**BIBLE TALK Radio Broadcast**

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**The Beatitudes (part 1)**

Thank you and good morning. Welcome to our program.

If I ask you “Who are the truly happy, fortunate individuals in this life,” what would you say? If you asked people on the street this question you will probably get answers such as: Those who have no money worries, and who have all they need and want, materially; those who are in good health; those with peaceful home lives, they have good marriages and healthy, respectful, obedient children; those who have a secure job and a job they enjoy; those who are loved and respected by those around them. These are the answers probably most people will give to the question “who are the truly happy, fortunate people in life?”

Well, in Matthew 5:3-12, Jesus gives what are called the beatitudes. Beatitudes are declarations of blessedness. Jesus in this passage is declaring who are the truly blessed people. The Greek word from which the word “blessed” is translated is defined by Thayer in his Greek-English Lexicon as “blessed, happy.” Another word that defines this word would be “fortunate.” And so Jesus here is telling us what kind of people who are truly happy and fortunate.

As we read the Lord’s list we see that the Lord’s view of true blessedness, or happiness is not the world’s view. Jesus doesn’t say anything about having money and possessions. He doesn’t say anything about having good health, or having a good marriage, or having a good job as the basis for true blessedness. Paul Earnhart wrote, “The beatitudes speak exclusively of spiritual qualities. The historic concerns of men – material wealth, social status and worldly wisdom – do not simply receive little attention, they receive none at all.”

Since Jesus is Lord and always speaks truth, His formula for true blessedness must be closely considered and implemented if we are to be blessed.

Today and next week, the Lord willing, we want to look at the characteristics our Lord gives of one who is truly blessed, fortunate. We want to look at Jesus’ beatitudes.

Today we want to look at the first four of the Lord’s beatitudes.

Here is what the Lord said, *"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 meek, For they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.”*

Notice, “blessed are the poor is spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” There is no one in the kingdom of heaven who is not poor in spirit. No one will enjoy the blessing of the kingdom without being poor in spirit. But what does it mean to be “poor is spirit?” The word “poor” comes from a word which could be translated “abject poverty.” It reflects one who is virtually destitute, or in “imminent danger of real starvation.” Jesus here is not talking about being poor in material things. He is talking about being poor in spirit. He is describing poverty of spirit. One who is poor in spirit is one who has become convinced of his misery and need in spiritual things. He is one who has come to see his need of and dependence upon God. The one who is poor is spirit understands that he is a sinner and that he is totally dependent upon God’s grace for his salvation. He understands that he is dependent upon God for his righteousness. It is the attitude of the tax collector in the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector who went to the temple to pray. It says that *“the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!'”* (Luke 18:13) Notice, he recognized his complete dependence upon God and cried out for God’s mercy. The world will place emphasis on belief in self-reliance, self-confidence. They teach if you want to succeed in life then come to realize the powers that are innate in yourself. No one can enter the kingdom of heaven with this attitude. We must be poor is spirit if we are to enter the kingdom of heaven and enjoy the blessings of that kingdom.

And then Jesus says, “blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”

The poor in spirit are also mourners. People mourn for sickness, pain, material loss, wounded pride, etc. But this is NOT the mourning that is under consideration here. The context bears out a different kind of mourning. It is the mourning of those who recognize their spiritual poverty. It is mourning that arises because of their sins and how their sins have affected their relationship with God. King David found forgiveness of his sins because he mourned over his sins. He says in Psalm 51:17, *“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart -- These, O God, You will not despise.”* When we recognize sin in our lives, it is not a time for laughter, but a time for mourning. James says in James 4:8-10, *“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.”*

Sadly, because of pride, many have become hard hearted. They refuse to acknowledge the sins in their lives. And even though some may acknowledge sin in their lives, they have no sorrow for their sins. And I think one reason people do not sorrow over their sins is because they have a defective sense of what sin is and what sin does. Sin is transgression of God’s law (1 John 3:4). Sin is against God. Read Gen. 39:9. Our sins grieve God. And sin separates us from God (Isa. 59:2). And if we die in our sins we will be separated from God for all eternity (Rom. 6:23). Therefore, when we commit sin, we ought to mourn over our sins. Such mourning, such godly sorrow will lead us to repent of our sins and that brings salvation. In Acts 2 many of the Jews became aware of the fact that they had crucified the Christ. It says in verse 37, *“Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’”* The fact that they were cut to the heart indicates guilt and sorrow of heart. They wanted to know what to do. Peter said to them, *“Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”* (v. 38) Those who repented and were baptized were forgiven of their sins and they were comforted. Paul said to the Corinthian saints, *“For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation…”* (2 Cor. 7:10) Those who have such godly sorrow, those who mourn over their sins, will have salvation and they will be comforted.

And them Jesus says, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”

Who are the meek? Meekness toward God is probably first and foremost in this context. W. E. Vine, quoting from Trench says in defining the word “meek,” “It is that temper of spirit in which we accept His [that is God’s) dealings with us as good, and therefore without disputing or resisting… …it is only the humble heart which is also the meek, and which, as such, does not fight against God and more or less struggle and contend with Him.” The meek individual is like clay in the hand of the potter. The clay is soft and pliable. The clay allows itself to be molded in the hand of the potter. The meek individual is like clay in the hand of God. He humbly submits to the will of God without resistance or complaining. Joe Corely wrote, "Meekness means to submit to God's will in a mild and gentle spirit, even in circumstances of great difficulty." Meekness is submission under provocation; willingness rather to suffer than to fight back. Who is the happy, fortunate individual? It is the one who obeys the will of God, even when it is not politically correct. It is the one who submits to the will of God even when the world around him is trying to pressure him to do something else.

Jesus says, “for they shall inherit the earth.” The meek inherit the earth in that they have all they need here on earth. When one humbly submits to God, God promises that he will have all he needs. Jesus said in Matthew 6:33, *“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”* “All these things” are the necessities of life here on earth. Those who are meek will inherit the earth.

And the fourth beatitude Jesus gives, *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.”* Out of a consciousness of spiritual poverty, mourning over sin there is a strong desire for righteousness. We know what it means to hunger and thirst for food and drink. We all have experienced physical hunger and thirst. We also need a hungering and thirsting for righteousness. What is “righteousness?” - It “is the character or quality of being right or just.” The idea here is being right before God. It is a right relationship with God that is desired. To be righteous before God we must be forgiven of sin, and that is through the death of Christ (Rom. 3:21-26). The one who hungers and thirst after righteousness is the one who comes and prostrates himself at the cross of Christ seeking forgiveness of his sins. You ask an honest man “are you righteous” and he thinks back over his life and he says, “no, I am not righteous.” How can he be righteous? By God’s forgiveness through the death of Christ. He comes to realize that Jesus is the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him (Heb. 5:9). And so he comes mourning over his sins, meek before God, hungering and thirsting for that righteousness that only can come through Christ. He obeys the commands of Jesus to be saved. He believes in Christ, repents of his sins, confesses his faith in Christ and is baptized in the name of Jesus for the remission of his sins, as Jesus commanded. He is then forgiven of his sins, he is righteous. And he continues to hunger and thirst for righteousness by practicing righteousness. 1 John 3:7 says, *“Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.”* If he hungers and thirst for righteousness he will continue to seek God’s forgiveness throughout his life and strive to practice righteousness by humbly and meekly submitting to the will of Christ. Jesus says, that the one who does that shall be filled.

Who is the truly happy, fortunate person? It is the one who recognizes his spiritual poverty and his need for God’s grace. It is the one who mourns over his sins, and humbly submits to the will of God without resistance, he hungers and thirst for righteousness. The Lord promises that this one will be filled. He will be comforted. He will have all he needs, physically and spiritually. Does that characterize you?

Next week, Lord willing, we will look at the rest of the beatitudes of our Lord recorded in Matthew 5:3-12.

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