

Matthew 5: 1-9 (ESV) – The Beatitudes, part 1

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



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

Background: This is the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, probably Jesus' most famous teaching, something many of us may know quite well from Sunday School lessons.

[Read, or have an elder read, the entire section, verses 1-9]

Today we'll just look at the first sentence Jesus says to start the entire sermon (verse 3). It's the first of the list of Beatitudes (verses 1-9), which all start with "blessed are..."

Focus of the study:

Matthew 4:23 – 5:9

²³ And Jesus went throughout all Galilee, teaching in the synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. ²⁴ So Jesus' fame spread throughout all Syria, and people brought to Jesus all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, those having seizures, and paralytics, and Jesus healed them. ²⁵ And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.

¹ Seeing the crowds, Jesus went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him.

² And Jesus 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:

- We start with some background that sets the scene. [Read Matt. 4:23-25 only.] What has Jesus been doing with his time? Verse 23:*
 - Teaching in the synagogues (temples)
 - Proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom
 - Healing every disease and every affliction among the people
 - Which diseases has Jesus been healing? Every one of them; the writer details: "various diseases and pains, oppression by demons, seizures, paralytics"*
- What kind of an effect do you think Jesus' healings are having on the crowds of people? What would you think if you saw Jesus doing these things, or even experienced a healing yourself?*
 - v. 24: Jesus' fame spreads
 - And people start bringing even more people to him to get better.
- And what happens to those people?*
 - Jesus heals them too.

4. *So what's the picture here, according to verse 25? Who is around Jesus, and why?*
 - a) "Great crowds" following him, because Jesus is healing and teaching about God. He is now famous, understandably!
5. *So that is the scene when Jesus starts the Sermon on the Mount. What does Matt. 5:1 say?*
 - a) "Seeing the crowds," Jesus decides to teach them.
6. *And here is how Jesus starts his teaching: [Read Matt. 5:2-9]*
7. *Where is Jesus while he's giving this teaching?*
 - a) v. 1: "up on the mountain" – *Why do you think Jesus would head up a hill to start speaking?*
 - i. Likely so that the entire crowd could hear him. No microphones or speakers in those days!
 - ii. Had to project his voice, "opened his mouth," which could mean shouting or speaking loudly.
8. *Why do you think Jesus bothered to go up and speak loudly?*
 - a) Jesus really wants people to hear what he's going to say!
9. *Who is with Jesus as he starts to speak?*
 - a) Disciples – his followers (crowds included)
10. *How does Jesus start his teaching?*
 - a) v. 3: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. *Since it gets repeated a lot in this section, let's think about what blessed means. I wonder what "blessed" means to you? What's the feeling you have when you feel blessed?*
 - i. Happy, content, at peace
11. *So I wonder what "poor in spirit" means? What does it mean to be poor in general?*
 - a) You lack something; you're in need; you don't have anything at all, empty
 - b) You're a pauper, weak, powerless
12. *So what might it mean to be poor in spirit? How do you think your spirit would feel if it's feeling poor?*
 - a) Your spirit needs something; you feel empty, tired, weak inside
13. *I wonder why Jesus says that those with downtrodden, poor spirits are "blessed"? A poor heart doesn't really feel happy in the moment, right?*
 - a) **BUT:** *What does Jesus say that the poor in spirit receive?*
 - i. "Theirs is the kingdom of heaven" –*If you own a kingdom, what is that like? Are you poor?*
 - ii. No! You have everything that is in that kingdom. Richly abundant!
14. *What do you think is in God's kingdom, the kingdom of heaven? Let's dream a little ...*
 - a) Peace, joy, light—in fact, EVERY good thing
 - b) *Even more important, who do you think is in the kingdom of heaven? Who is the King of the kingdom of heaven?*
 - i. God!
15. *So if your heart is needy, poor, empty, who is with you? GOD.*
16. *What does it feel like when you know God is with you? Blessed!*

We can be sure that even when we are feeling low, we are actually very close to God. When we know that we cannot provide for ourselves, we look to God to provide for us—and we are close to God, and God is close to us, in those times.

We will continue this passage next time!

- Ask for any other prayer requests for today.
- Close in prayer, naming people and needs listed.
- End with a song, e.g., first verse of Amazing Grace

Matthew 4:23 – 5:9

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