

## The Beatitudes

Matthew 3:1-2

Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Matthew 4:17

From that time Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Matthew 4: 23

Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people.

→ **The kingdom of heaven is a very important concept in Matthew and here at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount. What is true about the kingdom of heaven? God is in charge in the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of heaven is based on God's laws, God's priorities, God's values, God's character. The kingdom of heaven is now and in the future. Repentance is important in the kingdom of heaven.**

Matthew 5:1-2

When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. He opened His mouth and *began* to teach them, saying,

Luke 6:12-20

It was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God. And when day came, He called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles . . . Jesus came down with them and stood on a level place; and *there was* a large crowd of His disciples, and a great throng of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon, who had come to hear Him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were being cured. . . And turning His gaze toward His disciples, He *began* to say, "Blessed *are* you *who are* poor, for yours is the kingdom of God."

→ **The Beatitudes were directed specifically toward the disciples at the beginning of their calling as disciples, the crowds were also there listening.**

Matthew 5:3-10

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

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

“Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.

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

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

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

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

**→ The Beatitudes describe what is valued in the kingdom of heaven and the person who is part of that kingdom. The description is focused on the heart. They describe a person who recognizes their own spiritual poverty, who mourns over sin, who is meek and humble, who desires righteousness, who responds to others with humility and mercy. This kind of person is unnatural and in stark contrast to the world.**

**→ Where did Jesus encounter the strongest opposition to His ministry?**

Luke 18:9-14

And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.’ But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, the sinner!’ I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Matthew 5:20

“For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses *that* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.”

Matthew 6:5

“When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.”

Matthew 23:27-28

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness. So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.”

→ **How were the Pharisees opposite of the person described as belonging to the kingdom of heaven?**

→ **How ironic and sad that the Jews, God’s chosen people, who were waiting for their Messiah were so far away from the kingdom of heaven that they wouldn’t even recognize their King when he came and would kill Him.**

→ **Why do you think it was important for the disciples to hear this at the beginning of their calling?**

Matthew 5:10-12

<sup>10</sup> “Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. <sup>11</sup> “Blessed are you when *people* insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

→ **What differences do you see between verse 10 and 11?**

→ **What do these verses say about persecution?**

→ How did Jesus tell them to respond to persecution and why?

→ Jesus is preparing His followers by helping them to understand how His kingdom is diametrically opposed to the world. He draws a dramatic contrast between God's character and that of the Pharisees, between the kingdom of heaven and the religious system the Jewish leaders had set up. Because of this, the followers of Jesus will face opposition, and it will primarily come from the Jewish establishment. The disciples needed to know what it would mean to follow Jesus and count the cost.

Acts 7: 51-54 (Stephen before the Jewish council and High Priest)

"You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did. Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become; you who received the law as ordained by angels, and yet did not keep it. Now when they heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they *began* gnashing their teeth at him."

→ What does this have to do with us? The heart is still important, the kingdom of heaven still has to do with the heart. Humility, mourning over sin, realizing our spiritual bankruptcy, coming as a child to God with nothing to offer of our own are still the heart attitudes God looks for. How can we cultivate this kind of heart? Which of the Beatitudes do you most need to see in your own heart?

→ There will be opposition, God's kingdom is still opposed to the way of this world. What are some of the ways we face persecution in following Jesus? How can we rejoice when we are persecuted?