



Daily Verse and Comment

Matthew 5:3-12

(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 after righteousness, for they shall be filled. (7) Blessed *are* the merciful, for they shall find mercy. (8) Blessed *are* the pure in heart, for they shall see God. (9) Blessed *are* the peacemakers, for they shall be called *the* sons of God. (10) Blessed *are* those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (11) Blessed are you when they shall reproach you, and shall persecute you, and shall falsely say every wicked thing against you, for My sake. (12) Rejoice and be filled with joy, for great *is* your reward in heaven; for in this same manner they persecuted the prophets who *were* before you.

A Faithful Version

During His earthly lifetime, [Jesus](#) demonstrated these qualities in His own person, and He expects us to do likewise. It is interesting and noteworthy that [God](#) places the Sermon on the Mount near the beginning of the very first book in the New Testament, immediately after Jesus begins to preach [the gospel](#) of the [Kingdom of God](#). Also of note is that it follows His call for [repentance](#) - for deep, heartfelt, sincere, and radical change in a person's thinking and way of life. This change is what causes conversion to God's way. Then the [Beatitudes](#) appear as the preamble to the best-known sermon ever preached, teaching intended for those who have repented and are being converted.

We must not be deceived into thinking Jesus intended the Beatitudes for eight separate groups of disciples, some of whom are [meek](#), while others seek righteousness, and yet others endure persecution. Far from it! These are eight distinct qualities of the same group, all of whom are to be [poor in spirit](#),

[merciful](#), [mourning](#), making [peace](#), etc. Nor should we pass them off as intended only for an elitist group singled out from among the disciples, thus forming a kind of spiritual aristocracy. They are Christ's specifications of what every disciple ought to be. All of these qualities should characterize each of His followers.

Just as surely as every Christian character should produce all nine segments of the [fruit of the Spirit](#), so Christ's eight Beatitudes describe His ideal for every citizen of God's Kingdom. Unlike the gifts of the Spirit, which He distributes as He wills to different members of His body to equip them for different kinds of service, the Beatitudes are qualities each Christian needs. We cannot escape our responsibility to seek them all.

Each beatitude pronounces the person who possesses that quality as "blessed." We need to understand this word because, as some have rightly noted, the Greek word used by Matthew, *makarios*, can also be translated as "happy." Happy, however, is not the correct translation in this context. Happiness is *subjective*; the same things do not always make everybody happy. And we can certainly rule out mourning as a producer of happiness. Instead, Jesus makes *objective* judgments about the state of the citizens of God's Kingdom. He declares, not what they feel like, but what God thinks of them. People with these qualities gain His approval. Because God thinks well of them, they are "blessed." God's blessing is far broader and exceedingly more important than merely being "happy."

The second half of each beatitude reveals what the blessing is. Just as surely as all eight of the qualities should be part of each Christian, so each should share in the eight blessings. As the eight qualities provide broad overviews of our responsibilities, the eight blessings give us insight into the broad privileges that come to us because we are meeting our responsibilities and God is pleased.

Are the promised blessings intended for the future or now? The answer is both. God does not expect a Christian to have to wait until the future becomes the present to be blessed. Although we must endure heavy trials and pressures from time to time, is it not possible to be blessed with contentment and a sense of well-being - rather than a troubled spirit and debilitating anxiety - while patiently going through them?

Is not the Kingdom of God a present reality that we can, as Paul says in [Colossians 1:13](#), be "translated into" in the here and now? Can we not obtain mercy and be comforted now? Can we not become children of God now, and in this life have our hunger satisfied and thirst quenched? The reality is that all eight blessings have both a present and future fulfillment. We enjoy the [firstfruits](#) now, yet the full harvest is yet to come. As R.G.V. Tasker, professor of New Testament exegesis at the University of London, writes, "The future tense . . . emphasizes their certainty and not merely their futurity. The mourners will *indeed* be comforted, etc." (*The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, p. 61). We receive some of the blessing now but much more later.

John Donne, author of the poem used in the song, "No Man Is an Island," says of the Sermon on the Mount: "All the articles of our religion, all the canons of our church, all the injunctions of our princes, all the homilies of our fathers, all the body of divinity, is in these three chapters, in this one Sermon on the Mount." No doubt he employs a measure of hyperbole here, but it indicates the esteem that those who search deeply into this message hold for it. The Beatitudes are this profound message's introduction, paving the way for us to receive the rest. They are like a verbal bomb blast that forcefully gathers our attention by establishing standards of responsibilities of great height and depth.

Attempts to classify them into groups have met with some success, but John Chrysostom (AD 347-407) described them simply, "as a sort of golden chain." Like the Ten Commandments, each stands alone, but at the same time it is firmly linked to all the others, making a complete set of qualities each child of God must have to be in His Kingdom. One commentator sees the first three beatitudes as having overlapping qualities and combines them in one link, the following four in a second link, and the eighth as a final link in a three-link chain. The simplest grouping is probably the best, however. The first four, dealing specifically with one's relationship with God, sets the stage for the final four, which have more to do with one's relations to man.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:

[The Beatitudes, Part Two: Poor in Spirit](#)

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