



### Time to Reflect

- What aspects of our lives do we need God's help with? Take a few moments in honest prayer as we turn to God.
- Do our lives, what we say and what we do, point people towards God?

Last week we took an initial look at the Sermon on the Mount and we established some signposts as to what we will be studying together over coming weeks. This week we get down to specifics and we look at the Beatitudes or, as John Stott referred to them, "Beautiful Attitudes." In our passage we encounter pearls of wisdom, pieces of advice, which apply to a wide range of situations that we may find ourselves in. We could also suggest that these are principle marks of Christian character and conduct, especially in relation to God and other people.

**"Everybody who has ever heard of Jesus of Nazareth, and knows anything at all of his teaching, must surely be familiar with the beatitudes...Their wealth is inexhaustible. We cannot plumb their depths. Truly, 'we are near heaven here.'"**

(John Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, p30)

### Passage Specifics

- On nine occasions from (v3-v12) we encounter the word 'blessed.' We would generally say that this word means 'happy.' But in the Sermon on the Mount it refers to the ultimate wellbeing and spiritual joy of those who share in the salvation of God. Let us look at eight key teachings.

#### **1. THE POOR IN SPIRIT (v3)**

- When we read this first beatitude, we could be forgiven for assuming that it is referring to the financially less well off. It is talking about spiritual poverty – those who are poor in spirit.
- A poor person in the Old Testament was afflicted and had to look to God for help and salvation. As we reflect on this, we are reminded that there is nothing that we can do for ourselves to gain our eternal salvation.
- Put another way, the poor in spirit recognise their need of God, that they are spiritually bankrupt, and that only God can remedy this situation.
- We all need God because we all sin – and only He can deal with our sins. We are blessed when we realise this and turn to God.

#### **2. THOSE WHO MOURN (v4)**

- This can be interpreted in a physical sense, but it can also be applied to those who mourn the loss of their innocence, righteousness, and self-respect. In this context it is the second stage of spiritual blessing. It is one thing to be spiritually poor and acknowledge it; it is another to grieve and mourn about it.
- By reflecting on our spiritual condition, we realise that we stand guilty before a righteous God. Our sins are an offence to Him. This situation should grieve us – the realisation that none of us are righteous.

- However, this is also a good place to be. We are blessed when we grieve the fact that we have sinned and fallen short of God's glory. Why? Because we realise that we need His help, and we get that help when we come to Him in faith – with humility and meekness.

### 3. THE MEEK (v5)

- The word translated as meek in this text means gentle, humble, considerate, courteous. There is an honesty in a meek person's life – an honesty to lead them to God in repentance and faith, but also an honesty in our dealings with other people.
- We are blessed when we are genuine and authentic – when we are meek.

### 4. THOSE WHO HUNGER AND THIRST FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS (v6)

- This is spiritual hunger and thirst – a longing for more of God in our lives. We are blessed when we seek God, when we want to spend time with Him (prayer and Bible Study), and when we seek to translate our faith into our everyday lives – to radiate Christ in our watching world.
- A good Christian witness should be like a signpost, pointing in the right direction and being able to be understood. Each of us are called to be God's witnesses, pointing others to Him.

### 5. THE MERCIFUL (v7)

- Mercy is compassion for other people in need. John Stott writes **“Our God is a merciful God and shows mercy continuously; the citizens of his kingdom must show mercy too.”<sup>1</sup>**
- What a blessing it is to have a compassionate heart, when we look at people in need and long to be able to help. We should ask God to create in us a compassionate heart so that we can live out our faith and not just talk about it.

### 6. THE PURE IN HEART (v8)

- The heart is the centre of our being and, as Christians, we should be inwardly pure – in body, soul, and mind.
- Jesus is teaching a lesson here. It is not what we do that makes us spiritual pure (that would be salvation by works). Inward purity is the gift of God, given freely to us through His grace.

### 7. THE PEACEMAKERS (v9)

- Being pure in heart creates an openness and sincerity in us. These are central to acts of reconciliation. Is there someone that you struggle with, a quarrel that you are involved with?
- Jesus is telling us here that we are blessed when we work for peace, when we strive to set things right and bring quarrels to an end. This can be a courageous thing to do, but it is something we will be blessed for.

### 8. THOSE WHO ARE PERSECUTED BECAUSE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS (v10-12)

- Persecution of Christians has been evident throughout history. But no one has ever stopped the Church through persecution. Indeed, whenever the world persecutes the church, it seems to grow even more. Look at the example of the Early Church.
- The Romans tried to persecute it out of existence, yet it spread the Gospel throughout the entire empire. The Church in China blossomed during the Twentieth Century despite persecution.
- Blessing in the face of persecution (v11). But persecution is not easy to face. (v12) is a call to stand firm and focus on eternal things when faced with persecution. Such faith acquires great reward in heaven (v12).

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<sup>1</sup> John Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount* (Nottingham: InterVarsity Press, 1984), p47.