

March 24, 2002 by Steve Brandon



The Teaching of Jesus Christ - The Blesseds (Part 1)

Matthew 5:3-6

1. Blessed are the poor in spirit (verse 3).
2. Blessed are those who mourn (verse 4).
3. Blessed are the gentle (verse 5).
4. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness (verse 6).

Matthew 5:1-16

And when He saw the multitudes, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. And opening His mouth He [began] to teach them, saying, "**Blessed** are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. **Blessed** are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. **Blessed** are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth. **Blessed** are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. **Blessed** are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. **Blessed** are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. **Blessed** are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. **Blessed** are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when [men] cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me. Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how will it be made salty [again]? It is good for nothing anymore, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do [men] light a lamp, and put it under the peck-measure, but on the lampstand; and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

This morning we will begin looking at a section of the Sermon on the Mount, which is commonly referred to as "The Beatitudes," found in verses 3-12. As I mentioned last week, this name, "the Beatitudes," comes because from the Latin word "beatus," from which we get the English word, "beautiful." We translate this word into the English language by using the word, "blessed" (as occurs at the beginning of each of these statements). When you say, "the Beatitudes," you are really saying, "The Blesseds." I have sought to bring this Latin word into our English context today by entitling my message this morning, "The Blesseds." Jesus gives eight such "blesseds" (as highlighted above). Note that in the last three verses (verse 10-12), most commentators identify this as one "blessed" with Jesus' expounding its meaning.

Before we get into each of them, I want first to make a five quick observations.

Observation #1. These are not commands.

Jesus doesn't say to His listeners, "Blessed are the poor in spirit. Therefore, go and be poor in spirit." Jesus doesn't say, "Blessed are those who mourn. Therefore, go and be sad." Jesus doesn't command His listeners to "be gentle," or to "hunger and thirst after righteousness" or to "be merciful."

Rather,...

Observation #2. These are descriptions.

You remember last week I outlined this section of the sermon with the title, "Jesus describes kingdom citizens." These simply describe those people who are in the kingdom. Jesus was making simple observations about the sorts of people who were in the kingdom of heaven. Using grammatical terms, these are indicatives (i.e. descriptions), not imperatives (i.e. commands).

Observation #3. They have a pattern.

They all begin with this word, "blessed." They all end with a reason for the blessed state of these people. Without exception they follow this pattern. Blessed are those who are _____, because they _____.

Observation #4. They form a unit.

Notice the first "blessed" in verse 3, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for there is the kingdom of heaven." Notice the last "blessed" in verse 10, "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The result is the same in both of these cases, "... for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." None of the other "blesseds" contain the same result. Jesus begins and ends with the same result. Everything else is sandwiched between these two beatitudes. It helps to keep all of these "blesseds" as one unit.

Furthermore, notice that the first and the last "blesseds" are the only ones with a present tense reality, "... for theirs **is** the kingdom of

heaven." All of the other "blesseds" speak of a future result.

Verse 4 - "... for they **shall be** comforted."

Verse 5 - "... for they **shall inherit** the earth."

Verse 6 - "... for they **shall be** satisfied."

Verse 7 - "... for they **shall receive** mercy." (and so on)

The implication of this is that you cannot separate these blesseds. You cannot justify yourself by saying, "I meet three of these descriptions. That's 37 percent! That's just fine with me." No. These blesseds are a unit. They are all or nothing!

Observation #5. They all are expressions of divine favor.

This is the root idea behind this word, "blessed." It describes the person who is favored by God. When the priests of the Old Testament would give their benediction, they would say, "The LORD **bless** you, and keep you; The LORD make His face shine on you, and be gracious to you; The LORD lift up His countenance on you, and give you peace" (Numbers 6:24-6). The idea of this blessing was simply that of divine favor, protection, and security. When Mary, the mother of our Lord, went to the house of her sister, Elizabeth, Elizabeth cried out, "**Blessed** among women are you, and **blessed** is the fruit of your womb!" (Luke 1:42), because God had favored her to be the earthly mother of the Messiah. The result of this divine favor is that it produces a genuine "happiness" and "joy."

Some have translated this word, "blessed" as "happy." I think that this minimizes the depth of this term. It makes the meaning of this word to be too trifling. The meaning of the happiness expressed by this word is deeper than being "happy." This word describes a happiness which isn't a fleeting emotion, which comes and goes, or which is dependent upon circumstances and hormones. The happiness and joy of which Jesus speaks never goes away. This joy isn't tied to some particular event, which leaves when circumstances change for the worse. It is the joy that never leaves. It never leaves, because the source of this happiness is the comfort that God looks down upon you favorable.

Is this something that you want? Is this attractive? It ought to be!

I would love to look at all of these blesseds this morning, but I don't feel like we could do justice to each of them if we do. So, this morning, we will look at the first four blesseds. My outline this morning is quite simple. Four "blesseds," four points. With each of my points, I would like to ask two simple questions of the verse. "Who is blessed?" (i.e. the description) and "Why is this person blessed?" (i.e. the result). These questions are in accordance with the pattern of each of these verses.

1. Blessed are the poor in spirit (verse 3).

Question #1: Who is blessed? Jesus speaks here that it is the "poor in spirit" who are blessed. This is quite simple to understand. It simply means that in your spirit, you have no resources. You have come to the end of yourself and are in need of everything in your spirit. Such a person can only look to God for help. That is the point!

Take this imagery out of the spiritual realm and put it in the physical realm. Certainly, you all have seen poor people along side of the road. Picture such a person in your mind....

- a person who has no place to spend the night.
- a person who has had no bath in several days.
- a person who owns only what is on his back.
- a person who can do nothing other than hold out his hand and say, "Please help me!"

Now, bring this imagery back into the spiritual realm. Picture such a person in your mind....

- a person whose spirit is empty.
- a person whose spirit is dirty and in desperate need of cleansing.
- a person who has no spiritual resources
- a person who can do nothing other than cry out to God and say, "Please help me!"

A. W. Pink summed it up beautifully when he wrote, "To be poor in spirit is to realize that I have nothing, am nothing, and can do nothing, and have need of all things" (The Beatitudes, chapter 1).

The greatest illustration of this in the Bible is the story of the Pharisee and tax-collector, found in Luke 18:9-14. I alluded to it twice last week, but let us turn and look at it closely this week.

Luke 18:9 reads, "And He also told this parable to certain ones who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt." This is precisely what it means to be "rich in spirit," not poor in spirit. The one who thinks himself to be righteous, isn't poor of spirit. He thinks to himself, "I have everything, am everything, and can do everything, and have need of nothing."

Jesus tells the story in **Luke 18:10-12**, "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee, and the other a tax-gatherer. The Pharisee stood and was praying thus to himself, 'God, I thank Thee that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax-gatherer. 'I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.'"

Jesus gave us a picture of those who were "rich in spirit." Such a person makes bold claims of his own **righteousness**. Such a person thinks to himself, "I'm not a sinner. I'm an upright member of the religious society." Such a person makes bold claims of his own **religious activity**: "Though the standard of the law is one fast per year, I fast twice per week! I pay tithes of all that I get! I even tithe my mint and cummin (Matt. 23:23). If I get a little package of mint, I give a tenth of it away."

Notice that these bold assertions of external righteousness are true! It's not that the Pharisee is wrong in his estimation of himself. His error is in his exclusive concern only for himself. He says, "I'm rich in spirit."

Then Jesus contrasts the poor in spirit in **Luke 18:13**, "But the tax-gatherer, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!'" This one says, "I have nothing, am nothing, and can do nothing, and have need of all things." This one looks to God and says, "Help, me please!" (Or, in this case, "God, be merciful to me, the sinner!")

This one exhibits the attitude of Augustus Toplady who wrote,

Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress, Helpless, look to Thee for grace.
Foul, I to the fountain fly, Wash me, Savior, or I die.

Jesus finishes His story by commenting on these two approaches to God. **Luke 18:14**, "I tell you, this man [the penitent man] went down to his house justified rather than the other [the Pharisee]; for everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, but he who humbles himself shall be exalted."

This is what it means to be poor in spirit: to think little of self, to be humble for God, to look to God, and God alone for help. This has always been the posture of God's people down through the ages.

Abraham considered himself to be "dust and ashes" before God (Gen. 18:27). Upon dedicating to God all the resources necessary to build the first temple, **David** said, "Now therefore, our God, we thank You, and praise Your glorious name. But who am I and who are my people that we should be able to offer as generously as this? For all things come from Your, and from Your hand we have given You" (1 Chron. 29:13-14). **Isaiah** stood before the LORD and said, "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts" (Isaiah 6:5). **John the Baptist** didn't think himself worthy enough to untie Jesus' sandals (John 1:27) - a job reserved for only the lowest of servants. The great apostle **Paul**, "I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh" (Romans 7:18). "I am the foremost of sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15).

Notice in each of these cases, these saints said this, after they came to faith. **Abraham** considered himself as "dust and ashes" even after God's great covenant with him in Genesis 17. It was at the end of **David's** reign as king that he gathered all of the supplies for the temple. **Isaiah** was known as a righteous prophet in the land when he considered himself to be ruined. **John the Baptist** spoke in humility about Jesus in the midst of his baptizing campaign. **Paul** wrote to Timothy in the latter years of his ministry.

So being poor in spirit doesn't simply get you in to God's kingdom. It is a sign of being in the kingdom, right **now**. Is this not what Jesus says? "For theirs **is** the kingdom of heaven."

Question #2: Why is this person blessed? Jesus simply says, "theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Sure, there is a future aspect to one's faith. We have a future hope of the things to come. Paul even calls it a "blessed hope" of Christ's return (Titus 2:13). But, the emphasis here is the present possession of the kingdom right now.

For all of you, who are poor in spirit, the good news of the gospel is that the kingdom of heaven is here, now. We have it. We own it. We are a part of it. As Peter says, we are "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession" (1 Peter 2:9). It is here and now for those who are poor in spirit.

2. Blessed are those who mourn (verse 4).

Question #1: Who is blessed? Jesus speaks here that it is those who "mourn" who are blessed. What a strange statement! "Happy are the sad!" ??? Ask anybody in the world, and they will consider this a contradictory statement -- a fallacy. In all times and in all places, it has always been considered that those who are cheerful and glad and pleased who are considered the blessed of the world, not those who are sad!

I remember the very first course I ever took in college, which was mandatory for all entering freshmen, was essentially a philosophy class, which studied all of the world's systems. The class was entitled, "On Being Human." The fundamental questions we probed in this class concerned themselves with what it meant to be human. What drives us? Where do we find satisfaction? What is our purpose? What makes us happy? It seemed like time and time again, we always came back to this search for happiness and joy and cheerfulness. If I would have said in that class, "the way to happiness is to mourn, because those who mourn will be comforted," I would have been mocked and ridiculed. The world over considers mourning as a bad thing -- a result of pain.

Yet, Jesus says, "Blessed are those who mourn." So, what does this mean? What does it mean to mourn? Most commentators tie this verse with the previous one and so understand this "mourning" to mean, "mourning in their spirit," which results in "mourning for sin." I believe their reasoning to be correct, because there are those in the Bible who mourn, who are on their way to hell and won't be comforted. Jesus isn't speaking about the blessing of crying children. However, those who "mourn over their sin," will certainly find comfort in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Again, like our previous beatitude, there are many examples of this in the Bible. **Jeremiah** was known as the weeping prophet. He wept over the sin of the nation of Israel. The **Psalmist** wept, "My eyes shed streams of water, because they do not keep Your law" (Ps. 119:136). **David** groaned all day long because of his own sin (Ps. 32:3). **Paul** mourned. He said, "I am a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. Wretched man that I am!" (Rom. 7:23-24). Each of these men found great blessing.

Jesus' message, "blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" was prophesied to be preached by the Messiah in Isaiah 61. The first three verses of Isaiah 61 speak of the Messiah, who has been anointed. Here is His message, "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, Because the LORD has anointed me ..." (You might recognize these words as the words that Jesus chose to exposit when He entered the synagogue in Capernaum in Luke 4, to describe His own ministry). "... to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to captives, And freedom to prisoners; To proclaim the favorable year of the LORD, And the day of vengeance of our God; **To comfort all who mourn**" (Isaiah 61:1-2). According to the last part of verse 2, the Messiah was to come and bring this message of comfort to those in distress. He would comfort those who mourned.

He was to come and replace the distresses of His people with blessings instead. Verse 3 describes the how this will be done, "To grant those who mourn [in] Zion, giving them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting. So they will be called oaks of righteousness, The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified." The garland, a nice crown upon the head, will replace the ashes of repentance. The nice, smooth, fragrant oil of gladness will replace the mourning. The mantle of praise, a nice looking garment, will replace a spirit of fainting. By speaking forth this beatitude, Jesus was identifying Himself as the Messiah according to Is. 61:3.

Now, think of the crowd to whom Jesus was speaking. In chapter 4 of Matthew, we were told that "the news about Him went out into all Syria; and they brought to Him all who were ill, taken with **various diseases** and **pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics**; and He healed them. And great multitudes followed Him from Galilee and Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judea and [from] beyond the Jordan" (Matt. 4:24-25). Certainly in the multitudes to whom Jesus preached, there were former demoniacs, epileptics, and paralytics, whom Jesus healed. Jesus demonstrated His compassion by healing and comforting those who were the downcasts of society, who were in great distress and affliction.

So certainly in this crowd, there were those who mourned, but found comfort in Jesus.

Question #2: Why is this person blessed? "They shall be comforted" (verse 4). Jesus is into comforting mourners. Those broken of sin can find comfort in the cross of Jesus. Many who mourn today, due to difficult circumstances in life will one day be comforted, when they arrive in the presence of the Lord.

My thoughts have gone this week to a woman I knew, who is now with the Lord. Her life was far from a glorious, happy existence upon earth. She was abused by her husband. (I believe that she word dentures because he knocked out her teeth). She was abandoned by her husband. She was left to raise several children on her own. She never possessed great wealth. There was much mourning in her house, because of the difficulties in her life. Yet, she looked to Jesus alone for comfort. While on earth she found great comfort. I am sure that she has found a greater comfort in heaven than ever upon earth.

I take tremendous consolation that gospel of Jesus Christ comes not to those who have it all together. We don't have a message that simply addresses those in our society who can help themselves. We have a message of hope for those who have no hope. We have a message of comfort for those who have no comfort and have mourned instead.

3. Blessed are the gentle (verse 5).

Question #1: Who is blessed? The NASB says, "blessed are the gentle." As a footnote on this word, it also includes other possibilities: "humble" or "meek." Most other standard translations use the word, "meek." The idea is simply that of a humble, lowly person, who doesn't think highly of himself.

Of any quality exhibited by Jesus, it was this one. In Matt. 11:29 Jesus said, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am **gentle** and humble in heart." Jesus, though the Son of God, didn't think highly of Himself. "Although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, being made in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2:6-7). He wasn't boastful or arrogant or proud of Himself, though He came from glory with the Father to dwell among us as a despised, hated, and rejected man.

Jesus especially demonstrated His meekness during His last few hours upon the earth. Perhaps you remember when Jesus was arrested, Peter drew the sword and cut off the slave's ear. Jesus said, "Put your sword back into its place ... do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matt. 26:52,53). Peter would later give testimony that "while reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats," (1 Peter 2:23). While hanging on the cross, He said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). Jesus was a perfect example of a meek and lowly person.

Notice that this isn't necessarily describing a weak person. It isn't as if Jesus couldn't have resisted and prevented His arrest. It isn't as if Jesus couldn't have proved everybody wrong at His trial. It isn't as if Jesus couldn't have prevented His dying on the cross. Since this word describes Jesus, some have described the meaning of this word as "power under control." Those who do so are correctly resisting the tendency to equate meekness with weakness.

Though Jesus was God, He humbled Himself to be a despised man. Though capable of overturning the government, He chose the path of submission to the Father in all things. This is what it means to be gentle, or meek: "to chose the path of submission to the Father in all things."

Lest you think that this characteristic is simply a natural personality trait (i.e. like some people are born more gentle than others), know that it

isn't. In Galatians 5, Paul lists this quality as fruit of the Spirit -- that which the Spirit produces in us. It is not something natural. It is not describing someone's natural temperament. Rather, it is supernatural (as is true of all the other blessings). God does this work in our hearts and we exhibit these characteristics.

This has always been true of the great saints in the Bible. It was said of Moses that he was "very humble, more than any man who was on the face of the earth" (Num. 12:3). In the previous chapter, Eldad and Medad were prophesying. Joshua said, "Moses, ... restrain them." Moses replied, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD's people were prophets, that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them" (See Num. 11:28-29). Even Moses' brother and sister had similar thoughts as Joshua. They said, "Has the LORD indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us as well?" (Num. 12:2). They thought of themselves highly, but not Moses. Though Moses spoke face to face with God, he didn't consider himself great because he was a meek man.

It was true of David. We see this in 2 Samuel 16, when his son, Absalom, had just taken the city from him. David fled Jerusalem for his life. He went east, over the mount of Olives, weeping with covered head and walking barefoot in contrition (2 Sam. 15:30). During his escape, there was a man named Shimei, who "threw stones at David and at all the servants of King David" (2 Sam. 16:6). Shimei cursed David saying, "Get out, get out, you man of bloodshed, and worthless fellow!" Then one of David's servants said, "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over now, and cut off his head." But David said, "Let him alone and let him curse, for the LORD has told him" (2 Sam. 16:11). David didn't think highly of himself.

This is the meek and gentle person: the one who isn't concerned with himself. Jesus says that this person is truly blessed. Notice that this is diametrically opposed to what many today call "self-esteem." The path to blessing is not to think highly of yourself. The path to blessing is to think lowly of yourself, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." This is almost the same point of the first two blessings.

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones says it far better than I ever will. He writes,

The man who is meek is not even sensitive about himself. He is not always watching himself and his own interests. He is not always on the defensive. ... To be truly meek means we no longer protect ourselves, because we see there is nothing worth defending. ... The man who is truly meek never pities himself, he is never sorry for himself. He never talks to himself and says, 'You are having a hard time, how unkind these people are not to understand you.' ... John Bunyan puts it perfectly, 'He that is down need fear no fall.' (Studies in the Sermon on the Mount, p. 69).

Question #2: Why is this person blessed? Jesus says that it is because "they shall inherit the earth."

This is a straight quote from Psalm 37:11, "The humble will inherit the land." Psalm 37 is filled with admonitions to be meek. "Do not fret because of evildoers" (verse 1). "Trust in the LORD, and do good" (verse 3). "Delight yourself in the LORD" (verse 4). "Commit your way to the LORD" (verse 5). "Rest in the LORD and wait patiently for Him" (verse 7). "... Do not fret, ... for evildoers will be cut off, but those who wait for the LORD, they will inherit the land" (verse 8). The picture of Psalm 37 is this: "Don't be aggressive and arrogant and fretful against the plans of the wicked. Give yourself to God and He will bless you." In this instance, he will give you the land of your forefathers. Jesus extends this to the entire earth. Essentially, this means that God will provide for all his needs.

4. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness (verse 6).

Question #1: Who is blessed? "Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness." This describes the person who has a strong desire for righteousness, which seemingly is never satisfied. We are all familiar with hungering and thirsting: the basic human impulses that all of us feel. It is something that tugs at us and never stops until the hunger is satisfied or the thirst is quenched.

Other desires can be re-directed. Suppose some day this spring, you have a strong desire to take a walk outside. Yet, just as you begin, you get a phone call from one of your friends or relatives, you have really wanted to talk to. So you talk on the phone for a half an hour. Now, you don't have time to take a walk, but you have spent your last half-hour doing something else you wanted to do. Your desire for a walk will calm down. By evening, it will be gone. But hungering and thirsting can never be re-directed. They never stop bothering you until they are satisfied. You cannot say, "Wow, I am hungry, I'm going to read a book instead of eat." That won't work. Hunger and thirst will never stop until the hunger is satisfied or the thirst is quenched. And once satisfied, it will be simply a few short hours until the hunger and thirst will come again to tug and pull and your flesh.

Such is the picture of the one that Jesus is describing -- a constant pull of the heart for righteousness. You feel pain when you don't have it. You constantly desire it. Once you get it, a short time later, you want some more.

Notice that this is in the present tense. It isn't those who "have hungered and have thirsted for righteousness," and who have found their fulfillment and now are sitting happy and satisfied. Rather, it is those who "are hungering and are thirsting for righteousness." It describes the one who is never satisfied, but longs to be satisfied.

The Scripture is manifold in using this imagery.

- "As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God" (Psalm 42:1-2).
- "O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly; My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You" (Psalm 63:1).
- "I stretch out my hands to You; My soul longs for You, as a parched land" (Psalm 143:6).
- Isaiah said, "Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters" (Is. 55:1).

Augustine said it well with his famous words, "You made us for Yourself, and our heart is restless, until it rests in You."

Question #2: Why is this person blessed? Jesus said that he "shall be satisfied." Such a person will ultimately be satisfied with perfect righteousness.

I want to point out **the path to this satisfaction**. Jesus said that the one who hungers and thirsts will be satisfied. The one who is satisfied will be blessed. The one who is blessed will be happy. Notice that it isn't the one who hungers and thirsts for happiness which will find it. The path to happiness comes through righteousness. This is where my introductory college class failed. The quest for directly for happiness, rather than toward that which will end in happiness.

Suppose you want to go to California, the land of bliss and happiness, because happiness is bound up in an average temperature of 70 degrees, and because happiness is found where it is never colder than freezing, and because happiness comes when it is sunny 320 days out of the year. (If you doubt these things, ask my wife, who is still wondering why we are living in Illinois and living completely inside for six months out of every year.) You could get to California several different ways from here. You could jump in a car and **head west**. You will drive and drive and drive and drive, and California will seemingly never come. After four days you will finally see it. Or, you could jump in a car and **head east** (the opposite direction) to the airport, where you can get on a plane in be there in six hours.

This is a good picture of how to be truly blessed. Many people think that blessing and happiness come in the here and now. Many people think that indulging the flesh, with its passions and desires is the way to true happiness. These are like those who jump in a car and head west, thinking that this is the way to happiness. But Jesus tells us that **the true way to happiness is through an intense desire for righteousness in our hearts**. This is exactly opposite of what it seems to the world. Yet, this is what Jesus tells us.

We have looked at the first four beatitudes in this wonderful sermon. They all have one thing in common. Have you noticed it? They all pertain to those who lack something, which is desperately needed.

Those who are poor in spirit, lack in their spirits.
Those who mourn, mourn because they lack resources.
Those who are gentle (or humble or meek), lack pride of self.
Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, lack what truly satisfies.

Is this not the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ? We don't sit here today because we have the spiritual resources that we need in ourselves. Rather, we have found ourselves to be **spiritually impoverished** and have looked to Jesus for our wealth of spirit. We aren't here because we have endured through the difficulties of life caused by our sin and have come away rejoicing and enjoying our sin. Rather, **we have mourned** for our sin and have looked to another for help. We don't come to meet together each week, because we think ourselves to be good enough for God. Rather we come because **we are meek** and look not to ourselves, but to God. Our happiness isn't found in the pleasures of the world. Rather, we are **seeking His righteousness**, believing that we will be most blessed when we find our greatest satisfaction and delight in God.

This is a liberating message. We are not proclaiming to the world, "Look within! Don't worry, be happy! Think positive about yourself. Clean yourself up. Make yourself good. Come and worship with us good people at Rock Valley Bible Church." This was the message of the Pharisees, but this was NOT the message of Jesus. The message of Jesus was exactly the opposite. We are not looking for "good people" to join us. We are looking for those who know their own bankruptcy and have no other choice but cry to God for help.

We can proclaim to the world, "Are you broken in spirit? Come to Jesus. Are you mourning over sin? Come to Jesus. Are you humble in heart? Come to Jesus. Are you desiring satisfying righteousness? Come to Jesus." Jesus seeks, not those who are sufficient in themselves, but the desperate, who need great help. The citizens of the kingdom are beggars.

The multitudes in the day Jesus spoke were filled with such types of people. Demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics, those with every kind of sickness were surely many of the most broken, humble and desperate of people. Jesus preached the good news of the gospel of the kingdom to them. He begins the sermon on the mount by describing who exactly the kingdom citizens are. They are the beggars, the broken, the meek, and those who desire righteousness.

These are those who are in the kingdom. Have I described you this morning? Have you identified yourself with each of these characteristics as I have described them? **If these attitudes are not in you, you have no part in His kingdom**. I exhort you, as Jesus did, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17) The presence of the kingdom demands that He find citizens of the kingdom, who are broken, meek, beggars, longing for the righteousness that only Jesus can give.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on March 24, 2002 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.