

The BE attitudes

Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC

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October 8, 2023

Text: Matthew 5:1-16

Purpose: To help the congregation realize that being a Christian is not necessarily what we do, but it is who we are. It is not in the DOING but in the BEING that separates believers from the world.

The owner of a drug store walks in to find a guy leaning heavily against a wall. The owner asks the clerk "What's with that guy over there by the wall?"

The clerk replies, "Well, he came in here this morning to get something for his cough. I couldn't find the cough syrup, so I gave him an entire bottle of laxative."



The owner screams, "You idiot! You can't treat a cough with a bottle of laxatives!"

The clerk calmly replies, "Of course you can! Look at him; he's afraid to cough."¹

I have come to realize, that in life, you don't always get what you want!

Have you ever seen someone with an attitude because they didn't get what they want when they wanted it? You would know exactly what I am talking about. I was at my favorite biscuit



destination (Bojangles) this week and the line at the drive through was VERY long. So, I decided to go inside and take my chances at getting quicker service. By the way, you know this never works out, but I was determined to try.

The beleaguered store manager was running the cash register and was confronted by person after person complaining about their biscuit being too hard. Several came back and demanded a refund. They were having what we call here in North Carolina, a "hissy fit." To top it all off, they were out of their Cajun fries, which added more frustration for others.

When it was my time to order, I just smiled at him and said, "Tough day?" That was just the break he needed to regroup and move forward. He said several times to me, "It's going to be a good day. It's going to be a good day!"



Our bad attitudes usually flare up when we are not getting our own way. It's all about ME. Peter, Paul, and Mary, during one of their comedy routines discussed this very issue. In the 1950's there was a magazine named, *Life*. Then along came a magazine named *People*. Now we have one called *Us*. What is next? *Me*? Actually, there is a magazine called *Self*²

This is so typical of the way in which our culture is focused. Jesus was trying to bring about the realization that the Christian life is not about self, but about giving of self to others. Jesus reminded His disciples repeatedly, *"If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake, he is the one who will save it. For what profit is it if a man gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?"* (Luke 9:23-26)



The way of Christ is the way of living humbly, serving others, modeling meekness, seeking righteousness, being a peacemaker, and steadfastly standing with Christ no matter the cost.



The passage we have read this morning is the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount. I am looking forward to going to Israel in a few weeks. There along the Sea of Galilee, is a church dedicated to the Beatitudes. As you walk up the steps, you will see the various words from Matthew 5 written into the steps as you go to the top of the mountain. This place could have been where taught His disciples and followers this passage of scripture. Many Christians have claimed this passage as their life's goal. Some have gone so far to claim that they don't need anything else except the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount. J. Vernon McGee encountered such a man one day.

The man: “The Sermon on the Mount is my religion.”

Dr. McGee: “It is? Let’s shake hands. I congratulate you – you’ve got a wonderful religion! By the way, how are you doing with it?”

The man: “What do you mean?”

Dr. McGee, “You said that the Sermon on the Mount was your religion. Are you living by it?”

The man: “Well I try.”

Dr. McGee: “That’s not quite it. The Lord said that you are blessed if you DO these things, not if you vote for them. Are you keeping it?”

The man: “I think I am.”

Dr. McGee: “Do you mind if we have a little test?”

The man: “All right.”

Dr. McGee: “The Sermon on the Mount says that if you are angry at your brother, you are guilty of murder. Are you keeping that one?”

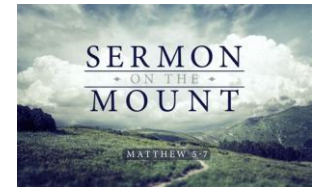
The man: “Well, that’s pretty strong, but I don’t think I have been angry enough to kill anyone.”

Dr. McGee: He then quoted the one the Lord gave on adultery: “*Whoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her in his heart.*” (v. 28) and asked him, “How about that one?”

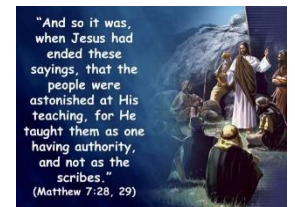
The man: “Well, you got me on that one.”

Dr. McGee: I said to the man, “Well, I imagine that there are several things in the Sermon on the Mount that would get you. Apparently, you are not living by your religion and if I were you, I’d change my religion and get something that works.”³

The Sermon on the Mount has become for some individuals a document that they can vote on instead of seriously engage the teachings of Christ. It is loaded with law. It actually takes the Law to a higher level. Not just an outward obedience to the Law, but it challenges us to make the changes inwardly. But if you will look at the Sermon on the Mount honestly, it will point you to a Savior who died for you on the cross. The Sermon on the Mount sets before us great principles and high goals. We need to know them and as we understand them better, it reveals how we do not measure up fully.



These three chapters in Matthew, (five, six and seven), probably were not taught all in one setting. It was most likely taught at different times and in different settings. The best teaching method is often done by repetition. I am sure Jesus repeated these passages over to different audiences. We are the same way. We need to hear the same thing over and over before it actually sinks in. This Sermon on the Mount



is thought to be a collection of Jesus' teachings over a period of time.

They can be broken down into four different kinds of relationships as citizens of the kingdom of God. We are subjects in God's kingdom and we need to examine the various relationships we have.



1. The relationship of the subjects of the kingdom to self. (5:1-16)
2. The relationship of the subjects of the kingdom to the Law. (5:17-48)
3. The relationship of the subjects of the kingdom to God. (Ch. 6)
4. The relationship of the subjects of the kingdom to others. (Ch. 7)

Today and next Sunday, we will begin looking at the relationship we have as subjects of God's Kingdom and our inward self. We will begin by looking at the kind of attitude we need to have on the inside of us.



In the Gospel of Matthew, chapter four, we see that Jesus has gone out into the wilderness after His baptism by John the Baptist. He has been tempted by Satan for forty days in the wilderness. He then began a ministry of teaching, preaching and healing. He has called at least four disciples to come and join Him in the ministry. They are Andrew, Simon Peter, James, and John. Jesus went up on the mountain and sat down and began to teach. That was the position of a teacher. He would not

stand and teach, but instead he would be seated and expound on His teaching.

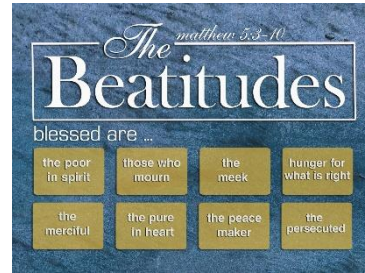
We often think that Jesus was trying to teach the multitude that had gathered and was following Him. Instead, the scripture implies in several places that Jesus was focused on teaching the disciples, and all the others were just eavesdropping.



These Beatitudes are all centered on the word, "blessing." We all want a blessing. We all want to be blessed. We all want to be a blessing to others. This word blessing is like our word happiness. Except it is not just a kind of momentary happiness. Momentary happiness is like someone giving you a piece of candy. You enjoy it for a moment, but then it's gone. The word "Blessed" as described in Matthew, is a state of being deeply internally happy. We find that same word in Psalm 1:1, "*Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful.*"

These Beatitudes are all about our attitude. Let us turn to these eight blessings listed in Matthew. Today we are only going to examine the first four listed in Matthew, chapter five. There is so much we can learn about ourselves and how we should relate as citizens of the Kingdom of God.

Before we begin looking at these blessings, notice what this DOESN'T say. I have put up a list of the ones in Matthew for you to compare as I read a list of what is DOESN'T say.



Blessed are the proud, for there is the kingdom of heaven
Blessed are the joyful, for they shall be happy.
Blessed are the mighty, for they shall control all the wealth.
Blessed are those that sit in judges chambers, for they shall see justice.
Blessed are the victors, for they shall win all the spoils.
Blessed are the generous in heart, for they shall earn heaven.
Blessed are those that negotiate peace treaties, for they shall be called God's servants.
Blessed are those that compromised in order not to be persecuted, for they shall be called wise among men.
Blessed are those that persecute religious fanatics, for they shall be called defenders of God.

Jesus did not come to establish a new world order here on earth. He came to set a person against his family, a brother against a sister, a child against a parent. He was turning it all around. He was beginning on the inside and working His way out.

Our first beatitude is found in verse three.

#1 – “Blessed are the **poor in Spirit**, for theirs is the **Kingdom of heaven.**”

It is my understanding of the beatitudes that this first one is really the entrance requirement to the kingdom of heaven. We need to be humble in spirit. I have met some people that thought they had it all together. They were rich in spirit. They were not poor in spirit. What I find unique about this attribute is that once you think you have it, then you don't have it.



I can see a person walking around saying, “Hey! Look at me, I am humble!” That just doesn't go together. This beatitude is a recognition of who God is, who we are in light of His creation, power, grace and forgiveness. He is abundant in His mercy to those who seek Him. But you must humble yourself.

#2 – “Blessed are those who **mourn**, for they shall be **comforted.**”

Jesus is concerned about the inward person. Have you ever really grieved over the sin in your life? Have you been so upset that nothing could console you? Have you ever had something rip your heart so that all you could do was cry? I have found that the only lasting comfort that can come to those that mourn is God. He is the God of all comfort. If you are still dealing with a deep abiding grief in your life, may I commend Hanna Whitehall Smith's book to you, *The God of All Comfort*. This book may help you realize that God can become the balm for our soul, if we turn to Him.



#3 – “Blessed are the **meek**, for they shall **inherit the earth.**”

This idea of the meek inheriting the earth is not new to Jesus’ disciples.

In Psalm 37:11 it says, “*But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.*”

This idea of meekness really doesn’t fit within our American culture of “survival of the fittest.” On television the meek are scorned and pushed aside. But God said that He would call a people out that would be humble and meek. In Zephaniah 3:12 it says, “*I will leave in your midst a meek and humble people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord.*” God has called us to a life of humility, and in that we find safety and security.

There is a story told of a rich young boy that went to visit a friend of his from school whose family barely had enough money to last week to week. The boy’s father wanted to see how the boy would respond seeing how much they had versus how little this other family had.

After the boy came home, the boy said he wanted to thank his father for showing him how truly poor his family was. The father was concerned because he thought they had everything. They had three cars, a manicured yard, and a swimming pool – the father thought they were rich, not poor.



The boy went on to explain. Dad, we have a pool in our back yard, but my friend had a creek that never needed cleaning. We have a beautiful yard that is surrounded by a brick wall. My friend has a yard that never ends. We have a skylight in our home, but my friend has the whole sky to look at. We have pedigree poodles, but he has a dog you can run and play with.

Thanks, dad, for showing me how poor we really are!



Having things does not equal having a life. Those that are self seeking and boastful may own the deed to the land, but they won’t inherit the earth. Only God is the owner of the earth. The earth is the Lord’s and all the fullness in it. I have learned that death cancels out any and all wealth. The title may temporarily pass to another person, but it ultimately belongs to God.

#4 – “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for **righteousness**, for they shall be **filled.**”

The world in which we live is seeking happiness and pleasure. Yet happiness is not found in the pursuit of it. Life is not found in the pursuit of life. Both can be found if we pursue Jesus Christ and His righteousness. Jesus told us, “*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be satisfied.*” (Matthew 5:6)

As followers of Christ, we are to seek justice and righteousness. We are to do right in our business dealings. We are to do just in the treatment of our employees. We are to provide a good day’s work for the pay we receive. Those



that pursue righteousness, those that pursue it with all their heart, they will be filled.

Augustine thought that all these beatitudes were to be taken as a whole – not just nuggets to pick and choose from.

NEXT WEEK we will look at the other half of the BE Attitudes.

THE BEATITUDES	
1) Blessed are the poor in Spirit, for there is the kingdom of heaven	5) Blessed are the Merciful, for they shall obtain mercy
2) Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted	6) Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God.
3) Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.	7) Blessed are the peace makers, for they shall be called sons of God.
4) Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfy.	8) Blessed are those who are persecuted, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.

“Blessed are the **merciful**, for they shall **obtain 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 are **persecuted** for righteousness sake, For theirs is the **kingdom of heaven**.”

“Blessed are you when they revile and **persecute** you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your **reward in heaven**, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

David Jeremiah once said, “Our attitude toward others reveals our genuine attitude toward God.” Ouch!

Charles Swindoll once said, “The longer I live, the more I realize the impact attitude has on life. Attitude, to me is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness or skill. It will make or break a company, a church, or a home.

The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change our past, we cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can change is our attitude. I am convinced that life is 10 percent what happens to me and 90 percent how I react to it. And so, it is with you. We are in charge of our attitudes. 4”

For us to grow in our relationship with God, we need to examine our hearts and let the mind of Christ dwell in us.



We need to become more concerned with BE coming Christ like, than DOING Christ like things. God is more concerned with your heart and your walk than He is with your activity for Him.

I cannot over emphasize the shift from DOING things for God to BEING Christlike. Every person here is focused on DOING the things God has called them to do. But we need to make an honest attempt to shift our inward positioning – our every thought, our every communication, our every reaction to injustice, our every response to feeling mistreated, our every feeling that we are being rejected – and recenter our lives on BEING Christlike in every response, thought, and action in our life.



As we go this week, let us make our BEING a priority, then our DOING will have the meaning it is intended to have.

LET US PRAY

Notes:

¹Mikey's Funnies, August 31, 2023, A Cough Funny

² A Treasury of Bible Illustrations, #765, Life and Self

³ Dr. J. Vernon McGee, Thru the Bible, Vol. 4, p 28-29.

⁴ A Treasury of Bible Illustrations, #36 A choice each day.