sinners and as a light to the world. That should be our primary motivation in life. Dr. Wiersbe explained, “We experience God’s mercy when we trust Christ, and He gives us a clean heart and peace within. But having received His mercy, we then share His mercy with others. We seek to keep our hearts pure that we might see God in our lives today. We become peacemakers in a troubled world and channels for God’s mercy, purity, and peace.”

### **Attitude Toward The World**

Genuine righteousness is offensive to sinners. The world is at war with God. If we are truly living righteously as God wants us to live, then we must expect to be persecuted. However, Dr. Wiersbe adds, "We must be sure that our suffering is not due to our own foolishness or disobedience."

### **Conclusion**

With the Beatitudes, Jesus taught the believers how to live a life that is dedicated to and pleasing to God. In other words, He taught us how to live righteously. Choose righteousness. Choose Jesus today!

*God bless.*