

## Northwest Community Evangelical Free Church

(September 4, 2016)

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Sermon manuscript

**Sermon Series:** Life, the Jesus Way  
(Studies in the Sermon on the Mount)

### **Bountiful Blessings from Faithful Following** Study #2 (Matthew 5:4-10)

#### **Introduction: On discipleship...**

Last Sunday we launched a series of studies that will be focused on Jesus' best-known sermon, the Sermon on the Mount. This morning we're going to look at one of the better known parts of that sermon: The Beatitudes.

Before we go there, though, I'd like to say a bit more than I did last Sunday about the original audience of this message.

The people who were present to hear Jesus' Sermon on the Mount were following Him. They were learning about Him. And we call people who follow and learn about Jesus, *disciples*.

For one thing, the *apostles* who were present for this message were following Him.<sup>1</sup> And then, the "**large crowds**" (Matthew 4:25) of people who climbed the mountain to hear Him speak were also following Jesus. (That's why they climbed the mountain...)

So, it is perfectly appropriate to say that all the people who were listening to the Sermon on the Mount were Jesus' disciples.

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<sup>1</sup> Not all of the apostles had been chosen when Jesus gave this sermon. We believe that Matthew had not yet been selected, as his "calling" is not recorded until Matthew 9. However, revealing that the sense of chronology is somewhat elastic in literature of the first century, Luke records the call of Matthew/Levi (Luke 5) before Jesus delivers this message (Luke 6).

But, the simple fact that we can call them disciples doesn't tell us everything we'd like to know about this audience, because the New Testament uses the term *disciple*<sup>2</sup> in a wide variety of ways.

Sometimes, of course, *disciple* describes believers who are thoroughly committed to Jesus. They obey Him and submit to His Lordship.

But sometimes, the word *disciple* describes people who were learning about Jesus, even following Him, but who had not entrusted themselves to Him. They weren't eternally saved. Judas Iscariot is an example of this kind of disciple.<sup>3</sup> Judas was a disciple of Jesus, but he never believed.

And sometimes, *disciple* refers to people who believed and followed, but they didn't follow very well.

For instance, we know Joseph of Arimathea as the *disciple* who asked for Jesus' body after the Lord's crucifixion. He wanted to place Jesus' body in his own tomb. But John tells us that Joseph had been - at least up until that point - **[John 19:38] a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one** - and that's nothing to brag about. Simon Peter was a believing disciple, and he denied knowing Jesus three times on the night before He died.

So, even believing disciples may sometimes act very badly.

#### *Disciple, on the way to faith...*

On the one hand, then, it is possible to be a disciple, a learner, and to not be a Christian. And the reality is that most people who become Christians go through a period of learning about Him before they believe in Him.

That is where many people are. They are interested to learn about Jesus. They are curious to hear the stories. They want to find out if His truth claims are valid. They are investigating.

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<sup>2</sup> Greek - mathetes; μαθητης.

<sup>3</sup> John 12:4.17:12.

This is not a bad place to be.

You may have friends who are following and learning, but have not yet placed their trust in Jesus for eternal life. If that is where your friend is, be patient. Listen. Discuss. Pray.

This may be where you are - and if that is where you are today, I am thrilled that you are here! You have an opportunity to learn about Jesus today in a “judgment free zone.” You can consider Him and weigh His words and deeds. You can seek out someone to talk with who will lovingly respond to your questions, listen, and who will apply no pressure.

And then, after learning about Jesus, seeing Him in the pages of Scripture and seeing Him in the lives of people who have trusted Him, you’ll come to a point where you see that He is trustworthy - and you’ll place your faith in Him, just like I did.

So, that’s one place you might be today.

*Disciple, on the path to growth...*

But it’s also possible that you are already a believer, you are a Christian and you realize that you have growth steps in front of you. There is ground to cover on the way to being the disciple Jesus saved you to become.

That’s where I am today. I’ve been a Christian a long time and I am still growing as a disciple. I want to keep growing. That may very well be you, too.

You may be willing to admit that you’re not the serious disciple you want to be. Maybe you are not now as serious a disciple as you once were, and you’re ready to return to your “first love” for Jesus. Maybe you’re on a discipleship path and you’re eager to stay on it.

If any of that describes you, there is no better place to turn than to the Sermon on the Mount. And the best place to start is where Jesus started.

His opening salvo is what we call The Beatitudes. And, as the predominant theme of the Sermon on the Mount is the life of fully-yielded discipleship, the Beatitudes give mouth-watering invitations to that life.

*Believing disciples listening to Jesus...*

When Jesus gave this sermon, He was speaking, as Lord, to a crowd of disciples. Based on the way He spoke to them, I think we can assume that He assumed they were His people.

Sure, there may have been those present who did not believe. But by and large, they belonged to Him. He called them “**the salt of the earth**” (5:13) and “**the light of the world**” (5:16). He told them that God was their “**Father who is in heaven.**”

Jesus speaks here as king. The Sermon on the Mount is His Kingdom Constitution. This sermon lays out how His subjects are to live.

When you listen to Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, you are listening to your king call you into deeper commitment to Him.

So, we are just about ready to jump into the passage. But before we do, back up with me for just a minute more and let me make a couple of observations about the seven short verses we’re about to see.

*About the Beatitudes...*

- The “blessed” of the Beatitudes

In each Beatitude, Jesus pronounces  *blessing*  on people who adopt certain mindsets, who develop a certain character, and who endure certain experiences for His sake.

What does He mean by “**blessed**”?

I ask, not because we don’t know what the word “blessing” or “blessed” means in English. I ask because we need to know what Jesus meant to say by His use of the word.

Over thirty years ago, a well-known author and pastor wrote a book on this passage. He titled it, The Be-Happy Attitudes.

When it came out I remember rolling my eyes and thinking to myself, *“That’s a really lightweight title for some heavy truth”*

Well this past week, I read this in another book, one by D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, a man no one considers to be a lightweight, *“This [blessed man] is the sort of man who is to be congratulated, even envied, for he alone is happy.”*<sup>4</sup>

Then I read in the standard Greek lexicon of the New Testament that the word Jesus used for *blessed* (makarios / μακαριος) is *“the distinctive religious joy (happiness?) which comes to the person who shares in the salvation God offers.”*<sup>5</sup>

So...maybe my eye roll was premature. Maybe happiness is not so far removed from Jesus’ meaning when He said, **“Blessed...”**

From heaven’s vantage point, the blessed man or woman has God’s stamp of approval. From the standpoint of an outside observer, the one who is blessed is enviable because she or he is living the life everyone would like to live. And from the perspective of the person Jesus is describing, *blessed* implies contentedness, satisfaction, and, yes, happiness.

Now, when it comes to reading the Beatitudes, it might be best to read them breathlessly.

- The tone of the Beatitudes

It’s fine to read them as most of our English versions have them. **“Blessed are...”** It’s even OK to read them slowly, thoughtfully. But, honestly, the Beatitudes are more exclamations than they are declarations.

<sup>4</sup> From Studies in the Sermon on the Mount. Eerdmans. 1959.

<sup>5</sup> Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich - The Greek Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature.

So, you might try, *“Oh, the blessedness of those who mourn”* or *“How blessed are the gentle and the merciful...”* and *“Oh, how enviable are those who are persecuted...”*

To read them right is to read them enthusiastically, with conviction.

And don’t miss this. All of the Beatitudes are all applicable to all of us who know Jesus.

- The applicability of the Beatitudes

We don’t get to pick and choose which ones we’d like to live out and which ones we’ll avoid.

We who know Jesus express our love for our king by doing what the Beatitudes tell us to do. When tough stuff comes our way, we joyously submit to them because we submit to Him.

The Beatitudes begin with Matthew 5:3, which we saw last Sunday.

*Review of “Blessed are the poor in spirit...”*

**[5:3] “Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”**

Jesus speaks of the blessings that come to those who know that they are spiritually destitute.

It is a great thing when we own the truth that we have nothing to boast about before God. It’s a blessing when we can affirm that life in Jesus is *“everything coming from God, nothing coming from me”*, that as Jesus said, **[John 15:5] “apart from Me you can do nothing.”**

When we accept our spiritual poverty as an ongoing reality and live in submission to King Jesus’ sovereign Lordship we possess, present-tense and in real-time, the kingdom of heaven. We experience His kingly reign.

And building on that first Beatitude Jesus speaks of the future blessing that comes to the person who mourns.

### **Discipleship - and My Sin (v. 4)**

#### **Mourn**

**[5:4] “Blessed are those who mourn...”**

This second Beatitude is directly related to the first. We own our spiritual poverty and we are spiritually destitute exactly because of our sin.

An awareness of our sin and the damage it has done leads to grief. We have broken God’s moral order. Seeing this breaks us.<sup>6</sup>

It isn’t that mourning is a goal to pursue. Mourning is a by-product of being **“poor in spirit.”**

Owning my poverty before God brings a sober understanding of what my sin has done.

I reflect on the damage my sin has caused to people who mean the most to me in life. There have been times when I have been self-centered toward my family - toward my wife, my children, my extended family. That selfishness has hurt them. It has done damage.

I reflect on ways I have led here at this church that I love, and I admit having done damage.

I reflect on doors God has opened to serve my neighbors, doors I have not passed through. I could have shown God’s love to those who don’t know my Jesus. Those omissions have done damage.

And I grieve over these sins of commission and omission.

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<sup>6</sup> The strongest word it is possible to use in Greek for mourning - mourning for the dead.

Jesus is not urging His people to moroseness. He’s just inviting me and He’s inviting you to an honest assessment of the impact of our failure to love, our selfishness, our sin, on our world.

When we see it, we’ll mourn. People who see their sin weep.<sup>7</sup>

So, *“Blessed are those who mourn over their sin.”* Really? Yes, because Jesus promises you that a day is coming when you will receive comfort.

#### **Comfort**

**[5:4] “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”**

There is comfort now in knowing that your sin is forgiven and that you’ll never taste God’s condemning judgment. Your Savior took away the penalty for your sin. And the power of the Holy Spirit has taken away the power of sin to rule over you.

But, later, in Jesus’ glorious kingdom, you will be free from the presence of sin and from ugly effects of sin. As bitter as the tears of grief over sin are now, God’s comfort will be infinitely sweeter, then.

Jesus continues, focusing the next three Beatitudes on the blessings that will come to the disciple who loves people.

### **Discipleship - and Love (vv. 5-7)**

#### **Blessings to the Gentle (v. 5)**

*Gentle*

**[5:5] “Blessed are the gentle...”**

This is King Jesus pointing you and me to a counter-cultural life.

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<sup>7</sup> See Ezra 10 and Nehemiah 9 for national repentance by Israel due to sin. The people of God wept when they became aware of their sin and their sin’s impact.

This is a life not based on working a system to get ahead. This counter-culture life rejects manipulation and doesn't grasp at power. He invites us to gentleness.

Gentle doesn't mean weak. In fact, the idea of strength is present in the word "gentle." But it is strength under control.<sup>8</sup>

It is like a horse that is trained to respond to a rider's tug on the reins. That's gentle. The horse is way stronger than the rider. But the gentle horse goes where the rider directs. That horse submits to the will of the rider.

This is the disciple who is eager to do Jesus' will. She responds easily to His gentle nudges to love. He goes where Jesus directs him to serve, obeys His commands give.

To the disciple who doesn't grasp for control and authority but who lives a life of submission, Jesus promises a great inheritance.

*Inherit the earth*

**[5:5] "Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth."**

We'll visit the idea of inheritance repeatedly during our time in the Sermon on the Mount. It's a big theme, both here and throughout the New Testament.

In a nutshell, when the New Testament authors speak of a believer's "inheritance" they are often referring, not to the gift of eternal life we receive when we place our trust in Jesus, but to a reward that comes our way in the future when Jesus reigns over His kingdom.<sup>9</sup>

People who live gently now are promised a royal role in Jesus' future earthly kingdom.<sup>10</sup>

Gentle people doesn't push and shove their way to the front here. They give their lives to love and service in Jesus' Name. They put others first. And they'll be the great ones in Jesus' kingdom.

The Lord continues.

### **Blessings to the Hungry and Thirsty (v. 6)**

*Hungry and thirsty*

**[5:6] "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness..."**

We all know what it is to be hungry and thirsty. Jesus is using the vocabulary of appetite. We get that. It's a normal thing to be hungry and to be thirsty. We need food and drink to survive.

It's abnormal when there's no appetite for food and drink...which reminds me of my recent backpacking trip. (When Jacob Rusch heard that I was going backpacking, he told me that his first thought was, "Oh good, no more gardening stories for a while.")

On this trip my sons and I enjoyed great connection, saw spectacular scenery, and had some pretty high adventure. For me, it turned out to be a little bit too high.

Altitude can impact people differently, but it's not unusual when going from 1,000 feet elevation (San Antonio) to 11-12,000 to have difficulty adjusting. Symptoms will vary.

My sole symptom was a lack of appetite for food or drink. In fact, I was unable to eat or drink from Day 2 - Day 6 of the trek.

<sup>8</sup> 1 Peter 3:4 - of a wife who is respectful and gentle toward her husband; 1 Peter 3:14-15 - of a witness who gives testimony to Jesus, but gently.

<sup>9</sup> See 1 Corinthians 6:9; 15:50; Galatians 5:21; Ephesians 5:5; Colossians 3:23-24; Hebrews 9:15; 12:23; 1 Peter 1:3-4.

<sup>10</sup> Inheriting the Promised Land was the hope of Israel when they left Egypt and then throughout their wilderness wanderings. It would also have been the hope of the Jews of Jesus' day when they lived under Roman rule.

I was able to choke down morning coffee and a few swigs of water during each day. I ate a little bit of breakfast on a couple of the days. Otherwise, I didn't eat more than a few banana chips.

Loss of appetite is abnormal, especially during periods of excessive exercise. But at mealtimes I would sit and watch Ben and Zach gobble down their meals. I couldn't eat. I had no appetite.

It was abnormal for me to have no appetite for food and drink while I was in Wyoming. It is abnormal for God's child to have no appetite, no hunger and thirst, for righteousness.

We hike through our days and see the wreckage caused by unrighteousness. Seeing that wreckage sparks an appetite for justice.

On a personal level, we know the temptations to indulge the appetites for things that don't satisfy. Junk food for the soul.

Temptations abound to gorge on power over others, sexual conquest, unhealthy entertainment, conspicuous consumption, wealth gained at any cost. The problem is that these are empty calories. They don't satisfy.

But you've tasted the satisfaction of the pursuit of holiness. You know how good it tastes to walk with God and to resist temptation to sin and to give yourself to loving service.

Your obedience to God brings joy AND it whets your appetite for more. You thirst to see injustice pulled out by the roots, racism ended, poverty due to corruption stopped. The world is broken and you are hungry for it to be put back together.

Blessed are you. Blessed are you who nurture that good hunger and thirst. You have a guarantee from Jesus that in the future that hunger and thirst for righteousness will be satisfied.

*Satisfaction guaranteed!*

***[5:6] "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."***

Jesus is going to establish a kingdom where righteousness reigns.<sup>11</sup>

Yes, our world is a mess and unrighteousness abounds everywhere we look. But one day our world not be a mess. There will be peace and justice. His reign will be what we have always hungered for. Your thirst for good will be quenched.

Jesus' next words promise reciprocity. This is the law of the harvest, reaping what we have sown.

### **Blessings to the Merciful (v. 7)**

*Mercy given*

#### ***[5:7] "Blessed are the merciful..."***

Contrast this person, the merciful person, with the person who mourns. The one who mourns sees his own sin and grieves. The merciful man sees the sins and struggles of others and shows mercy.

The merciful woman doesn't look at the world through rose-colored glasses. She sees the ugliness of her friend's failures and foibles, struggles and sins. But she has received mercy from God. So, she pours out mercy on her friend. She is quick to dole out compassion, even if her friend has shot herself in her own foot.

Listen to Jesus' promise to the merciful.

*Mercy received*

#### ***[5:7] "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy."***

You came to Jesus for forgiveness, trusting in His sacrificial death on the cross for your sins. You asked for grace - and He said, "Yes!" You received mercy from God.

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<sup>11</sup> See Isaiah 45:8; 61:10-11; 62:1-2; Jeremiah 23:16; 33:14-16; Daniel 9:24.

Now, picture this. Having received grace and mercy from God, you then lead a life of harsh judgment toward those who struggle with sin. You don't forgive those who wrong you.

How will God deal with you at the Judgment Seat of Christ? (See Romans 14:1-10; 2 Corinthians 5:6-10) You will receive no reward from your Savior. You will be justly recompensed for the unmerciful way you have treated others.<sup>12</sup>

But now imagine that, instead of lacking mercy, you lived mercifully. You even offered forgiveness to those who did you dirty. You became known as a friend of struggling sinners. Compassion oozed from your every pore.

At the believer's Judgment Seat, you who have shown mercy to others will be shown great mercy by your king.

The Beatitudes continue.

### **Discipleship - and Walking with God (vv. 8-10)**

#### **Blessings to the Pure in Heart (v. 8)**

*Pure in heart*

**[5:8] "Blessed are the pure in heart..."**

Blessed are those who maintain a fixed, single-minded devotion to God. There is no hypocrisy to them. They don't show one side at church and another elsewhere. There is internal and external congruity.

*Will see God*

**[5:8] "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."**

In the future, they will have a rich encounter with their God.

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<sup>12</sup> See Jesus' parable of the unrighteous servant. (Matthew 18:23-35)

#### **Blessings to the Peacemaker! (v. 9)**

*Peacemakers*

**[5:9] Blessed are the peacemakers..."**

Jesus didn't come to earth to "keep the peace." By His death and resurrection, He confronted the warfare between God and man and *made peace*.

He effected reconciliation so that now anyone who comes to God through faith in Him is accepted. He broke down barriers between people, too, making peace possible between long-standing enemies.<sup>13</sup>

*Called sons of God*

**[5:9] Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."**

Those who work hard at making peace with others display a family resemblance to the God who makes peace. If you bring the message of peace with God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ to your friends, your friends will see the likeness of a loving God in you.

They will see that you are the son, the daughter, of the God who makes peace.<sup>14</sup>

Jesus' blessings end the way they began. He started off by saying that the one who recognizes his spiritual poverty possesses (present tense) the kingdom of heaven. He finishes by naming another who, in real-time, possesses the kingdom of heaven.

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<sup>13</sup> In Ephesians 2, Paul says that Jesus broke down the barrier between Jew and Gentile.

<sup>14</sup> Exodus 19:5-6 - God charged Israel (His "son" - Deuteronomy 14:1; Hosea 1:10) with bringing Gentile neighbors into peaceful relationship with Himself. Israel failed miserably to fulfill her (evangelistic) stewardship with her neighbors. But Jesus perfectly fulfilled His. Now, we who follow Him are called to follow His example and prove to be, "sons" (not Sons) of God.

## Blessings to the Persecuted (v. 10)

***[5:10] “Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”***

Next Sunday we’ll talk much more about this, as Jesus has more to say about persecution. Persecution is much on our minds these days. We know that across wide swaths of our planet, it is not a safe thing to be a bold witness for Jesus. It wasn’t for His first followers and He knew it wouldn’t be.

But He wanted His audience on that Galilean hilltop to know that if they did suffer persecution, they would experience His reign in their lives, present tense, real-time.

God draws especially near to those who suffer for the sake of righteousness. And that word about persecution ends the Beatitudes.<sup>15</sup>

### **Conclusion:**

In the Beatitudes, Jesus calls us, His people, to a life of fully-yielded discipleship. It is a challenging life, but the benefits of that life are out of this world.

Can you imagine...  
 ...any greater promises of an enriched life than what Jesus holds out to those who live out the Beatitudes?  
 ...a more attractive witness to your friends of the power of God than you, living out the Beatitudes?  
 ...the smile on God’s face as you lead the life He promises to bless?

Neither can I. So, what would keep you from entering the blessed life of the fully-yielded disciple today?

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<sup>15</sup> The Beatitudes begin and end with the identical blessing of *“for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”* on the *“poor in spirit”* and *“those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness.”*