

THE SECOND SUNDAY OF EPIPHANY

Rehobah!

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

MATTHEW 5 - THE BEATITUDES

A CHRIST-LIKE HEART

LIVING IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

“Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

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

MATTHEW 5.11-12

BLESSED ARE . . .

And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:

“Blessed are . . .”

MATTHEW 5.1-3 NKJV

- ▶ **Jesus went up on a mountain** - *Moses went up on the mountain to receive the laws of the first covenant. Jesus likewise went up the mountain for kingdom of heaven lawgiving.*
- ▶ **He sat down** - *Sitting was the formal posture of teaching. This was not a casual moment.*
- ▶ **His disciples came to him** - *This teaching is for disciples—true followers.*
- ▶ **He opened his mouth and began to teach them** - *It is an inadequate translation that says, “He taught them.” Jesus is giving an authoritative proclamation. He is defining what it means to “produce fruit in keeping with repentance”—to have a “kingdom of heaven heart and life.”*

AM I BLESSED OR HAPPY?

“‘Happy’ isn’t good enough. The biblical translator who uses such a word should change jobs, maybe write TV comedies with nice endings. The problem is that, if you decide you don’t like the word ‘blessed,’ there isn’t a single English word which can take its place. You might use a phrase like ‘on the right track’ or ‘going in the right direction.’ Sin means being off the track, missing the target. Being ‘blessed’ means you aren’t lost—you’re on the path the Creator intends you to be on. But what you recognize as a blessing may look like an affliction to an outsider. Exchanging ‘blessed’ for ‘happy’ trivializes the biblical word. You might as well sum up the Bible with a slogan like, ‘Have a nice day.’”

RABBI STEVEN SCHWARZCHILD

Jim Forest, *The Ladder of the Beatitudes*, p.17

- ▶ “blessed” *ma-kari-os* (adj.) - to share in the life of God
 - ▶ one who becomes a partaker of God’s nature through faith (2 Peter 1.4); a quality of life that has nothing to do with circumstance (external blessing) and everything to do with an internal transformation that enables one to live out God’s will and life



Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will.

ROMANS 12.1-2

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

- ▶ No aspect or dynamic of the kingdom of heaven is synonymous with the kingdom of earth; in fact, they are in contradiction and opposed to each other.
- ▶ Jesus is the personification of the kingdom of heaven. The true blessing in having a spirit and life that reflects these qualities *is the blessing of having become more like Christ.*

"Be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect."

Blessed are those **persecuted because of righteousness**,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are the **peacemakers**,
for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are the **pure in heart**,
for they will see God.

Blessed are the **merciful**,
for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are those who **hunger and thirst for righteousness**,
for they will be filled.

Blessed are the **meek**,
for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who **mourn**,
for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the **poor in spirit**,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Repent! for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

THE BEATITUDES

- ▶ Qualities of heart and spirit which define what is important within the kingdom of heaven.
- ▶ Not separate categories and different kinds of people; every quality should be present in every kingdom-oriented person.

LIVING IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

- ▶ Life in the kingdom of heaven depends on repentance: *“Repent! for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!”* This means abandoning my way of life, the norms of society, the values of culture, the expectations of others, and most especially one’s own self, to embrace an impossible way of life that leads to eternal reward.

“For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and the gospel will save it.”

MARK 8.35

- ▶ The presence of this kingdom life exhibited from within us to the world is essential. Without it, we have no witness to the world and no worth to the kingdom.

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.”

MATTHEW 5.13

- ▶ The teaching of the kingdom reveals the Father and a true relationship with the Father; those who are His true children desire to be able to say as Jesus did, “If you have seen me, you have seen the Father.”

“In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

MATTHEW 5.16

- ▶ The Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount are a call to “an impossible life”—a “right-ness” that exceeds human effort and which can only be accomplished by truly abiding in Christ and yielding to the Holy Spirit.

“For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.”

MATTHEW 5.20

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. . . . This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.”

JOHN 15.5, 8-9



The promise of the New Covenant, foretold by Jeremiah, is fulfilled in the teaching of the Gospel, in which the Holy Spirit will come to the aid of mankind, and write God's law on our hearts, so that we finally become capable of accomplishing it. . . . The Beatitudes are a description of this new heart that the Holy Spirit fashions in us, which is the very heart of Christ. . . . The Holy Spirit is drawn to the situations and attitudes described in the Beatitudes. . . . The fundamental question of the Christian life is how to make oneself fully open to the Spirit and the action of divine grace. We can accomplish nothing by ourselves.

JACQUES PHILIPPE, *The Eight Doors of the Kingdom*