

070724 Meeker Christian Church Beatitudes #1 "Poor in Spirit"

This is the first in our series of sermons on the Beatitudes from Matthew 5:1-12, we may interject other sermons along the way but in time, we will cover them all.

The previous chapter here in Matthew started with satan tempting Jesus as Jesus began his ministry in the Galilee region. Galilee is the Northern part of the 3 districts of Israel, the other two being Samaria in the middle and Judea to the South. It was there in the small villages of Bethsaida & Capernaum on the Northern shore of the Sea of Galilee that Jesus selected four young fisherman to be his disciples and later Apostles. They were brothers Peter and Andrew, and another set of brothers, James and John. A fifth disciple, the Apostle Philip was from the same area and likely a fisherman as well. Jesus was gaining great popularity in HIS ministry and large crowds gathered to hear him as recorded in **Matthew 4:23-25** *And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, reaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. 24 Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them. 25 Great multitudes followed Him—from Galilee, and from Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan. And continuing into*

Matthew 5:1-3 *And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. 2 Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying: 3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

With our tour group, Jean and I visited a possible spot of this incident near the NW corner of the Sea of Galilee just above the ruins of that little village of Capernaum. From our groups vantage point, we could see across the Sea directly East to the area of the Decapolis which today is known as the Golan Heights, to the North we could see Mt. Hermon which is the source of the water for the Sea of Galilee. To the South we could see the line of trees growing along the torturous path of the Jordan River as it flows from the Sea of Galilee.

The day we were there it was a place of uncommon peace and beauty in sight of a small

communal kibbutz, which at the time was a typical farm settlement with their fertile fields. The tranquility of the setting belied the military dangers that lurked a few miles to the North into Lebanon, and to the East, Damascus, Syria, and SW Palestine and the present day Hamas conflict. /// Israel is a land of incredible contrasts from unexcelled fertile fields to rocky hills, - from lush watered valleys, to parched hill slopes, from cool breezes to scorching winds, from righteous peace to wicked inspired agitation. Honestly, in the region – some things have changed very little since the day JESUS sat down, which sitting down by the way, was the custom of first century respected leaders. Jesus sat down **to teach the attitudes of character GOD created HIS children to exhibit for the joy and fulfillment of their lives.** The first of those attitudes is **Matthew 5:3** *Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

The Latin word for blessed is beatus, and from it comes the word beatitude. (Weirby) To the first century audience “blessed” meant "divine joy and perfect happiness." At the time of its inception, the word was not used for humans; it described the kind of joy experienced only by the gods or the dead. But Jesus used the word "blessed" with the definition and in the setting from which the audience was familiar. It is noteworthy that Jesus always established a relationship with his audience of things with which they were familiar and then He took them from where they were seeking and willing to learn and taught them about the eternal truth of sacred, created character traits for their personal well-being and that of the community.

At creation those characters were embodied for each person to sustain an inner satisfaction and sufficiency that did not depend on outward circumstances for happiness. The audience of Jesus with the rest of the worlds populations, had been and continue to be - inspired by satan to believe earthly circumstances were the measure of happiness. That has been an essential in satans arsenal right into our age. And constantly reinforced by the media, fashions, fancies and perversions of the fallen nature of mankind. Most of our life experiences and examples have been for us to believe that happiness is based on achievement of the American Dream.///The sacred, heavenly truth revealed to those of the first century in this scripture is that true blessed happiness in life is what the Lord offers those who unconditionally trust Him, in spite of and

through the circumstance in life! The Psalmist knew the difference 1,000 years before Christ: From **Psalm 1:1** *Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;* Blessed in this passage in Hebrew is the same form of the word “blessed” translated from the Greek that Jesus used as He spoke these beatitudes. The significance is that it means the beatitudes are not pious hopes of what might be, or dreamed of - but - the beatitudes are what is by virtue of creation available to those who learn and live Righteously. This “blessedness” which belongs to the Christian is not a blessedness which is postponed to some future world of glory like we talked about last week; but this is a “blessedness” which exists and is possible to Christians here and now. Blessedness is not something into which the Christian will enter; it is something into which they have entered when becoming devoted to Jesus. Admittedly, the fulfillment of blessedness will be part of the eternal reward when we are in the presence of God. Meanwhile it is a very present reality to be enjoined and enjoyed here and now.

Allow me to make a point here: Today we have three of our younger set who are going to be baptized. They have been in church all their lives and have seen righteousness in their families and learned from Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, Camp Christian, Church, models of others and have from those accumulated sources been impressed by the Holy Spirit to ask to be baptized. That is fulfillment of **Proverbs 22:6** *Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.* Why should anyone be surprised when scripture is followed that the promised results become the harvest of seeds planted and watered. Oh that the world would acknowledge God is loving and merciful and made at creation people for a purpose by a plan and careful, deliberate preparation. It IS NOT up to a child to make up their own mind and make a decision for righteousness, they are to be trained. They will be trained by the culture or something even more sinister. God mandates that we *train up a child in the way he should go.* That my church family is the basis of these beatitude instructions.

Someone has described these beatitudes like this: "O the bliss of being a Christian, O the joy of following CHRIST, o the sheer happiness of knowing JESUS CHRIST as MASTER, SAVIOR and LORD! ...

When we encounter trying and sorrowful times in this life, JESUS reminds us: **John 16:22**
Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you.

Secular human happiness is based upon life circumstances. /// These beatitudes speak of that joy which seeks us through our pain, that joy which sorrow and loss, and pain and grief, are powerless to touch, that joy which shines through tears, and which nothing in life or death can diminish or take away no matter the tactics of evil used against a Christian.. Last week an elder in the Thayer church where we served for many years died. He was a very close friend, confident, and constant source of joy and encouragement. He was raised in the church, involved in missions, Hidden Haven Christian Camp and everything the church stood for. There was no weeping and wailing during his extended illness nor at his passing – but his family models his life: **Philippians 4:7** *and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.* Rest in peace a great man of faith, Stan Stitt, and his wife of 66 years Kathy. She is doing just fine.

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

To be poor in spirit means to be humble, to have a correct estimate of one's self: **Romans 12:3**
For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. Poor in spirit is the opposite of the world's attitude of self-praise and self-assertion. It is honesty with ourselves; we know ourselves, accept ourselves, and work earnestly to be ourselves to the glory of GOD. *the poor in spirit.* Describes we who have accepted that spiritually has rescued out of abject and complete spiritual poverty. It carries the idea of one who is poor having no influence or power, or prestige, and have finally come to the point of realizing that no earthly resources will rescue us. We have then willingly and passionately put our whole trust in GOD. It is then we become detached from things, and attached to God having experienced that things bring very momentary happiness or security. ///

I am amazed in our lives and in the lives of so many Americans when they start wondering how to get rid of accumulated stuff. Or as our oldest son on his 62nd birthday said: “Please

don't get me anything, I do not want anymore stuff, I just want the love of family and friends abounding in the joy of God." *the poor in spirit* are known for and as they have learned and live that GOD alone can bring help, and hope, and strength. The person who is poor in spirit is one who has realized that "things" mean nothing except as useful tools from our tool box of spiritual gifts to be used for God's divine and eternal purpose of helping others to see Jesus.

Do not let satan mess with your mind or lead you astray or tempt you to misinterpret this beatitude to be about material poverty. The instruction of this beatitude is about the poverty of the soul/spirit; when a person realizes their own utter lack of resources to meet life, and finds help and strength in GOD. **FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN... Matthew 5:3**
Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN...To those poor in spirit "belong the Kingdom of Heaven." The Kingdom of Heaven is when and where God's will is perfectly done on earth as it is in heaven.

I am not being naive here --- I know the prince of the earth is satan, I know of the evil that exists and the fallen nature of all mankind. But I am teaching and learning to live as a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven because that is God's will and gloriously created destiny for those who are proclaimed and practicing Christians. It is our earthly preview of infinite and eternal peace, security and agape love of the Heavenly Father.

One commentator's ~~Barelay~~ paraphrase: "O the bliss of the man who has realized his own utter helplessness, and who has put his whole trust in GOD, for thus alone he can render to GOD that perfect obedience which will make him a citizen of the kingdom of Heaven! The very form of the beatitudes is the statement of the joyous thrill and the radiant gladness of the Christian life.
In the face of the beatitudes a gloom-encompassed Christianity is unthinkable."

Today's invitation hymn is _____. If you are here today as a baptized believer and are ready to place membership with this congregation in kingdom service then please come forward as we sing. If you are here and know that the Holy Spirit of God has guided you to understand the meaning of confessing the name of Jesus and His power over sin, then please come forward as we sing and then follow through with your baptism.

Matthew 4:23-25

Matthew 5:1-3

Matthew 5:3

Psalms 1:1

Proverbs 22:6

John 16:22

Philippians 4:7

Matthew 5:3

Romans 12:3

Matthew 5:3