



DESERT VIEW BIBLE CHURCH

MATTHEW 5:1-12 • 9/18/2022

MAIN POINT

Choose actions and attitudes that are blessed by God.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What was the happiest time in your life?

Happiness is the universal goal of almost everyone's life. If you think about it, every decision we make—from the places we go, the jobs we pursue, the people we befriend, the spouse we marry, the decision to have children—is rooted in the questions, "Will this decision make me happy? Will this choice bring wellbeing to my life?" Our decisions are made in correlation to the amount of happiness that those decisions will bring us. But what if being "happy" isn't the ultimate goal? What if there's something better than literal happiness?

As we'll see in today's Scripture focus, Jesus told His followers what life in His kingdom will be like. Will it be "happy"? Not exactly. It will be something far better.

It will be “blessed.”

WATCH THE SESSION ONE VIDEO FEATURING MICHAEL KELLEY.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

READ MATTHEW 5:1-6.

What is your understanding of what it means to be blessed?

What are the major blessings in your life? List as many blessings as you can think of in a couple of minutes.

The word “blessed” literally meant to be fortunate, happy, or joyful as a result of circumstances, or even more significantly here, as a result of and with emphasis on divine favor.

What does your list of blessings communicate about your life?

This sermon is like a grenade tossed into the bunker of what we think it means to be happy in today’s culture. The poor in spirit are blessed. Those who mourn are blessed. The gentle are blessed. Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness are blessed.

According to Jesus, being blessed is more than just happiness; it goes deeper than ordinary emotion and it's driven by more than mere circumstance. While the people in Jesus' day—like the people in our own day—might have thought blessing came from being healthy, wealthy, and wise, understanding what true blessing means is one of the things that makes Christians distinct. Enduring happiness, or blessedness, comes with a life lived in a way that pleases God.

What does it mean to be “poor in spirit”? Give an example of what it looks like to be poor in spirit.

How does this Scripture passage affirm and encourage those who are disheartened and in mourning?

Who do you know who is gentle? How does he or she inhabit the characteristic of gentleness?

What does it look like to “hunger and thirst” for righteousness?

Our vertical relationship with God impacts our horizontal relationships with others. If we truly experience the blessing of finding God's love and acceptance through Jesus, then that blessing is naturally reflected in our horizontal relationships. In verses 3-6, Jesus described the kind of person who is blessed vertically—in his or her relationship with God. The next attributes, found in verses 7-9, show us what happens in horizontal relationships as a result.

READ MATTHEW 5:7-9.

When do you typically want to seek revenge? When do you find it most challenging to show mercy to another?

What is the difference between someone who maintains a pure lifestyle and one who is “pure in heart”?

When have you felt the cost of choosing to show mercy, be pure, or make peace?

While so many are chasing their own happiness at the expense of others, true blessing is found in giving ourselves for the sake of others.

READ MATTHEW 5:10-12.

What did Jesus mean when He said, “for the kingdom of heaven is theirs”?

What are some ways Christians experience persecution in today’s world, both in the United States and beyond?

This is the first time in these verses that Jesus gave a command. That’s because all of these characteristics are representative of something that’s happened inside us. When we come to Christ, we are fundamentally changed at the deepest level imaginable. We are citizens in a new kingdom, and in that kingdom we have new values and new definitions.

In other words, we are citizens in God’s kingdom, but we still live in this world. So Jesus commanded us in verse 12: “Be glad and rejoice.”

What can you do to remind yourself in a practical way to rejoice in the middle of a difficult, sad, or painful experience?

How do we help one another choose joy when others mistreat us because of our faith?

Tell yourself who's Boss. Jesus is Lord of my life, and He is Lord over all. Because of that truth, we can choose to rejoice and be glad despite the tough stuff of life. We make an active choice to stand against the current of our circumstances and choose joy.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What steps will you take this week to seek out blessing rather than mere happiness?

Choose one relationship this week in which you want to model what it means to be blessed. Serve that person in a tangible way.

Do you struggle with allowing others to bless you? Share with someone you trust about a tough situation you are going through. Ask him or her to help you choose to be glad and rejoice in the middle of that situation.

PRAYER

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you pursue the blessings of His Kingdom over temporary happiness.

COMMENTARY

5:1 Jesus ascended a mountain when He saw the crowds because He deemed the mountainside to be a better setting for teaching a large group. As the new Moses, His delivery of God's message from a mountaintop provides yet another parallel with the ancient Moses. The Greek words translated He went up on the mountain are used three times in the Greek OT (Ex 19:3; 24:18; 34:28), and all three fall in the section describing Moses' ascent of Mount Sinai. This fits with Matthew's repeated theme of drawing out parallels between Moses and Jesus. For instance, Jesus' birth paralleled several events surrounding Moses' birth. Herod attempted to kill the infant Christ by ordering the slaughter of Bethlehem's boys (Mt 2:16-18) much as Pharaoh ordered the execution of newborn male Israelites (Ex 1:15-18,22). Furthermore, the angel's pronouncement that danger had passed ("Those who sought the child's life are dead," Mt 2:20) is a clear echo of Ex 4:19, "All the men who wanted to kill you are dead" (see note at Mt 2:15).

5:3 Since Matthew introduces the Sermon on the Mount by highlighting the connection between Jesus and Moses, the Beatitudes (Mt 5:3-12) should probably be read against the backdrop of Moses' teachings. The only time the adjective "Blessed" (Gk makarios) was used by Moses was in his blessing on Israel (Dt 33:29): "How happy you are, Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the Lord? He is the shield that protects you, the sword you boast in. Your enemies will cringe before you, and you will tread on their backs." Israel's blessing had both a historical and future focus. "Saved by the Lord" referred to Israel's exodus from Egypt. The remainder of the blessing assured the Israelites of success in their conquest of the promised land. Against this backdrop, the blessings of the new Moses identify Jesus' disciples as the new Israel who will enjoy a new exodus and conquest. The new Moses is a spiritual deliverer rather than a political one, and His promises must be understood in that light. In the Beatitudes, the new Moses pronounces spiritual salvation (exodus from slavery to sin) and promises spiritual victory (conquest and inheritance of a new promised land) to the new Israel. This background is confirmed by the allusion to Israel's exodus and conquest in the promise that the meek will "inherit the earth" (5:5).

In the OT, the poor were those who cried out for God's help, depended entirely on Him for their needs, had a humble and contrite spirit, experienced His deliverance,

and enjoyed His undeserved favor (Ps 86:1-5). In light of this background, Jesus was describing His disciples as unworthy sinners who depend on God's grace for salvation. Although the promises in Mt 5:4-9 are expressed in the future tense, the affirmation the kingdom of heaven is theirs is in the present tense (5:3,10). This suggests that the kingdom had already arrived through the coming of Jesus but that the fulfillment of many kingdom promises will occur only in the future. This future fulfillment awaits Christ's second coming. The statement "the kingdom of heaven is theirs" appears at the beginning and end of the main body of the Beatitudes (5:3,10). This bracketing device suggests that the Beatitudes constitute promises only to those who belong to the kingdom. Isaiah 61:1 promised that Messiah would bring good news to the poor. This beatitude serves as a fulfillment of that prophecy (Lk 4:16-21).

5:4 This beatitude is also dependent on Isa 61: "He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted... to comfort all who mourn, to provide for those who mourn in Zion; to give them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, festive oil instead of mourning, and splendid clothes instead of despair" (vv. 1-3). The context of Isa 61 portrays mourning as expressive of Israel's sorrow over the exile which their sins had caused. In this light, Mt 5:4 expresses the grief of those suffering the consequences of sin. Theirs is an attitude of repentance.

5:5 Like the preceding Beatitudes, this one parallels Isa 61. Isaiah 61:7 (LXX) uses the words "they will inherit the land," an exact parallel to Mt 5:5b. The first three Beatitudes thus confirm Jesus' identity as the Servant of Isa 61. This identification is important for understanding the sacrificial nature of Jesus' death since Isa 52:14-53:12 describes the Servant as suffering the punishment that sinners deserved (see Mt 8:17 and 12:17-21 which appeal to Isa 53:4 and 42:1-4). The beatitude also echoes Ps 37:11 in which the gentle are those who stubbornly trust God and surrender to His authority even when they cannot make sense of their circumstances. Inherit the earth (land) in the OT refers to inheriting the promised land of Canaan. Thus most of Jesus' hearers recognized that His disciples were a new Israel that would inherit the land promised to Abraham. In the context of the Sermon on the Mount and the Gospel of Matthew as a whole, "inheriting the earth" involves more than the promise of living in Palestine. It refers to living in a recreated earth over which Christ rules eternally. Matthew 19:28 anticipates the renewal of earth and assures Jesus' disciples that they will enjoy great reward in the eternal kingdom.

5:6 Hunger and thirst are metaphors for a disciple's fervent desire for righteousness. The words they will be filled are in the passive voice, indicating that righteousness is not something that disciples can achieve by their own efforts. The verb here, like those in the promises of Mt 5:4,6-7 (and possibly 9), is a "divine passive" that describes an act of God. He alone imparts the righteousness for which disciples hunger and thirst. This is crucial to understanding the theology of the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus required His disciples to keep the least of the commandments (5:19), surpass the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees (5:20), and to "be perfect... as your heavenly Father is perfect" (5:48). Such demands can be twisted into a false theology in which righteousness is achieved by works, but the righteousness Jesus demands of us is actually a divine gift given to His followers.

5:7 The merciful are those who relate to others with a forgiving and compassionate spirit (6:2-4; 18:21-35). God will show mercy to the merciful.

5:8 The words pure in heart refer to someone who is authentically righteous in their inner person. Righteousness can be faked, as was the case with the Pharisees (23:25-28). Jesus said true purity is attained when God grants it to the person who hungers and thirsts for it. Complete fulfillment of this divine promise will occur at Jesus' return, but the identification of His disciples as those who are pure shows that dramatic transformation occurs even in this lifetime. The promise that Jesus' disciples will see God looks forward to the time when they will literally behold God in all His glory. The words are not to be interpreted figuratively as if they refer merely to special insight into God's nature or to a visionary experience. The new Moses promises His followers access to God that not even the ancient Moses was allowed to experience (Ex 33:12-23).

5:9 The ministry of peacemaking involves resolving conflict by making prompt apologies and acts of restitution, refusing to seek revenge, and humbly serving and loving one's enemies (5:21-26,38-41,43-48). The promise that peacemakers... will be called sons of God probably means that Jesus' authentic disciples emulate God by undertaking the ministry of reconciliation. Thus at the final judgment they shall be accepted as the sons (and daughters) of God.

5:10 The purest form of righteousness is pursued by disciples who know that their good deeds will demand great sacrifice and will result in pain rather than immediate reward. This is the epitome of the kingdom righteousness demanded by the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus pronounced that the kingdom of heaven belongs to those who

suffer for righteousness. In the Greek text, theirs is shifted from its normal position at the end of the clause to the beginning instead. This gives the pronoun a special emphasis indicating that the kingdom belongs to righteous sufferers and to them alone. Those who always endeavor to evade persecution are not true disciples and will not have a share in the kingdom because true disciples follow Jesus even at the cost of their lives (16:24-27). The kingdom of heaven is the reign of God in the person of Jesus the Messiah. Righteous sufferers are subjects of God's rule through their submission to Jesus' authority. Jesus inaugurated this kingdom during His ministry, but it will be consummated in the end times.

5:11-12 Jesus' words show that persecution is typically either verbal or violent. Verbal forms include insult and slander. The word persecute includes acts of physical violence like the slap of Mt 5:39. Jesus promised that the cost of discipleship will be offset by the enormity of the reward the disciple enjoys in heaven. Jewish leaders rejected and vehemently persecuted the OT prophets, and Jesus repeatedly denounced this persecution (21:34-36; 23:29-37). By treating Jesus' followers in the same way they had treated the prophets, Jewish persecutors unwittingly bestowed on them a prophet's honor.