



# THE BLESSINGS OF THE BEATITUDES

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# Introduction: Jesus’ Famous Sermon

Early on in his earthly ministry, Jesus climbed a mountain. It was a moment in his story that reads like a climactic scene, yet this wasn’t his dramatic trek into the wilderness to be tested by the devil. Nor was it his final, tortuous climb up the hill of Calvary.

After being heralded and baptized by John the Baptist, Jesus began teaching in the areas around the Sea of Galilee. He called an unimpressive band of brothers to follow him. Making a name for himself as a teacher, healer, and curiosity, his fame grew as did the crowds that followed him.

His message was simple at first, recorded for us in Matthew 4:17: “Repent! For the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.”

But what was this Kingdom of Heaven? What was this new prophet talking about?

**He climbed a mountain to tell his followers just that.**

Followed closely by his disciples, Jesus climbs a hill and sits. It plays like a great movie scene where the audience is holding its breath in anticipation, like when the bold lawyer rises to give his defense with all eyes in the courtroom fixed upon him.

What is he going to say?

**Jesus opens his mouth and delivers the Sermon on the Mount.** The Apostle Matthew records Jesus' most famous sermon for us in chapters 5-7 of his gospel, and it contains some of the most well-known words of Jesus.

In it, he says we are to be the salt and light of the world. He tells us to build our house on a rock, turn the other cheek, and ask, seek, and knock. He gives us the Lord's Prayer, the Golden Rule, and many often-quoted verses on everything from anxiety to forgiveness to charity.

**He teaches all about this new kingdom he is ushering in, and he begins it all with the Beatitudes.**

## What Are the Beatitudes?

The Beatitudes are recorded for us in Matthew 5:3-11:

*“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 filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God. Blessed are those who have been persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are you when people reproach you, 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 that is how they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”*  
(Matthew 5:3-11 World English Bible)

**We don't often think of Jesus as a poet like David or a wisdom teacher like Solomon, yet the Beatitudes could easily belong in the Psalms or Proverbs. These statements are beautiful, poetic, and wise.**

**But the words of Jesus are never trite or pithy!**

The Beatitudes are rich, deep, and impactful. They speak to the here and now as well as the eternity that is to come. They usher in this new kingdom by turning everything our sinful world knows upon its head.

**The Beatitudes describe people who are blessed, but in the new, upside-down kingdom of Jesus, things are not as we would expect. The blessed people are not described as being wealthy, happy, powerful, content, influential, or successful, though that's how our modern world might describe a state of blessedness.**

In the economy of Jesus's new kingdom, the blessed are:

- Poor in spirit
- Grief-stricken
- Meek and humble
- Hungry and thirsty
- Merciful
- Pure in heart
- Peaceful
- Persecuted

It's not exactly a person you'd expect to see on the cover of *Forbes* Magazine! Yet these characteristics bring eternal blessings like:

- The Kingdom of Heaven
- Comfort
- The earth itself

- Satisfaction
- Mercy
- The presence of God
- Adoption as God's child

**We might be tempted to look at this list of blessed characteristics as describing different people.** People who mourn get this blessing. People who are merciful get that blessing. Persecuted people enter the kingdom but it's the meek that inherit the earth.

In fact, these attributes describe all believers in Christ who have put their faith in him and been filled with his Holy Spirit. These are not different people at all, but describe the heart of every follower of Jesus who has been transformed by his grace. These attributes and their subsequent blessing are common to all believers.

**We also might be tempted to read the Beatitudes as a holy to-do list.** If I do this, or

act that way, or demonstrate this attribute then I will be blessed. We might think that we need to do all of these things, all the time, in order to be saved and enter God's kingdom.

Following the Beatitudes as a list of demands we must meet before we can be a part of the kingdom of God discounts the work of Jesus on the cross. It disregards his free gift of grace. It puts us back under the burden of the law. It means we have to earn our salvation, contrary to God's plan of redemption through his son.

**The Beatitudes describe believers in Christ and the blessings we receive in him.** These blessings are experienced both here on earth now and in the eternity that is to come. They are beautiful promises from our loving God. They are full of rich truths, encouraging promises, and everlasting hope.

In this study, we'll take a deep dive into the Beatitudes. We'll study each of these statements of Jesus and learn what each means in the life of the believer. We'll look to other

scriptures for understanding, and to Jesus and his teachings for examples.

Each chapter will explore an individual Beatitude and include scripture, reflections, and prayers.

Let's get started!



# Chapter 1: Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit

## Scriptures for Today

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.” Matthew 5:3

“But the tax collector, standing far away, wouldn’t even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.”  
Luke 18:13

## Reflection

**The order of the Beatitudes is no accident.**

Jesus is deliberate as he describes these eight attributes of the members of his new kingdom. There’s nothing haphazard about his list, and he begins at the proverbial bottom with an unlikely trait: Poverty of spirit.

**Believers in Christ must first come to him poor.**

Being poor in spirit has nothing to do with our bank account, our real estate holdings, or our 401K, though Jesus has lots to say about the effects of worldly assets upon us. This kind of poverty has to do with our heart and soul, not our finances or lack thereof.

**Poverty of spirit is an acknowledgment that we bring nothing to the table of our salvation.**

We have nothing to offer God that would earn us his favor. We are poor in every way that matters, and we know it. We are low, needy, and humble.

When we are poor in spirit, we recognize that:

- Our primary problem is our own sin
- We cannot follow God's commands on our own
- We need grace and mercy that we don't deserve
- We are unworthy of the love of God

- We bring nothing to God but our hopelessness
- We need God's help

**Jesus tells a story in Luke 18 that perfectly depicts this poverty of spirit.**

Two men enter the temple to pray. The first is a religious leader who brings his “righteousness” before God. He brags about his works and his worthiness, looking down upon sinners from his high horse of arrogance.

The second is a tax collector. He is the lowest of the low, and he knows it. He doesn't dare even come close to the altar, and can't even raise his head. He brings nothing to God but his sin. He is utterly poor and has absolutely nothing to bring to the table.

**Jesus blesses this humble, poor, contrite man.**

In the upside-down kingdom of God, it's the poor who are rich. It's the last who will be first. It's the lowly who are lifted high. It's the rejected who are accepted. It's the ones who know they have nothing to offer who get everything they could ever imagine.

**That's the promise of this first Beatitude.**

Come to Jesus with nothing and he will give you everything. Bring him your sin and he will give you his righteousness. Come to him as a sinner and he will make you his child. Come to him low and he will lift you high. Come as an alien and he will welcome you with open arms into his kingdom.

## Prayer

**Father God, I confess that I have not always been poor in spirit.** I've tried at times to bring my righteousness before you to earn a place in your kingdom. Yet your word says my righteousness is like filthy rags! Forgive me for even trying to earn your favor.

**I am poor in spirit and have nothing to bring to your table.** I am a sinner with nothing to offer you. I cannot earn your love. I do not deserve your salvation. I am utterly bankrupt, totally helpless, and completely at your mercy.

**Being poor in spirit is exactly where you want me to be.** Help me embrace this state of weakness, because know that when I am weak, you are strong. When I am last, you make me first. When I am low, you raise me up and give me a place in your kingdom.

**I do not deserve your love, and yet you have given it to me in abundance.** I don't deserve a place in your kingdom, yet that is exactly where I am. Thank you, God, that because of my poverty of spirit, you have made me spiritually rich. This is the work you have done on my behalf through your son Jesus.

**Thank you Father for blessing me in this most remarkable way.** I don't deserve your grace, but I embrace it and thank you for it

today. In the name of Jesus Christ my savior I  
pray.

*Amen.*



## **Chapter 2: Blessed Are Those Who Mourn**

## Scriptures for Today

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

“Behold, God’s dwelling is with people, and he will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; neither will there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, anymore.” Revelation 21:3-4

## Reflection

**Of all the Beatitudes of Jesus, this is arguably the most familiar.**

People who have experienced the loss of a loved one have most likely received a sympathy card or bouquet of flowers containing this sentiment. It’s easily shared on social media in a pretty font over the peaceful image of a mountain stream or beautiful sunset.

**The blessing of comfort to those who mourn in this second Beatitude can be a balm to a grieving person, to be sure. We will all face death sooner or later, and will seek comfort in our grief. Jesus's words can bring peace to hurting hearts here on earth.**

**Yet this promise is so much more than a sentiment suited for a greeting card.**

Remember, Jesus doesn't work in trite, pithy poetry. His words are powerful, life-giving, and transformative. They reach deeper than we often care to go, getting to the very heart of his gospel and our need for it.

This Beatitude builds upon the first, which we looked at in the previous chapter. Believers first come to the Lord poor in spirit, with nothing to offer God but our sin, unworthiness, and brokenness. The promise to such humble, self-aware people is the very Kingdom of Heaven.

**Once we find ourselves in this rightfully bankrupt place before God, there can be only one appropriate response: grief.**

We grieve because:

- We live in a fallen world
- Sin has negatively affected every part of creation
- Sin has negatively affected every part of our own lives
- There is death all around us, all the time
- We ourselves are dying
- We have no hope apart from God

The right response to being poor in spirit is grief. But God doesn't leave us there. He doesn't want us to be downcast, hopeless, pessimistic people. We grieve, yes, but according to 1

Thessalonians 4:13, not as those who have no hope.

**We are hope-filled mourners because comfort is here!** As believers in Christ, we are a part of his kingdom. We are his children. Our hope is in him and his promises are trustworthy. We have the Holy Spirit, the comforter, dwelling inside of us. We experience comfort through his word, his presence, and his promises.

**We are hope-filled mourners because the ultimate comfort is coming!** We experience the promises of the Beatitudes here on earth, but only in part. We get a glimpse of these blessings now, but they will be fulfilled completely when Jesus returns.

**Revelation 21 gives us a window into what that ultimate comfort will look like.** He will wipe away every tear and comfort every heart. There will be no more death, pain, or grief. We will know no sorrow because we will be with

God. He is the only comfort we have in this life and in the life to come.

## Prayer

**Father, I confess that I don't mourn nearly enough.** I've become numb to the brokenness all around me, but more importantly, I've become numb to the sin in my own heart. Forgive me and give me a heart that grieves over sin, pain, and death.

**Let me grieve, but not as one who has no hope.** Let me grieve my sin and the sin all around me, but may that grief point me to you. May that grief always lead me to your word, your spirit, and your presence. Meet me in my grief.

**Thank you for being my only comfort.** I often seek comfort in the pleasures of this world which always leave me empty and dissatisfied. You are my only true comfort, peace, and hope. Thank you for always satisfying my needs,

since my ultimate need is you, and you promise to never leave me or forsake me.

**Thank you God for blessing me with a comfort only you can provide. I don't deserve such comfort, yet you surround me with it in abundance. Thank you for this gift of grace, in the name of Jesus I pray.**

*Amen.*



# Chapter 3: Blessed Are the Gentle

## Scriptures for Today

“Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.” Matthew 5:5

“Come to me, all you who labor and are heavily burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” Matthew 11:28-30

## Reflection

**The Beatitudes build upon each other as they describe people belonging to the Kingdom of God.**

These kingdom citizens are poor in spirit, marked by an awareness of their poverty, emptiness, and need. They mourn over the sin that corrupts the world, poisons their soul, and keeps them from God. But God blesses these poor mourners by ushering them into his family and comforting them with his presence, peace, and love.

**The third Beatitude builds upon these first two attributes by describing the posture displayed by these members of God's household. One might think that believers who have been called by God might be:**

- Self-confident knowing God chose them
- Boisterous and bold about their faith
- Aggressive in the face of evil
- Combative against sins
- Quarrelsome among those who disagree

**Again, the Kingdom of God seems counterintuitive to those who don't understand it and haven't experienced the love of God. Weak are strong, poor are rich, last are first, and it's the meek, gentle, humble people who inherit the earth.**

**God's people are to be meek, displaying not weakness, but power under control. They are**

to be gentle, especially toward people in need of God's grace, mercy, and love. They are to be humble, knowing that everything they have is only by the free gift of God and not as a result of their own works.

**As in all things, we can look to Jesus as our example.** Jesus rarely spoke of his own character traits. In Matthew 11, we see him do just that, and the way the Son of God and savior of the world describes himself is startling. He could have easily described himself as being:

- Loving
- Kind
- Patient
- Merciful
- Just

**The list of characteristics Jesus could have assigned to himself is endless, yet he chose to describe himself as meek and gentle.**

Jesus was never weak, but his power was always under control, and submitted to his father's will. He never cowered in the face of sin, facing it head on when he cast out demons, rebuked religious leaders, and chased the money changers from the temple.

**Yet his life was marked by gentleness, especially toward people who sought after him in their brokenness.** He spoke gently to the woman at the well and the one with the issue of blood. He welcomed little children into his arms. He dined with tax collectors, prostitutes, and sinners who flocked to him in droves.

**Jesus displayed a gentleness that we are to emulate.** We are able to display this fruit of the Spirit when we acknowledge our sin, depend on God's grace alone, and humble ourselves before him. Jesus is gentle, yet strong, and

more than able to carry our burdens, replacing them with his love and grace.

## Prayer

**Father, I confess to you that gentleness is not always a fruit of the Spirit that I display.** I can be harsh and hurtful rather than meek and gentle. Forgive me Lord.

**Thank you for Jesus, the perfect example of gentleness.** Help me to emulate him in my life. Make me gentle, meek, and humble just as he was, especially as I interact with people who do not know you.

**You promise that the meek will inherit the land.** This promise of a future inheritance for your children is one that I don't fully understand but want to be a part of. I'm humbled at the thought of being your child, an heir to your kingdom. Thank you for this!

**God, help me be gentle.** Help me be meek. Keep me humble. As I recognize my poverty of

spirit and mourn over my sin, it is the only right response. Thank you for your love, grace, and mercy poured out to me through Jesus. In his name I pray.

*Amen.*



# **Chapter 4: Blessed Are Those Who Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness**

## Scriptures for Today

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

Matthew 5:6

“God, you are my God. I will earnestly seek you. My soul thirsts for you. My flesh longs for you, in a dry and weary land, where there is no water.” Psalm 63:1

## Reflection

**Few of us in the modern day first world know anything about being truly hungry.** We have food and drink in excess, and few of us could understand hunger to the point of starvation or thirst to the point of dangerous dehydration.

**What is required to be truly hungry for something?**

- It means needing something that you cannot live without
- It means being acutely aware of that need

- It means being denied that need for a period of time
- It means wanting that need to be fulfilled more than anything

We don't hunger for food if there is a cheeseburger sitting in front of us. We're not thirsty for water if the jug in our hand is full. We hunger and thirst for what we do not have but know that we need.

**The first three Beatitudes speak to our humble state when we come to God. We are poor in spirit with nothing to offer. We are grief stricken, in mourning over our sin. In our poverty and grief, we are low, humble, and meek.**

**And in this impoverished, mournful, lowly state before the Lord, we become keenly aware of our spiritual hunger and greatest need.**

King David spoke of such hunger in Psalm 63. While fleeing to the desert under attack from

his own son, he finds himself in a place of great need and cries out to the Lord for help. One might think he would ask for:

- Food and water in the desert
- Military help while under attack
- Vindication from his foes
- Restoration of his rightful place on the throne

Surprisingly, David asks for none of these things while fleeing to the wilderness. In fact, he hungers and thirsts after only one thing: God. He speaks of his soul thirsting for God and his flesh longing for God.

**In his low, poor, sorrowful state, David knew that his greatest need was for God himself.** Physical resources, military support, vindication, and power could never satisfy him, and he knew it. In his state of utter desperation,

David knew that the only thing that could ever satisfy him was God.

**Jesus spoke of such spiritual hunger and thirst as well, and deems himself the very bread of life.** He promised his followers in John 6 that whoever would come to him would never hunger and whoever would believe in him would never thirst. Believers in Christ will be satisfied by him.

**We as believers hunger and thirst after righteousness which can only come through faith in Jesus.** We long to grow in our own Christ-likeness, become more righteous, and see injustice vanquished from the earth. Only God can satisfy this desire, and he promises that he will. He invites us to eat and drink at his abundant table.

## Prayer

**Father, I confess to you that I am far too easily satisfied by the things of this world. I hunger for food, drink, money, relationships,**

power, influence, and a whole host of things that can never satisfy me. Forgive me for engaging in this futility.

**You are my greatest and only need.** I recognize that in my low, humble, bankrupt state, you are all that will ever satisfy me. Help me to recognize this every day of my life, especially when I am tempted to seek anything other than you.

**Grow my hunger for you and your word.** Give me a heart after you. Make me hunger and thirst for your righteousness, your truth, your presence, and your grace. Let your name and renown be the desire of my heart. Make me delight in you alone. May I taste and see that you alone are good, and let that be enough.

**Thank you for giving me your righteousness, Jesus.** I know I have nothing to bring to your throne but my sin. I have no hope apart from your grace. I can trust in nothing of this earth to satisfy my greatest need. Thank you for

satisfying me with your love, grace, mercy, and righteousness. In your name I pray.

*Amen.*



# Chapter 5: Blessed Are the Merciful

## Scriptures for Today

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

“Therefore be merciful, even as your Father is also merciful. Don’t judge, and you won’t be judged. Don’t condemn, and you won’t be condemned. Set free, and you will be set free. Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, will be given to you. For with the same measure you measure it will be measured back to you.” Luke 6:36-38

## Reflection

**A remarkable thing happened at a Charleston, South Carolina bond hearing in 2015.**

Mere days earlier, a young man walked into a small church service where he was greeted warmly and welcomed with open arms. Moments later, he inexplicably opened fire,

killing nine innocent victims as they sat studying the Bible together.

At his first court hearing, Dylann Roof faced the family members of his victims, who the judge allowed to speak directly to him. Not surprisingly, they expressed profound pain, grief, loss, sadness, confusion, anger, and heartbreak.

**Yet one by one, they expressed something that was shocking, scandalous even.**

They expressed mercy and offered forgiveness. One by one they stood before a murderer and said they forgave him. They were praying for him. They hoped God would save him. They wished the best for him.

It was so shocking that it made the news all over the country. People were incredulous and confused. How could people who had their family member murdered in such a heinous way forgive such a cold-blooded killer?

**Believers in Jesus Christ, however, understood perfectly what was happening in that courtroom. It made perfect sense, and wasn't confusing in the least.**

These Christians showed mercy because they had been shown mercy. They forgive because they had been forgiven. They expressed love since they had been so loved. They gave something that wasn't deserved because God had done the same for them.

**Jesus spoke of this Godly mercy in the fifth Beatitude.** The merciful will be shown mercy, he promises, and it's the mercy that they have been shown by God that makes them merciful in the first place. It's the forgiveness that we've received that enables us to forgive others.

In Luke 6, Jesus explains it clearly. Be merciful. Don't judge. Don't condemn. Set free. Give in abundance. We do all of these things because God has been merciful to us. He has not judged us as we deserved. He has set us free and given to us in abundance.

It's a revolving door, isn't it?

- God shows us mercy
- We receive it and it transforms us
- It enables us to show mercy to others
- God shows us more mercy and the cycle continues

**When we come to God poor in spirit, mourning, meek, hungering only for him, mercy and forgiveness toward others is inevitable. We will love and forgive with the same love and forgiveness that we have been shown.**

That is exactly what happened in that courtroom. People who had been blessed with mercy poured it out in abundance to the glory of God.

## Prayer

**Father, you have so been merciful to me.** I deserve your wrath yet you give me love, forgiveness, and grace. I'm overwhelmed by your mercy. Thank you for it.

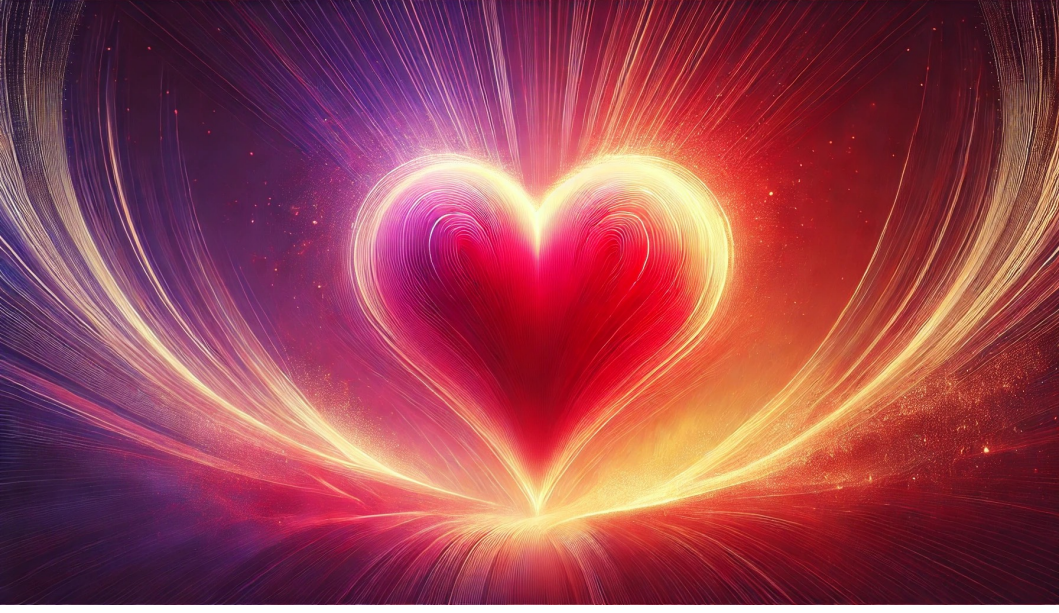
**I confess that I do not always display mercy toward others.** I want justice. I struggle to forgive. I want to see people pay for their sins. This is not how you treat me and not how I should treat others. Forgive me, Lord, and change my sinful heart.

**Make me a person marked by mercy.** When I am sinned against, make me quick to forgive. Show me areas in my heart where unforgiveness hides and rid me of it once and for all. Help me show mercy as I have been shown mercy.

**Father, you sent your son Jesus as the ultimate merciful act.** Through him I have been set free from my sin and adopted into your kingdom. Thank you for showing me such

mercy, and help me show it to others. In Jesus' name I pray.

*Amen.*



# **Chapter 6: Blessed Are the Pure in Heart**

## Scriptures for Today

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

“Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment.” Matthew 22:37-38

## Reflection

In the classic comedy *City Slickers*, a struggling, middle-aged man played by Billy Crystal takes a trip west with friends. He’s in the throes of the proverbial midlife crisis, disillusioned with life and void of purpose, passion, and joy.

He seeks counsel from a crusty old cowboy played by Jack Palance, who draws Crystal in close to impart to him the secret of life. He’s holding his breath, waiting to hear from the old man what it is that life is all about, what it is that he is missing.

The cowboy has him on the edge of his seat, and finally tells him the mystery. He holds up one finger. One finger. That's it.

Crystal is confused, angry even, until Pallance explains. The secret of life is one thing. *Your* one thing. It's different for everyone, and up to Crystal to figure out what that one thing is for him.

### **What does this movie scene have to do with our sixth Beatitude?**

For the Christian, our one thing is God, and the sixth Beatitude speaks clearly to this idea.

**“Blessed are the pure in heart” most translations say, yet our English language doesn't adequately capture Jesus' intent here. Pure of heart makes us think of perfection or sinlessness, and we all know as sinners in constant need of God's grace, perfection is something we'll never attain here on earth.**

“Pure in heart” might more accurately be translated as “singularity of heart.” It’s our one thing, and for believers in Christ, that one thing is him.

**Jesus speaks to this idea later on in the book of Matthew when some religious leaders test him, asking him which commandment was the greatest. He answers them clearly, stating, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.”**

Notice that this greatest commandment according to Jesus has nothing to do with behavior. It has nothing to do with following the law, obeying the Ten Commandments, feeding the poor, being a good parent or spouse, or checking any behavioral boxes.

**The greatest commandment has to do with our hearts – the very fiber of our being. Our lives are to be marked from the inside out by this singularity of purpose. Loving God is to be our one thing.**

Our heart, soul, and minds should completely and thoroughly love God, leaving no room for sin or idols. Every part of us should be focused on our relationship with him.

Any good outward behavior in our lives will flow from that posture.

**The pure in heart, believers in Christ who are singularly focused on loving and serving him, are called blessed.** And the blessing promised in this Beatitude? They will see God.

**We're a part of his kingdom.** And as great as the blessings are that we experience here on earth, they pale in comparison to seeing him face to face when we enter into eternity with him.

## Prayer

**Father God, I confess to you that you are not always the singular focus of my heart.** I let distractions, idols, and sin creep in and keep me from being pure of heart. Forgive me for

allowing other things to crowd you out of my heart.

**Give me a pure heart focused solely on you.** If left to my own devices, I will fail every time. Help me to fight off the things that pull me away from you.

**Help me to make you my one thing.** I want to love you, my Lord and my God, with all of my heart, soul, mind and strength. I want the only desire of my heart to be you. I want to love you more than anything else.

**Lord, you have given me more than I could ask or imagine.** You have saved me by your grace and made me a citizen of your kingdom. You have promised that I will see you, and in that I rejoice today. In Jesus' name I pray.

*Amen.*



# **Chapter 7: Blessed Are the Peacemakers**

## Scriptures for Today

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

“But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceful, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.”

James 3:17-18

## Reflection

**As the Beatitudes continue to build upon each other, we come to the seventh blessing and its subsequent promise: Peacemakers are blessed and will be called children of God.**

It's important to remember that these eight attributes depicted in the Beatitudes are not describing eight different categories of people. They all flow together to paint a picture describing believers in Christ. Jesus is explaining what the citizens of his kingdom

will be like, and the blessings that they are promised by God.

It should come as no surprise that the call to peacemaking should come so far down the list of Beatitudes, since:

- Peacemaking requires humility, or a poverty of spirit
- Peacemaking requires mourning, recognizing the problem and the need for reconciliation
- Peacemaking requires gentleness
- Peacemaking requires a desire for righteousness
- Peacemaking requires mercy
- Peacemaking requires a singular heart after God

**Our God is a God of peace, but because of the fall, the world he created hasn't been peaceful since the Garden of Eden. Wars rage. People kill and commit heinous sins against one another. There is political turmoil, natural disasters, devastating diseases, and a whole host of tragedies that rob the world, and our hearts, of peace.**

**So how is the God who created all this a God of peace?**

He's a God of peace because he made peace with us through Jesus. We were his enemies, but through Jesus we are now friends. We were cast off from him, but now we are his children. He has reconciled us to himself through Jesus' work on the cross, and we now have peace with him.

**God's people are to be peacemakers, and we look to Jesus once again as our perfect example.** After all, Jesus was called the Prince of Peace. His life and ministry were marked by peace, despite the violence that raged around him as it does today.

**Now that we are at peace with God, he calls us to make peace with others, just as Jesus did. This godly peacemaking is detailed all over the Bible. We are called to:**

- Love one another, even our enemies
- Serve one another
- Turn the other cheek
- Forgive sins committed against us
- Have mercy on one another
- Sacrifice for each other
- Speak kindly to each other

**The list could go on but the point is clear: Since God has reconciled us to himself through Jesus, we are to live peacefully with those around us.**

This of course doesn't mean ignoring sin or accepting abuse. It does mean loving others in the same way Christ has loved us.

## Prayer

**Heavenly Father, I was once your enemy, but now I am your child.** You made peace with me not by anything I have done, but by everything that Jesus did on the cross. Through him I am now at peace with you. Thank you for this undeserved reconciliation.

**By nature, I am not a peaceful person.** I want to fight and rage against people who hurt me. I can be angry and divisive. I want to get the last word. I don't often turn the other cheek. Help me to grow in this area and become a person of peace.

**It's only by your grace that I can become a peacemaker.** Remind me of the peace I have in you. Remind me of the place I have in your kingdom. Remind me of my status as your child as I seek to be a peacemaker.

**Thank you for the peace that passes all understanding.** This isn't a feeling, but a true state of being that I enjoy only because you are my God. Help me to share this peace with others, the most important act of peacemaking. In the name of Jesus, the Prince of Peace I pray.

*Amen.*



# **Chapter 8: Blessed Are the Persecuted**

## Scriptures for Today

“Blessed are those who have been persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are you when people reproach you, 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 that is how they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”  
Matthew 5:10-12

“For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from God’s love which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 8:38

## Reflection

**The Beatitudes begin with the promise of blessing to those who are poor in spirit, completely bankrupt with nothing to bring to God. They continue on, describing a person**

who is gentle, mournful, hungry, merciful, pure, and peaceful.

**The blessings promised to the believers in Christ who display such traits are nothing short of glorious.** They will inherit the kingdom of heaven and the earth itself. They will be comforted and shown mercy. They will be satisfied. They will see God and be called his children.

**But they will also be persecuted.**

Few of us living in the modern west can relate to the persecution faced by the early church. There is no threat of being thrown in jail, sold into slavery, or fed to the lions because we profess faith in Jesus Christ as there was 2,000 years ago.

**It might look different in our modern world, but those who live faithful lives seeking to glorify God will no doubt face trials because of their faith.** In fact, it should come as no

surprise to us when it happens since this world is not our home.

We will face scorn, ridicule, ostracization, and even persecution when we stand up for:

- Biblical truth
- Moral convictions
- The downtrodden, oppressed, and abused
- The unborn, the slave, and the unwanted
- Religious freedom

**The first and last Beatitude share the same promise, and it is no accident.** Both end with the statement, “Theirs is the kingdom of heaven,” and this is the truth foundational to the life of anyone who professes faith in Christ.

**This world is not our home.**

**Our citizenship is in heaven.** We are aliens and strangers here. We are not supposed to blend in, but should stand out. We are to be the salt and light of the earth, a city set upon a hill for all to see.

When on trial before Pontius Pilate, Jesus said, “My Kingdom is not of this world. If my Kingdom were of this world, then my servants would fight, that I wouldn’t be delivered to the Jews. But now my Kingdom is not from here” (John 18:36).

**Jesus faced persecution, torture, and death at the hands of people who didn’t recognize his kingdom.** We as his followers will face trials and persecution as well, because we belong to his kingdom and not this one.

**The good news is that the kingdom we do belong to is far greater than anything here on earth.** God’s kingdom is one of love, grace, mercy, forgiveness, and peace, and there is nothing on earth that can separate us from it!

## Prayer

**Father God, thank you that I am a part of your kingdom.** Thank you for making me your child and a citizen of your heavenly realm. I know nothing here on earth can come close to it.

**I confess that too often I blend in rather than standing out.** I don't want to draw attention to my faith. I don't want to be salt and light. Forgive me for this cowardice.

**Help me not fear persecution or suffering because of my faith.** I know that nothing can separate me from your love, and that you will not let me be tested beyond what I can bear. Give me a kingdom of hope in the face of persecution.

**Help me to rejoice in the face of suffering, knowing that I am becoming more like Jesus.**  
In your name I pray.

*Amen.*



# Conclusion: Building a Blessed House

## Scripture for Today

“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.” Matthew 7:24-27

## Reflection

**Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount begins with the Beatitudes, a beautiful, poetic preamble that describes the attributes common to believers in Christ and their subsequent blessings.** They are profound and full of truths that we have barely scratched the surface of here.

**His sermon ends a couple of chapters later in a surprising but no less profound way.**

Jesus opens with the Beatitudes and then continues by explaining life in his new kingdom. He gives his followers the Lord's Prayer and the Golden Rule. He teaches about money, divorce, charity, anxiety, and a whole host of applicable topics.

**Finally, he concludes his sermon with a simple story: a story about his kingdom.**

Two men build a house. One is foolish and one is wise. One builds his house on shifting sand while the other builds his house on a solid rock.

A storm beats down on both of them with crashing waves, pounding rain, and brutal wind. The storm is the same but the houses are not.

**The house on the sand collapses while the house on the rock stands firm.**

**There is no mystery about this parable, as Jesus tells us exactly what it means. It's the people who hear the words of Jesus and put**

them into practice that build a house able to withstand the storms of life.

It's the ones who hear and obey the words of Jesus who build their house upon the rock and are a part of his kingdom.

**The Beatitudes are some of those words that a wise person hears and does.** They describe a follower of Jesus, who will:

- Recognize their poverty of spirit and need for God
- Mourn over their own sin and the sin of the world
- Display meekness and gentleness toward others
- Hunger and thirst for the righteousness of God
- Show mercy and forgiveness toward others

- Keep their heart singularly focused on God
- Make peace with others
- Rejoice in persecution

**We can't do any of these things if left to our own devices.** In fact, we'll do quite the opposite!

It's only by the grace of God that we can put on these attributes and receive the blessings that come with them. It's only by his grace that we can put them into practice and build our house upon the solid rock of Jesus. It's only by his grace that we can live out the Beatitudes.