

5. How to be a happy person

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We may be able to come up with many profound Bible teachers and preachers in yesteryear and now, but if we were asked to name and tell them about one particular profound sermon in our lives, many would have a hard time remembering. But being the greatest communicator of the universe, Jesus just had done that. It is the Sermon on the Mount.

The sermon on the Mount lasts three chapters, I believe that it is one of the most meaty areas of Jesus' teachings. He connects what the Law of Moses said and His practical teachings for our lives. As we will find out in next few weeks, there are so much to learn from the lips of our Savior.

The sermon on the Mount by Jesus is known as "Beatitudes" which means "A state of utmost happiness." The word beatitude is not found in our Bible. It simply means blessing and comes from the Latin word for "blessed." What is it so happy and blessed about? If we do what the Lord Jesus tells us to do, we would be happy and blessed in our lives, because our lives would be filled with the joy that only comes from Him.

The first sixteen verses of Matthew 5 describe how to be the true Christian and deal with character. The rest of the Sermon on the Mount deals with conduct that grows out of character. Character always comes before conduct, because what we are determines what we do.

In Matt. 5:1–16, Jesus shows us that true righteousness is inward, and in 5:17–48, He points out that sin is also inward. Thus, He exposed the false righteousness of the Pharisees, who taught that holiness consisted in religious actions, and that sin was what you did outwardly. How many people make these same mistakes today! God looks upon the heart, not our religious activities.

Note that the Sermon on the Mount deals with attitudes—what we think in our hearts, our outlook on life. "Beatitudes"—the attitudes that ought to be in our lives if we are true Christians.

A. THE POOR IN SPIRIT

Matthew 5:1-2 And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:

In the Israel teachers' customary posture, Jesus sat down and the disciples stood and listened His teaching.

Matthew 5:3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed" Greek word is "makarios" which means happy. I wonder if we got the word "Macarena" from this Hebrew word.

Why would they be so happy when they are poor in spirit? Again, we must look the Greek to understand this particular word "poor." It is "ptochos" which mean "in needy, be humble." It is hard to get the right meaning in English, if we translate it directly. What Jesus meant is that the happy one is humbled and completely depend

on the Spirit of God, because theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

We must be empty before we can be full. The opposite of this is self-sufficiency. Our sufficiency is not of ourselves. The world promotes self-sufficiency, yet God dwells with the person whose heart is broken with a contrite spirit (Ps 34:18).

2 Corinthians 3:5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God,

B. WHOSE WHO MOURN

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

Our attitude toward sin should be a true sorrow for sin. As brand new born-again believers, when we sinned against God, our hearts were tender, we got convicted, our hearts were broken. But if we continue in our sins, our hearts become callous that we no longer feel the conviction from the Spirit of God. That is bad, real bad. We must take it as an extreme warning sign.

But if we confess our sins to our faithful God, He forgives us our sins and cleans us from all unrighteousness. We need to see our sins as God sees them.

C. THE MEEK

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

This should be our attitude toward others. The word "Meek" comes from the root word of a wild stallion becomes a trained and tamed horse. It has not lost its strength, but under control.

The meek are those wholly relying on God rather than their own strength to defend them against injustice.

Meek doesn't mean weak. It is not wimpy, wimpy, wimpy but hefty, hefty, hefty strength under control.

D. WHO HUNGER AND THIRST FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

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

Here our attitude toward God is expressed.

We must realize that our righteousness is as filthy rags because we must see ourselves as God sees us prior to forgiveness from Him. We must realize that in us, that is, in our flesh, there dwells no good thing. We must realize that in our flesh we cannot please God. We receive His righteousness by faith because we ask for it. Only God can fill our deepest longing and only He can answer our hearts' deepest cry.

A true Christian has an appetite for spiritual things. When we ask people what they desire and we will know what they are like.

E. THE MERCIFUL

Because of the result of the poor in spirit, mourning, meek and hunger and thirst for righteousness, we can have the next four things. The rest of the Beatitudes show the results of the new life in the believer.

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

This is not legalism, but merely the working of the biblical principle of sowing and reaping. If we show mercy, because Christ has been merciful to us, then mercy will come back to us. We do not earn mercy, but we must have hearts prepared to receive it.

James 2:13 For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

F. THE PURE IN HEART

Matthew 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Not sinlessness, but the truth within. It means a single heart, not divided between God and the world.

In this, the pure of heart receive the most wonderful reward. They shall enjoy greater intimacy with God than they could have imagined. Ultimately, this intimate relationship with God must become our greatest motivation for purity, greater than a fear of getting caught or a fear of consequences.

G. THE PEACEMAKERS

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

This does not describe those who live in peace, but those who actually bring about peace, overcoming evil with good.

Romans 12:18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

One way we accomplish this is through spreading the Gospel, because God has entrusted to us the ministry of reconciliation.

The reward of peacemakers is that they are recognized as true children of God. They share His passion for peace and reconciliation, the breaking down of walls between people.

H. THOSE WHO ARE PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS' SAKE

Matthew 5:10-12 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

We should never be guilty of deliberately asking for persecution. Some Christians think that sticking their spiritual long index fingers to unbelievers and condemning their sin are good godly things to do. They are obnoxious and not loving. The unbelievers might be lost, but they are not dumb. They can see clearly whether we care about them or not. There is a tremendous difference between being persecuted falsely for Christ's sake and getting yelled at because some Christians are obnoxious for no reason other than being weird.

If we live godly lives, suffering will come! However note the rewards: we are in the same company as Christ and the prophets, and we shall be rewarded in heaven.

2 Timothy 3:12 Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

I. SPRINKLE AND SHINE

Matthew 5:13-16 "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

Jesus speaks of that influence that we are to have in the world in which we live. In those days, salt was used as a preservative. They did not have refrigeration, so that when they butchered meat they would salt the meat heavily because salt would kill the surface bacteria of the meat and would prevent it from rotting.

Not only as preservative from rotting and decaying, but also we are supposed to be seasoning elements to the lost world. Often we realize that many restaurants don't put a whole lot of salt in the foods they serve. When we add salt in the food, it brings up flavor of the food much better. We should be like that. We need to show our full lives and meaningful lives to non-believers, so that they may want to have what we have.

Salt speaks of inward character that influences a decaying world. Light speaks of the outward testimony of good works that points to God. Our task is to keep our lives pure that we might "salt" this earth and hold back corruption so that the Gospel can get out. Our good works must accompany our dedicated lives as we let our lights shine.

Light also has two purposes: Firstly, it eliminates darkness. The definition of darkness is absence of light. But the same time, we are not to stick our lights into the non-believers eyes to irritate them, but through the light we have they may see that they are in darkness like we were once in darkness. Secondly, we may bring those who are lost in this dark world to the light and letting them know that there is hope in God.

The purpose in letting our light so shine by doing good works is so that others will glorify God, not ourselves.

J. APPLICATIONS

1) Jesus clearly tells us how to live blessed and happy as His followers:

We need to live humbly, hating our own sins as the Father does, our strength under control, seeking God's righteousness, merciful to others, pure in heart, keeping peace as much as we can and willing to live with the persecution against us for Christ's sake.

2) To be effective we must seek and display the Christian distinctive.

We can never affect the world for Jesus by becoming like the world.

3) The figures of salt and light also remind us that the life marked by the beatitudes is not to be lived in isolation.

We often assume that those inner qualities can only be developed or displayed in isolation from the world, but Jesus wants us to live them out before the world.

John 17:14-16 I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

4) Jesus never challenges us to become salt or light. He simply says that we are.

We are either fulfilling or failing that responsibility.