

## Children Of The Light

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Today we are going to be looking into the Sermon on the Mount a little bit. In chapters 5 to 7, Matthew gives us what is commonly called the Sermon on the Mount. And beginning in chapter 5, verses 3 through 9, we are given a picture or description of the seven character traits of the children of light, from their character, and then they go into what the rewards are.

Now, I say seven character traits because that is the way I see it. Some people say eight; they include a couple more, but I think you will see that that is really not the case.

This section is referred to as the Beatitudes. Now, if you turn that around, it really means attitudes to be. So the word beatitude actually comes from the Latin word *beatitudo*, meaning blessedness.

You can begin by turning to Matthew the fourth chapter. I want to kind of get a running start here leading up to what Jesus was saying. So in Matthew, we will check the last three verses out, where it says,

**Matthew 4:23-25** (AFV) And Jesus went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every bodily ailment among the people. Then His fame went out to all Syria; and they brought Him all who were sick, oppressed by various diseases and torments, and possessed by demons, lunatics, and paralytics; and He healed them. And great multitudes followed Him from Galilee, Decapolis, Jerusalem, and all Judea and beyond the Jordan.

Now, if you look at Luke's version in chapter 6 of Luke, he also adds Tyre and Sidon as a couple of other places, so I guess that is part of Judea. But anyway, so it was a lot of people coming from a lot of areas following Jesus.

Let us go ahead and turn over to chapter 5, and we will start there in verse 1.

**Matthew 5:1** (AFV) Seeing the multitudes, He went up into the mountain; and when He sat down, His disciples came to Him.

What we need to understand here, again, if you go back to Luke's version, you will see that He had already called the Twelve; He had already chosen the Twelve and named them apostles. But there were other disciples, I believe, as well, as we will see, and He opened His mouth and He taught them.

Now, I would like to write here a quote from John Ritenbaugh's sermon on the Beatitudes, Part One, the Sermon on the Mount. This was a series of sermons that he gave on this back in January of 1999. That is right at almost 27 years now. And so if you had not ever listened to them, this might be a good time to go back before Passover and go through all of them because he gets way deeper than what I can get in this little 35-minute talk.

So, anyway, I am quoting from what he said. I just wanted to open up with this:

Virtually every picture of this sermon, whether in a movie or painting, portrays Jesus speaking to a large multitude. Some reason exists to assume this because Matthew 4 ends [as we just read] with great multitude following Him. [He goes on to say] However, in this case, the stronger evidence lies with the understanding that it was a sermon intended for His disciples. [And again, I do not think it was just the Twelve, though he mentions that] Though others besides the twelve have been listening. Jesus did not speak to a great multitude here.

So, with that said, let us go ahead and start back in Matthew 5, in the second verse. I guess you are still there.

**Matthew 5:3** (AFV) And He opened His mouth and He taught them [His disciples], saying, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Let us look at this word blessed right here for a minute. According to *Mounce's Concise Greek-English Dictionary*, blessed is defined as happy, and a lot of times you will see some translations that translate it happy, and most of them will translate it as blessed, but it goes a little deeper than that. It goes on to say, "As a noun it can depict someone who receives divine favor, someone who is approved by God." I think this is more what we are speaking about when He talks about blessed, and certainly if you have God's divine favor and you are approved by God, I would think that that would be a good reason to be happy. Do you not feel blessed?

But when we look at this, the poor in spirit, it is not really that hard to understand. Poor in spirit is referring to an attitude of mind. It is the way you respond to people; the way we respond to people is what He is talking about. It describes an honest humility in a person, and it is reflected in how we treat others, or other people, or each other.

Now, "blessed are the poor in spirit" are those who exhibit an attitude of humility, and it shows in the way, again, that we treat each other or treat other people. And I believe that is very important. So this character trait is opposed to the proud and haughty, and we might even add, arrogant. Solomon said that in Proverbs 18:12; you can just reference this: "Before destruction, the heart of man is haughty [or proud], and before honor is humility."

And once again in I Peter 5, verse 5, if you want to flip over there, hold your finger in chapter 5 of Matthew. Here we will get his take on this. Cutting into what he is talking about here, he says,

**I Peter 5:5** (AFV) In the same manner, you younger men be subject to the older men; and all of you be subject to one another, being clothed with humility because God sets Himself against the proud [and haughty, we could add], but He gives grace to the humble.

Without a humble spirit, we would never truly repent. So humbleness of spirit, or poor in spirit, precedes grace and inheritance into the Kingdom of God because He goes on to say, blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven, as Matthew puts it.

Let us move on. Let us look at the next one:

**Matthew 5:4** "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

So Jesus says, blessed are those that recognize their spiritual poverty. Blessed are those that mourn that condition. When you begin to mourn your spiritual condition, this will change the way that you view those around you and the way you view yourself. I do not think He is talking so much about mourning the loss of a loved one. Even the wicked mourn the loss of their loved ones.

And I say this because of the context in which He is speaking. Remember, these are character traits of a true Christian, of firstfruits, and which I refer to as the children of the light.

In Ezekiel 9, we will see this; we will see this kind of gives a little bit of a picture of what we are talking about here, about mourning, to prove what I just said.

**Ezekiel 9:1-2** (AFV) And He cried in my ears with a loud voice, saying, "Let the executioners of the city draw near, even each with his destroying weapon in his hand." And behold, six men came from the way of the Upper Gate which faces north, and each had a slaughter weapon in his hand. And one man among them was clothed in linen.

I do not know, maybe the other ones were not holy angels or angels of God. I mean, they may have been evil angels that are doing the slaughtering. I do not know. It just seems that way. I thought it was kind of odd that just one of them they mentioned with linen clothing.

**Ezekiel 9:2-4** He had a writer's inkhorn by his side. And they went in and stood beside the bronze altar. And the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherubim, where it had been, to the threshold of the temple. And He called to the man clothed in linen, with the writer's inkhorn by his side. And the Lord said to him, "Go

through the midst of the city, in the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark on the foreheads of the men who are groaning and are mourning because of all the abominations that are done in her midst."

If you go back to chapter 8, you will see that He was showing Ezekiel, He took him in a vision, and He took him to Jerusalem, and He was showing him all the sins and the wickedness that was going on in the city. So that is what He was talking about here, and the ones that were marked were the ones that were mourning all the sinful acts, all the evil that was going on in the city.

Now this mourning is not just for the suffering or pain or sadness of life before the sinfulness that actually causes it. So the blessing is not upon all who mourn, but those who mourn actually regarding sin.

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

You know, I always like to look at the meaning of words, and meek here means mild, gentleness of mind, and we may even add kindness. It relates closely to the poor in spirit. See, the person who is humble, who is meek, who is mild, who is gentle, will treat people with kindness. It is also part of the fruits of the Spirit. We are very familiar with that. It says,

**Galatians 5:22-23** (AFV) The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

In Psalm 37, the psalmist says, "But the meek shall inherit the earth and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." So we see that is the reward of the meek. The meek, it says they are going to inherit the earth.

Now, if you go back to Revelation, you will see those in the first resurrection, which these attributes are actually spelling out, really, those that are going to be in the first resurrection, by the way, these seven attributes that we are looking at, because it is the same attitudes and attributes that Jesus Christ had when He walked on this earth. But if you go back there and

see (and I think it is Revelation 19), it says those in the first resurrection will rule with Jesus Christ, right? And where will they be ruling from? We will be on the earth because we are going to be coming back down to Jerusalem.

The next one we will look at is in verse 6, where it says,

**Matthew 5:6** "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

Again, here the word for righteousness probably has two meanings. I know a lot of people like to focus on the hunger and thirsting. Let us focus on the word righteousness for a minute because I think it kind of shows us two meanings here, probably. One would certainly be, of course, personal. It is the strong desire to be pleasing to God, to do what God wants, to live up to His will, keeping His commandments and having that strong desire to want to obey Him and avoid sin, and showing our love for keeping His commandments. And that is what Jesus said: "If you love Me, keep My commandments," and all His commandments are righteousness.

But out of this also will grow the desire for righteousness in the land, on the earth. You see, because we are talking about the desire for justice, for righteousness to rule in this world because it is such an evil world and it is getting darker and darker with every passing week; it seems like every passing day, really. And Jesus Christ is coming back to straighten all this out. But first our hunger and thirsting is for His Kingdom. You see, do we hunger and thirst? That is the question we need to ask ourselves.

Do we hunger and thirst for the Kingdom of God to come? Remember, as part of our outline of our prayer, Jesus said, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." How bad do we want that to come? And I think our hungering and thirsting should be toward that, when our Lord, He is going to be putting an end to sin. He is going to be putting an end to transgressions, which is rebellion. And He is going to make an end to sin, which is iniquity. And what is He going to do? He is going to usher in everlasting righteousness.

What a wonderful, wonderful world that will be to live in, in a land where righteousness rules!

Let us look at the fifth character attribute here, or attitude, if you want to call it that. But I call it character traits is what I should say.

**Matthew 5:7** "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

Once again, I look at this as how we treat other people. It has to do with how we treat each other and how we treat other people. You see, a merciful person is actually someone you like to be with. You like to be around them. You do not have to worry about them judging you so harshly, do you, because they are merciful people. They have compassion about them. So you really like to be with them. You actually like to see them coming. Those are the ones you want to make your friends, right? You want to be close to.

So the word most often translated mercy in the King James Version, it actually conveys strong feelings of pity, sympathy, compassion, and affection. And the Old Testament word is sometimes translated as lovingkindness, and that word, I believe, is *hesed*, which is, according to the Hebrew scholars, most likely the word that would be closest to the equivalent of the Greek word *agape*. So it is translated lovingkindness in the King James, and sometimes it is actually translated as mercy. And that describes one important aspect of mercy. When God looks on suffering people, people that are hurting, He feels compassionate toward them in their needs.

Remember, compassion always precedes mercy because compassion is more of the emotional part of it, you know; you have this feeling, it is emotion, that you have pity for something or you feel sympathy or compassion towards somebody or affection, and that precedes mercy. And mercy is the action. It is what you follow through with and do to try to help in whatever way you can.

Later on in the Sermon on the Mount, in verse 48, chapter 5, Jesus said,

**Matthew 5:48** "Therefore be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect."

We are commanded then here by Jesus; that is like a command to be perfect even as God is perfect. Is not one of our doctrines moving on to perfection? But in Luke's version of the same thing in chapter 6, verse 36, Luke translates it this way. He says,

**Luke 6:36** "Therefore be merciful, even as your Father is merciful."

So the command to be perfect seems to me like it means to be merciful. If you want to be perfect, you certainly got to have compassion and mercy, do you not? Anyway, that is the way I see it; that is, we are perfect in God's eyes when we are compassionate and merciful to others.

Now, I want to quote here from Chaim Bentorah's Hebrew word study. He was going through some things; I will not get into all that, but he was talking about numbers, and he was trying to explain what numbers represented, certain numbers. And this was very interesting to me because the number five, which represents, he says, grace and mercy, well, which character trait is this one we are talking about? Mercy. It is the fifth one. That was pretty interesting to me that Jesus used that one as the fifth one. If he is correct, then the number five really represents that. So anyway, I thought it was very interesting.

The sixth character trait is in verse 8, where it says,

**Matthew 5:8** Blessed are those with divine favor or those who have been approved by God, the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

I think what most uniquely characterized Jesus was His servanthood. You see, in Matthew 10, verse 45, He says,

**Mark 10:45** (AFV) "For even the Son of Man [Jesus said this] did not come to be served, but to serve, and He to give His life as a ransom for many."

Now come with me over to Philippians the second chapter. Let us take a look at this over here. We will begin in verse 3, where it reads,

**Philippians 2:3-8** (AFV) Let nothing be done through contention or vainglory, but in humility, each esteeming others above himself. Let each one look not only after his own things, but let each one also consider the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; who, although He existed in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but emptied Himself and was made in the likeness of men, and took on the form of a servant; and being found in the manner of man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

So you see, these character traits that we are looking at here is the very holy and righteous nature of Jesus Christ. It is what God is creating in us, right? We are being created in His likeness. Mr. Armstrong used to always say that God is building holy and righteous character in us.

Let us look at something else here in I John; see what John had to say about it.

**I John 3:1-3** (AFV) Behold! What glorious love the Father has given to us, that we should be called the children of God! For this very reason, the world does not know us because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are the children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be; but we know that when He is manifested, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him exactly as He is. And everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, even as He is pure.

So again, as we look through these things, we have to understand it has to do with how we treat others, how we treat each other, how we treat other people.

We have one more attribute, right? Number seven, where it says in verse 9,

**Matthew 5:9** "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God."

Now, I do not think that this is not so much a matter of trying to get in between two friends who are at odds with each other, have issues with one another, and you are trying to step in to make peace, because sometimes that really does not work. Because if you step in between two of your friends and they are having issues with each other and you are trying to make peace and you tend to agree more with this one than the other one, well, you know what? You just caused another problem that just probably made it worse.

So you have to be careful about how we do that and how we go about things like that. You do not want to be taking sides with two friends, you know, because the other one is going to probably be hurt, and then you would be at odds with him too.

But I do not think that is not what this is about. If you can make peace with people with whom you are at odds with or you have an issue with, you see, you are the peacemaker because that is your character, right? That is part of the character trait that we are talking about. A peacemaker is one that will not allow things to not be peaceful with him and other people. Even Paul said that, did he not? Try to make peace, be at peace with all men if possible. Anyway, so that makes you the peacemaker when you can make peace with people whom you have issues with or at odds with, I should say. And that is what it means.

The place to start making peace is between yourself and those where peace does not exist. It has to do again with attitude. That is what these are: attitudes to be, so how you conduct yourself toward other people and toward each other. And we are talking here again about that holy and righteous character. We are talking here about the very character, again, that Jesus Christ possessed when He walked on this earth.

These are the seven character traits that we should all be examining ourselves with. And one thing to remember: This is not a multiple choice. There are seven character traits, and they make up one individual. They have to all go together. There is not a multiple choice here, you cannot just be the one: "Well, I want the Kingdom of God to come," but you ain't none of the other ones. That ain't going to cut it.

So these are seven, and the reason they are seven is because seven represents completion, and what else? Perfection.

In verse 10, now we see what comes from having this character. These character traits will be what we will see in verses 10, 11, 12:

**Matthew 5:10** (AFV) "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Again, those that possess these character traits are going to be persecuted because, what you are going to see as we go through this, you are going to be a light. You are a light in a dark world. So you are going to stick out like a light bulb does in a dark room when you flip the switch on, right?

**Matthew 5:11-12** (AFV) "Blessed are you when they shall reproach you, and shall persecute you, and shall falsely say every wicked thing against you, for My name's sake. [For just simply being a Christian, preaching about Jesus Christ.] Rejoice and be filled with joy [when this happens to you], for great is your reward in heaven; for in the same manner they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

If you would turn over with me to John 15, we will begin in verse 18. Jesus was speaking here. He said,

**John 15:18-19** (AFV) "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. However, because you are not of the world, but I have personally chosen you out of the world, the world hates you for this."

That is, you have been divinely called or favored and you have been approved by God because Jesus chose us. You are the chosen; He is talking about these people that possess these character traits are the chosen. And He says, "I've chosen you out of the world, and the world hates you for this."

**John 15:20** (AFV) "Remember the word that I spoke to you: a servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you also. If they kept My word, they will keep your word also. But they will do all these things to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me."

Just think about even Charlie Kirk. He was assassinated simply for being professing Christian. He talked about, he tried to do good to people, you know, and this dark world, man, it is getting darker too. And they took his life. So hopefully, he will be rewarded for that someday, I am sure.

Immediately following His statements about the persecution of those who possess these character traits, Jesus goes on to say; there are two more things we will cover here, and that is verses 13 and 14:

**Matthew 5:13** (AFV) "You are the salt of the earth."

**Matthew 5:14** (AFV) "You are the light of the world."

Now, these two comparisons—salt of the earth, light of the world—actually say two different things about us. One, we are like salt that is scattered. You know, when you sprinkle salt all over your food and stuff, it is scattered on your food, right? Or if you took a handful of salt and threw it up in the air and the wind would just blow it, it would go all over the place, right? Because we are not concentrated in one place; we are all scattered all over the world.

And the second one is each of us is like a lamp or a lantern or a candle, depending on what translation you look at, in a very dark place. So He says, You are the salt of the earth, but now He gives us a warning here about something:

**Matthew 5:13** (AFV) "But if the salt has become tasteless, with what shall it be salted? For it is no longer [good for anything], but is to be thrown out and be trampled upon by men."

That is, to me, a warning right here for all of us. There is a risk that we may become good for nothing. And we might ask ourselves, well, how would that happen? Well, I suppose it comes about by our failure to live up to these seven character traits. And then in verse 14 again, He says,

**Matthew 5:14-15** (AFV) "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a mountain cannot be hid. Neither do they light a lamp [or lantern or a candle] and put it under a bushelbasket, but on a lampstand; and it shines for all those who are in the house."

So if you come into a dark house at night and all your lights are off, you flip that little switch and what happens? Boom! light comes on, and you can see; the light overtakes the darkness, but darkness does not overtake the light.

**Matthew 5:16** (AFV) "In the same way also [He says], you are to let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works [bearing fruit, and good works is what it is all about here. It is the same as bearing good works, bearing fruit], and may glorify your Father who is in heaven."

Does it not say that in John 15 bearing much fruit glorifies God the Father?

Let us begin wrapping this up. My time is running out. So turn back with me to Philippians, and we will begin to end here. We will read from chapter 2, beginning in verse 12, where Paul is addressing the Philippians. He says,

**Philippians 2:12** (AFV) So then, my beloved, even as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

Remember what Jesus said: If that salt loses its flavor, you are good for nothing. It is good for nothing. So Paul is saying, basically, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling because you certainly do not want to become tasteless.

**Philippians 2:13** (AFV) For it is God who works in you both to will and to do according to His good pleasure.

You know, God has not called us to lose. He has called us to win. I do not know if y'all remember Ronald Dart, but he had a radio station called "Born to Win," and that is what God does. He calls us to win. We are not losers; we are winners in Him.

**Philippians 2:14-15** (AFV) Do all things without complaints and disputes [Well, that is being a peacemaker, is it not?]; so that you may be blameless and without offense, innocent children of God [or we could even say children of the light] in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.

Brethren, we are the salt of the earth, and we are the light of the world.