**BIBLE TALK Radio Broadcast**

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**Rolla, Missouri**

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**The Beatitudes (part 2)**

Thank you and good morning. Welcome to our program.

Last week on the program we asked the question “Who are the truly happy, fortunate individuals in this life?” We mentioned if you asked people on the street this question you will probably get answers such as: Those who have no money worries; those who have good health; those with peaceful home lives; those who have a secure job and a job they enjoy.

In Matthew 5:3-12, Jesus gives what are called the beatitudes in which He defines who are the really happy, fortunate people in life. The word “blessed” in the beatitudes means “happy,” “fortunate.” And Jesus doesn’t say anything about having money and possessions, having good health, having a good marriage, having a good job, etc. as the basis for true blessedness. Jesus’ formula is far different from the way the world thinks. Jesus is telling us that even though the circumstances in our lives may not be what we desire, we can truly be blessed, happy, fortunate people.

Last week we looked at the first four of the beatitudes. These tell us the spirit with which we must approach God – we must be poor in spirit (recognizing our spiritual poverty and our need for God’s grace), we must mourn over sin (a broken and contrite heart because of our sins), we must be meek (humbly submitting to God in all things without complaining or disputing), we must hunger and thirst after righteousness (earnestly desiring a right relationship with God). The Lord promises that we will be blessed.

The next four beatitudes have to do with, not only our relationship with God but also how we should respond to our fellow man. Jesus says, *“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.”* (Matt. 5:7-12)

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” What does it mean to be merciful? W.E. Vine in his Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words says that mercy “…is the outward manifestation of pity.” He says “it assumes need on the part of him who receives it, and resources adequate to meet the need on the part of him who shows it.” One who is merciful is not just one who possesses pity or compassion for another, but he is one who manifests that pity in action. Mercy is not just the negative qualities of not dealing harshly, not inflicting punishment, but it is active kindness to those in need.

Jesus says, “for they shall obtain mercy.” If we are to obtain mercy, we are to show mercy. Other teachings in the sermon on the mount are a commentary of this principle. In Matthew 6:14-15, Jesus says*, “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”* If we are to be forgiven of our sins, we must show mercy and forgive others. Jesus also said in chapter 7:1-2, *“Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.”* If we judge others and show no mercy in that judgment, then we can expect no mercy in judgment for ourselves. James says in James 2:13, *“For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.”* Do you want mercy in judgment? Then show mercy. Jesus says, *“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.”*

And then the sixth beatitude, Jesus says, *“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”* Jesus here is talking about purity of heart. You see, purity of life begins with purity of heart. If our hearts are pure then our actions will be pure. If our hearts are not pure then our actions will not be pure. Jesus said in Luke 6:45, *“A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.”*  If we want our lives to be pure then we must get our hearts pure. If we are to have pure hearts we must begin by thinking and meditating on what is good and pure. Paul said in Philippians 4:8, *“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy -- meditate on these things.”* We need to be careful about what we feed our minds upon. The movies and TV programs we watch, the books we read, the music we listen to, the people we run around with, all affect the condition of our hearts which will affect our behavior. You have heard the expression as it relates to computers, “garbage in, garbage out.” This is also true of our hearts. You fill it with evil thoughts, don’t be surprised when you find yourself doing and saying things you thought you would never do or say.

Jesus said, *“blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”* The pure in heart will see God. In what sense shall they see God? In 1 John 3:2-3 it says, *“Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”* We are now children of God. What shall we be? We don’t know, John says, but we do know this: *“we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”* Notice, this will take place *“when He is revealed.”* This is at His coming. When Jesus comes we will see Him as He is. We shall see God. And it also says we shall be like Him. We shall be like Him in body and in character. Philippians 3:20-21says, *“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for* *the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be* *conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to* *subdue all things to Himself.”* Not only will we be like Him in body we shall also be like Him in character, in His purity. In 1 John 3:3, *“And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”* The hope of seeing God helps us to strive to be pure as He is pure, now. Hebrews 12:14 says,*“Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord:”*  Do you want to see God and be like Him in purity? Then strive now to be pure in heart and life.

And then the seventh beatitude, *“Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.”*

The peacemaker is one who strives to make peace. What is peace? Peace is the opposite of conflict. It is harmonious relationships. It is the state of mutual harmony between persons. The peacemaker then strives to be at peace with God by coming to Christ and obeying His gospel. He wants others to have peace with God and so he preaches the gospel of peace to them. He strives to be at peace with his fellowman. Romans 12:8 says, *“If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.”* He strives to be at peace with his brethren in the family of God. Romans 14:19 says, *“Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.”*

To rid our minds of some misconceptions about making peace, let us talk about what Jesus is NOT saying. He is NOT saying, “Blessed are you who make peace where you are involved personally.” Of course, Jesus’ statement includes this, but it involves more than this. We should not only strive to make peace where we are personally involved, but we also should strive to make peace among others where we have the opportunity. Also Jesus did NOT say, “Blessed are the peaceable who do not start conflicts.” It is true that peacemakers will be peaceable, but peacemakers are more than this. Jesus is talking about the peaceable character that is consciously exerted outside itself. He is talking about one striving to MAKE peace where there is conflict, not just avoiding conflict. And Jesus did NOT say, “Blessed are those who make peace at any price.” We must not compromise Truth to have peace. When we stand for Truth there will be conflict. Jesus even warned us that when we choose to follow Him there will be conflict in our families (Read Matt. 10:34-36). Even in the next beatitude He says, *“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake…”* When we stand up for truth and righteousness, there will be conflict. Jesus does not want us to abandon righteousness just to have peace. Yes, we are to be peacemakers, but not at any price.

Jesus said, *“For they shall be called sons of God.* Like Father, like son. Since God is a Peacemaker, so His sons, His children will be peacemakers. What a blessing to be called a son of God.

And then Jesus says, *“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.”*

Notice the nature of the persecution sometimes we have to endure.

We often equate persecution with imprisonment, beatings, death. These are persecutions, but also we are persecuted when people revile us and speak evil of us. These are the persecutions that we usually encounter today in this country.

And notice the spirit with which we are to accept that persecution: not with self-pity; not hurling insult for insult…, but rather we are to rejoice, be exceedingly glad. Sometimes we don’t see someone speaking evil of us as persecution. We just view it as someone giving us a hard time that we don’t deserve, maybe at work, or by an unbelieving spouse. So what do we do? We get angry. We hurl the insults back at them. This is not how we should handle persecution. Jesus says, “rejoice and be exceedingly glad.”

Notice the reason we are to respond with rejoicing: He says first of all, *“for great is your reward in heaven”* Those who are righteous and endure persecution have a home in heaven. And secondly Jesus says, *“for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”* In other words, you are in good company. When you are persecuted for righteousness sake it brings youinto an association with the prophets of old. Can you imagine that God accepts you into that association of the prophets of old when you receive persecution for righteousness sake? What a blessing.

Jesus says, “*For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”* Those persecuted for righteousness sake enjoy all the blessings of the kingdom.

Be sure that the persecution is for righteousness sake. Sometimes people suffer because they have

been unkind and mean to others. And they try to find comfort in a passage like Matthew 5. This passage offers no comfort for those who are suffering because of their wrong doing and bad attitude. We need to make sure that when we are persecuted, it is for righteousness sake.

In this passage Jesus is telling us who are the truly fortunate people in life. Each of us can be a part of this group of people if we want to be. If you are not among this group, why not come to Jesus today and render humble obedience to Him.

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God is merciful. Ephesians 2:4-5 says, *“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).”* God saw our plight as sinners, doomed to an eternal hell. He had compassion on us. He did something about it. He did what we could not do for ourselves. He sent His Son to die for us so that He could forgive us of our sins. That is merciful.

And we should be merciful as God is merciful. In Luke 6:35-36, Jesus says, *“But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.”*