

Matthew 5: 1-11 (ESV) – The Beatitudes

Main point: When we are empty and longing for God, he is with us and fills us.

Open with a short prayer, inviting God to teach us.

Background: This is probably Jesus' most famous sermon or teaching, something many of us may know quite well from Sunday School lessons. We'll just look at the first 9 verses, commonly called the Beatitudes, because they all start with "blessed are..."

Focus of the study:

Seeing the crowds, [Jesus] went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him.

² And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

³ "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴ "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

⁵ "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

⁶ "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

⁷ "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

⁸ "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

⁹ "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.

Questions:

1. *Where is Jesus while he's giving this teaching?*

a. v. 1: "up on the mountain" – *Why?*

i. likely so that the entire crowd could hear him. No microphones or speakers in those days! Had to project the voice, "opened his mouth," which could mean shouting or speaking loudly. *Why?* He wants people to hear this!

2. *Who is with him?*

a. crowds and disciples

3. *How does he start?*

a. v. 3: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

b. First, since it gets repeated a lot in the Beatitudes, let's think about what *blessed* means. *I wonder what "blessed" means to you?* Happy, content, at peace

c. *Then, I wonder what "poor in spirit" means? What does it mean to be poor in general?*

i. You lack something; you're in need; you don't have anything at all, empty; you're a pauper, weak

ii. So what might it mean to be poor in spirit? your spirit needs something, is empty, tired, weak

d. *Why does Jesus say those with downtrodden, empty, poor spirits are "blessed"?*

i. Theirs is the kingdom of heaven – I wonder what *that* means?

1. *If you own a kingdom, what is that like? Are you poor?* No! You have everything that is in that kingdom.
2. *What do you think is in God's kingdom, the kingdom of heaven?* [peace, joy, light ...] Even more important, *who* do you think is in the kingdom of heaven? Whose kingdom is it? God's!
- e. *So if your heart is needy, poor, empty, who is with you?* GOD.
 - i. What's it like when you *know* God is with you? blessed!
4. *What does Jesus say next?*
 - a. v. 4: "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."
 - b. *What does it mean to mourn?*
 - i. You've lost something or someone; grieving; sad, despondent, overwhelmed; mourning our own failures and weakness
 - ii. *Who would this apply to?* Has anyone here in this group ever mourned or felt sad? [of course, everyone]
 - iii. *What do you need when you mourn? What helps you in your sadness?*
 1. Knowing you're not alone; comfort, understanding, peace, reassurance
 - c. *When you are mourning, is your spirit feeling strong and full or weak and empty?* – you are, again, "poor in spirit"
 - i. And if that's the case, *who is with you?* God! And what does Jesus say will happen? "they shall be comforted."
 - ii. *How does and has God comforted you in your life?* [stories]

[could stop here]

5. Next, v. 5: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."
 - a. *What does it mean to be meek?*
 - i. Humble, lowly, not powerful, gentle, unassuming, waiting, patient, *trusting* that God will work for you, knowing you can't "do it all"
 - ii. "We roll onto him our anxieties, or frustrations, our plans, our relationships, our jobs, our health. And then we wait patiently for the Lord. We trust his timing and his power and his grace to work things out in the best way for his glory and for our good."¹
 - b. *What does Jesus say happens to the meek?* "They shall inherit the earth."
 - i. What is in/on/part of the earth? Everything!
 - ii. Who created it? God
 - iii. Whose children are we? God's!
 - iv. So what do we, as children, inherit from our Father? All good things: "He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not freely give us all things with him?" (Romans 8:32)

¹ Pastor John Piper: <http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/blessed-are-the-meek>

6. So there are similarities in these first 3 beatitudes – a sense of emptiness and even grief. Then Jesus moves to v. 6: Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.
 - a. *What does it feel like when you're hungry or thirsty?*
 - i. you've got to have food or drink NOW. You want and need it to live.
Longing, waiting, restless – the summary of feeling:
 1. poor in spirit
 2. mourning
 3. meek
 - b. *What does righteousness mean? What does Jesus and the rest of the Beatitudes tell us about righteousness?*
 - i. love your enemies and pray for them – v. 7, be a peacemaker; v. 9, show mercy
 - ii. keep your lives free from impurity – v. 8, be pure in heart
 - iii. "Righteousness is showing mercy to other people; and righteousness is being pure in heart before God who alone can see the heart; and righteousness is the effort to make peace."²
 - iv. Eat and drink (*do*) these acts of righteousness, and your spirit will be blessed
7. Ask for prayer requests for today.
8. Close in prayer, naming people and needs listed.
9. End with a song, e.g., first verse of Amazing Grace

² Pastor John Piper: <http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/blessed-are-those-who-hunger-and-thirst-for-righteousness>