

THE HAPPIEST PEOPLE ON EARTH; THE BEATITUDES

The fifth chapter of Matthew houses what is commonly known as “The Sermon on the Mount.” Matthew five comprises forty-eight verses dedicated to the lengthiest and most detailed teaching of Jesus. The first twelve verses are foundational to the rest of the chapter and foundational to the Christian life. The teaching of our Lord is so lofty, many see this challenge to live in such a way as a nice ideal, but can never be lived-out in reality. Our Lord emphasizes the loftiness by closing the chapter with Matthew 5:48: “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” The word we translate “perfect” in Greek is “*téleios*” derived from the word “*télos*” which means “consummated goal” defined as mature (consummated) from going through the necessary stages to reach the end-goal, i.e. developed into a consummating completion by fulfilling the necessary process (spiritual journey). This root (tel-) means “reaching the end (aim).” It is well-illustrated with the old pirate's telescope, unfolding (extending out) one stage at a time to function at full-strength (capacity effectiveness). In Matthew 5, Jesus is unfolding for us, one step at a time the place He desires us to be. Let's unfold the Beatitudes.

1. BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO REVERENCE.

Matthew 5:3: “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” The wording “poor in spirit” gives us the impression that on the deep, down inside of us there is a poverty that is good. A basic definition of “poor” is, “lacking sufficient money to live at a standard considered comfortable or normal in a society.” Allow me to tweak this definition to explain what our Lord has just said, “lacking sufficient spiritual capital to live at the standard considered conformable to the image of Jesus.”

The word “blessed” means happy. We will not be happy unless we come to an understanding that we are not happy and will not be happy until we realize we don't have the answers, but Christ not only has the answer, He is the answer to all of life's experiences. So to be poor in spirit is not bad; it is good because poverty declares ourselves bereft of making our life livable and happy. Then it places the attention to Christ, the source of all joy. This makes the follow-up statement of Christ even more pertinent: “...for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” I Corinthians 3:21 gives an “Amen” to this by saying, “Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours.” So, let us reverence Christ, not ourselves or other men. “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God.” (II Corinthians 3:5).

2. BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO REPENT.

Matthew 5:4, “Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.” This may first appear contradictory, but will rather qualify as an oxymoron. It’s true; if we mourn we will be happy! II Corinthians 7:10 says, “For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.” When we mourn before God for the wrong we have done, He forgives us! II Corinthians 7:10 says, “For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.” If I may paraphrase this beautiful verse, “When we are mourn over our personal wrongdoing and repent, we’ll never regret it. The world is sorry, but not over sin committed, but opportunity lost for self-aggrandizement.” True repentance leads to everlasting life. Worldly repentance leads to death, frustration and damnation. “Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God.” (Hebrews 6:1).

3. BLESSED ARE THE RESOLVED.

Matthew 5:5, “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.” Inheritors of earth are usually people seen as self-made conquerors. In Christ “...we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.” (Romans 8:37b). What brings the Christian to this highest level, beyond conquering? Meekness. Meekness is not weakness. Meekness is being humble enough to let God get the glory for every good thing in our life. When we see Moses, we do not think of weakness, but the leader of God’s people who led Israel from the wickedness of Egypt, through the wilderness and all the way to the threshold of the Promised Land. Yet the Bible says of him, “Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth” (Numbers 12:3). John the Baptist was another example of meekness. We see this reflected in the statement, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30). Our Lord set the example when He did all the miracles through the Holy Spirit and constantly gave God the Father glory for it all. Let us be resolved to be meek. The world will try to get us to clamor over our personal “rights.” God encourages us to meekly surrender our rights over to Him.

4. BLESSED ARE THE RAVENOUS.

Matthew 5:6, “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.” A vessel must be empty before it can be filled. If we are filled with other things, we’ve made no room for Jesus. The world cannot satisfy, even if we are filled with its stuff. “For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water” (Jeremiah 2:13). Jesus is the true

Manna and the Living Water that fills and satisfies us. Let us therefore be ravenous in our quest for Him!

5. BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO REMONSTRATE.

Matthew 5:7, "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy." One who remonstrates is one who forcefully protests something. And what we are protesting is the belief that you must look out for number one (yourself). The world says to be firm with everyone else, but mercy belongs to you and if not yourself alone, at least yourself first of all. God is saying be merciful with others. And if we do, we shall find it ourselves. Don't hurt people. Love them for Christ's sake. "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32). This is the nature of God, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy" (Micah 7:18).

6. BLESSED ARE THE REAL.

Matthew 5:8, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." We can never fool God. We can put on an outward show, but God sees through the false outward appearance, even as our Lord saw through the Pharisees while on this earth (Luke 11:39). Psalm 24:3,4a, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart..." Not only do the pure in heart see God, but the pure in heart have strength beyond themselves. To borrow the lines of Alfred Lord Tennyson in reference to the only knight who saw the Holy Grail, Sir Galahad, "My strength is as the strength of ten, Because my heart is pure."

7. BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO RECONCILE.

Matthew 5:9, "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." This phrase encompasses the great commission! II Corinthians 5:20 says, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." The peacemaker is one that not only makes peace with his fellowman, but serves as an ambassador for Christ in the matter of soul winning (Proverbs 11:30).

8. BLESSED ARE THE REPROACHED.

Matthew 5:10-12, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in

heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.” It is this extreme adherence to this principle that changed the world. The blood of the martyrs became the seed of the church. Psalm 69:9; Hebrews 11:26; Hebrews 13:13; Luke 6:22; I Peter 3:14.

Conclusion: Have you noticed in all of the beatitudes, the response that Jesus commands is opposite to the natural human response? “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:9). Our goal should be to line up our thoughts with God’s thoughts, our heart with His heart; our plans with His.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.