

# The Beatitudes.

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*Matthew 5: 1-16.*

## "Handfuls of Purpose" Part 3 (Miscellaneous, chapters 15 - 30).

*Let fall for eager Gleaners.*

*Thirty Addresses on Various Scripture Truths and Incidents*

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### CHAPTER 22 — THE BEATITUDES.

The particular aspect in which the Lord is presented in Matthew's gospel is, as the Messiah, the King. Matthew writes specially for Jews, to testify that Jesus was really the Messiah, though rejected. In the first chapter we get His genealogy on Joseph's side of the house; of course really He was not Joseph's Son. Had he been Joseph's Son really, He could not have been our Saviour; but in order that He should by right succeed to the throne, He must be proved to be legally Joseph's Son.

Really, He was Son of Mary, and Son of God, but God devised a way by which His legal right to the throne of David should be indisputable. By Jewish law, from the moment Joseph was espoused to Mary, she was looked upon as legally his wife, and any fruit of the womb was regarded as his. Thus, therefore, Jesus belonged by legal right to Joseph, and was regarded as his Son. Luke gives the Lord's genealogy through Mary, because Luke's object is to present Him as Son of Man.

Matthew 2 shows us the wise men of the East coming up to worship Him, and Satan stirring up the world's hatred and enmity.

Matthew 3 gives John the Baptist's testimony, and the Father's opening heaven to own Him as His beloved Son, and to testify to His perfect delight in Him.

Then Matthew 4 shows that, though Messiah, though God's King, He is a real man, and a man in dependence on God. Satan comes on the scene, and Jesus confronts the enemy. Satan is utterly defeated, by that which is the most difficult thing for you and for me, actual dependence upon the Word of God even for every word He speaks. "It is written" is His unvarying answer, and Satan is foiled. Then He fulfils Scripture, for He Himself is the light (Matt. 4: 14-16). Then He goes forth preaching "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." You will never find the kingdom of heaven preached as nearer than "at hand," — about to come. The kingdom of God could be said to be come unto them (Matt. 12: 28), or among them, because the King was there, but the kingdom of heaven was as yet only at hand. It was connected with His rejection and ascension.

In Matt. 12: 23-25 we have the manifestation of the power of the kingdom, though it was not yet set up. The power of the Lord was wonderfully manifested on every hand, and the fame of Him went everywhere. He presents Himself in the character of the Messiah-King, and His power was blessedly manifest.

Thus it is interesting to notice the connection between the fourth chapter and the fifth. In the fourth chapter you have the Person of the King, and His power manifested in vanquishing Satan on the one hand, and spoiling his goods on the other; and in Matthew 5, 6, and 7 you have the moral principles of the kingdom which He was about to set up, and what kind of behaviour He looked for from those that were in the kingdom. The kingdom of heaven is heaven's rule over earth, in mystery now, because the King is rejected, but by-and-by to be displayed in power and glory.

What then is the kind of behaviour that becomes His kingdom? The Sermon on the Mount gives the answer, and the first beatitude is characteristically descriptive: "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5: 3). This is not a question of persons going to heaven, by-and-by, but of heaven ruling them now; it is how to go on before you get to heaven.

We are impatient, sometimes, and say, I should like to go to heaven. "Stop," says God, "I will teach you how to live on earth, before you get there, how to live all along the road."

He who is the King has now gone into heaven. He is out of sight, but He is the Head of a system, and the Lord unfolds here what belongs to that heavenly system, and how those who belong to it should carry themselves.

"And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him" (Matt. 5: 1). Moses had said, "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken" (Deut. 18: 15). As the Prophet-King He here gathers His disciples about Him, to teach them. He goes up into the mountain too, thereby, I believe, signifying His removal from earth, His going back to heaven, his being hid in heaven, for the time.

Do not suppose, because we have these three chapters consecutively, that the Lord uttered all the words we get here at one time. They are parts of different discourses, as we shall find from other gospels. Mark's Gospel will help you largely in discovering this. It is quite clear that in the other gospels, for a special purpose, the Spirit of God relates all sorts of incidents, dislocating them from the time in which they actually took place, in order to present a certain picture. Here in Matthew we get repeated dispensational pictures, according to the scope, and design of the gospel, which reveals Jesus as the Great King. In Luke Christ's sayings are put together with the object of presenting moral pictures, for Luke's design is to present Him as a Man among men.

Here, then, Matthew puts all these words together to form a perfect whole, and to give a perfect picture of what the principles of the kingdom are. On the other hand, a striking selection of sayings and incidents is evident in Luke 14, 15, and 16. These chapters give us a moral picture. In Luke 14, we have earth, with its hindrances; in Luke 15, heaven with its joy and blessedness; and in Luke 16, in the case of the rich man, hell with all its terrible misery.

And now we read that, "When he was set, his disciples came unto him; and he opened his mouth and taught them" (Matt. 5: 1, 2). Oh, how He does love to have His own near himself. You will notice that there are nine "Blessednesses," and you will also see, they divide themselves into first, seven, and then two.

It is a common thing in the gospels to find seven, for seven is the symbol of spiritual completeness. We find seven parables in Matthew 13, seven loaves to feed the multitude in Mark 8, and the Lord is seen seven times in prayer in Luke's Gospel. Here it is a complete spiritual picture of what should be the conduct of those who are His, while He is out of His kingdom.

These seven beatitudes are again subdivided. The first four I might call internal, the last three, external. The first four partake, broadly speaking, of the character of righteousness, and are summarised in verse 10, while the last three have the character of grace for Christ's sake, and are summarised in verse 11.

## **1. BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT.**

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5: 3). What is it then to be poor in spirit? Exactly the reverse of what you find in the world. In the world people

stick up for themselves, stand for their rights. A person who does that is not in the kingdom of heaven at all, that is, is not in it in spirit. One who is poor in spirit, is self-emptied, self is out of sight. You will find a lovely connection with this in Psalm 41: 1: "Blessed is he that considereth the poor" — that is, the poor Man; and who is the poor Man? Christ! That is, considering the poor Man does not mean giving alms, but considering Him. "Blessed are the poor in spirit." It is a blessed thing thus to be self-emptied: poor-spirited the world would call you; that is it, but the Lord reckons such "blessed." The Lord give us to know in our hearts the meaning of it.

## **2. BLESSED ARE THEY THAT MOURN.**

Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted" (Matt. 5: 4). Why is it blessed to mourn? This is not merely the sorrows and trials that compass our paths oftentimes, though God does come in, and comfort our hearts in these. But do we not find ourselves in a scene where everything is opposed to God? Surely! Can we then love the Lord Jesus Christ, and pass through this scene, and not be mourners? Was not He a mourner when He passed through it?

"Love that made Thee a mourner,

It is not man's to tell!"

The Lord is speaking here to those who are in relationship to God, and know the Father. To know the Father, to know God as Father, is the distinguishing feature of Christianity. Do you know God then as Father, and are you passing through a scene where His Son is despised, and set at nought, and are you not a mourner?

In John 11 at the grave of Lazarus Jesus was a mourner, not merely He entered into the sorrow of the sisters in truest sympathy, but before God He felt what a ruin this earth is, how completely sin had marred the whole thing, and He is a mourner, and God comforts Him. In fellowship with Him, must we not be mourners too?

## **3. BLESSED ARE THE MEEK.**

"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth" (Matt. 5: 5). I believe that has its full application to the godly remnant of Israel by-and-by, but the principle is of deep value to us. What is it to be meek? It is to be like Him who said down here, "I am meek and lowly in heart." That was said by Jesus in Matthew 11, in a very dark day. You could not imagine a darker day. John was doubting Him, and Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, where His mightiest works had been done, were rejecting Him. What is His resource? He turns round to His Father, and takes everything from Him. He falls back upon His Father's love, and perfect wisdom in all His circumstances. What is it then to be meek and lowly? It is to take everything, as He took it, from the hand of God.

Supposing I give you a cross word, if you take it from me, Satan instantly gets an advantage, and you are angry. If you take it directly from God, you say, "That was not very nice, was not very Christ-like, but the Lord must have had some good reason for letting that cross-word come." What meekness that engenders in the soul, when I take everything thus directly

from the hand of God. What is it to be meek? It is a person who is willing to be trampled on, a person who takes everything so from God, that the bitter thing is sweet.

People often ask what "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4: 3) is, and they pass over the first two verses. I will quote them. "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love" (Eph. 4: 1, 2). You cannot get to verse 3 without passing through, and practically learning verse 2. We need all lowliness, meekness, long-suffering, and forbearance in love, in order to keep the unity of the Spirit. "I beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ" (2 Cor. 10: 1), are wondrous words.

#### **4. BLESSED TO HUNGER AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS.**

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled" (Matt. 5: 6). Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, God will fill. It is a hungering, and thirsting, after practically meeting the mind of God. Do we know that? I suppose the reason why we know so little of what it is to be filled, is because we so little hunger and thirst after righteousness.

Now the subject changes. Hitherto we have had righteousness. It is a *right* thing to be poor in spirit, it is a *right* thing to mourn, it is a *right* thing to be meek, it is a *right* thing to hunger and thirst after practically meeting the mind of God. Now we come to the other side of the subject. Grace. Christ!

#### **5. BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL.**

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy" (Matt. 5: 7). What met us at first? Mercy! What keeps us all along the road? Mercy! What does the Holy Ghost bid us look for? Mercy! We have received mercy to begin with, but the biggest mercy of the lot is to be delivered from this place and scene of corruption, is it not. To be taken up out of it all to be with. Himself will be an immense mercy. We are exhorted to be "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, unto eternal life" (Jude 21).

All through Scripture this word mercy abounds: it is a beautiful word, mercy. "Blessed are the merciful." Ah, beloved, I believe we are a hard lot. God delights in mercy. If a person has this thought inwrought in his soul, he will be quit of his hardness.

Not that mercy makes light of sin. Not at all! Those who are nearest to God have this too, they are "pure in heart" likewise, for they are the most like Christ. We *need* all these things, but all these *were* manifest in Him. Was He not poor in spirit? Was he not a mourner? Was He not meek? Was it not His meat and His drink to do the will of Him that sent Him? Was He not merciful? Pure in heart? A peacemaker? He was all these, and more, in perfection.

## 6. BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART.

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Matt. 5: 8). There is no making light of sin, but the most exquisite tenderness to the poor sinner. The man nearest to God has the most intense hatred of sin, but the most intense love and tenderness to the poor sinner. The man nearest to God is always the hardest on himself, and the most tender to others, specially if they have failed! The further I am away from God the harder I shall be on others, while I let myself off tenderly — far too tenderly.

## 7. BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS.

"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God" (Matt. 5: 9). How easy to do the reverse, to make a little discord, and be a peace-breaker. The peacemaker shall be called, by the name you and I love best, a child of God. "Ye are all the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3: 26), is but one side of the truth. Prove that you are a child of God by your ways, is the thought. God is the God of peace. Show your relationship, and your likeness to your father, by being a peacemaker, is our Lord's injunction here.

These last three blessednesses partake largely of the character of grace, the merciful, the pure in heart, and the peacemakers. They are the reproduction of Christ in us.

## 8. BLESSED IF PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Then there are two additional beatitudes which really summarise the other seven. First, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5: 10). That is, if you are poor in spirit, if you do not stand up for your rights, what do you get in this world? You get persecution, you are laughed at as a madman, because the difference between this world, as it now is, and in the millennial time, is, that now righteousness *suffers*, then righteousness will *reign*. Now you must do good, suffer for it, and take it patiently, for the kingdom is in mystery, and the King is hidden. By-and-by, when "a king shall reign in righteousness" (Isa. 32: 1), when the kingdom is no longer in mystery, but displayed, then righteousness will *reign*. Now, in this world, if you do right, you may suffer for it, for now righteousness *suffers*. In the millennium evil will be put down, and righteousness will *reign*. Now, if you are poor in spirit, the world will say you are mad, why not stick up for your rights, why allow yourself to be trampled upon? This suffering may come in many shapes — in your business, your family, or from your neighbour.

## 9. BLESSED IF PERSECUTED FOR CHRIST'S SAKE.

But there is more than suffering for righteousness' sake. "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake" (Matt. 5: 10, 11). The blessedness of the tenth verse is very different from that spoken of in the eleventh. In the tenth you suffer for righteousness' sake. In the eleventh you suffer for Christ's sake, and that is a higher thing. If you turn to Peter's epistles, you get the two brought

out. "For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully" (1 Peter 2: 19). That is suffering for conscience sake, which has the character of righteousness.

Again, "And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" The world will try to harm you, and the devil will try to harm you. "But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye, and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled" (1 Peter 3: 13, 14). That is suffering for righteousness' sake.

Now look at the fourteenth verse of chapter 4: "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye, for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified." (1 Peter 4: 14) That is suffering for *Christ's* sake. That is a higher thing: just as grace is higher, in a sense, than righteousness, so suffering for Christ's sake is higher thing than suffering for righteousness' sake.

Well, if you suffer for Christ's sake, what is to be your recompense? When you learn what is pleasing to the Lord, and, in order to please Him, you have to do what would displease every one else, what does He say? "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward *in heaven*." It is heaven, now, not the kingdom of heaven; and here is a lovely little word of gracious encouragement to the soul, "For so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." That is, you have got into good company, do not mind. Do they say dreadful things about you? Well, let them, He knows all about it, let them, I say.

Of course, if the world can come and lay anything really true against you, you can only be humbled. If they speak lies, just rejoice. There is nothing that so spreads too as rejoicing. just as in an army there is nothing so injurious as to have a few cowards among it. What did the apostles do in the Acts? "They departed from the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ" (Acts 5: 41, 42). They were so happy that they blew the gospel trumpet louder, longer, and more sweetly than ever before.

"Oh," you say, "I do not see the reward." No. I will tell you why, because reward day does not come till the end of the term. And we are not at the end of the term yet, but term day is coming, so go on.

You will notice another difference too, in verses 10 and 11. In Matt. 5: 10 it is, "Blessed are they." In Matt. 5: 11, "Blessed are ye," because when it comes to positive suffering for Himself, He drops the abstract term as too cold, and applies it, "Blessed are ye." Why? Because you are linked with Him now.

The Lord now uses two striking figures to show what His own should be in His absence. "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father

which is in heaven" (vers. 13-16). "Ye are the salt of the earth." Now salt is preservative, it preserves from corruption. When the saints are taken out of the earth there will be nothing left but the dead carcass of a Christless Christendom, nothing but corruption. *Salt* answers to *righteousness*. But "Ye are the *light* of the world," gives another thought. *Light* answers to *grace*. Salt merely preserves things pure from corruption, but light is aggressive, it drives out the darkness. So grace goes forth outside and seeks. "It giveth light."

A Christian should be a candle, and what for? That his light may be seen, and the Father get the glory. The Lord is very careful not to say, Let your good works be seen, but, Let your light so shine, and why? What is your light? It is the life of Christ reproduced in you, and that being seen, it is Christ in you that is seen. That is the point. The world is to see Christ in you. It is not merely giving a testimony, but being a testimony. Not being a *light-bearer*, but being light; and so your Father gets the glory, for that is all Christ. The reflection of Christ in the life of a saint has this for its effect, men will glorify your Father which is in heaven.

On the other hand, how careful we should be in our walk lest we fail to give light. The world is quick enough to pick up our faults. The world is a close observer of the life of a Christian and knows full well what is inconsistent with the name of Christ.

The Lord give us, beloved friends, to taste thoroughly in our hearts what He gives us here, that we may so walk, and so witness for Him, that the name of our Father may be glorified in us.

What grace, O Lord, and beauty shone

Around Thy steps below!

What patient love was seen in all

Thy life and death of woe!

For ever on Thy burden'd heart

A weight of sorrow hung;

Yet no ungentle murmuring word

Escaped Thy silent tongue.

Thy foes might hate, despise, revile

Thy friends unfaithful prove

Unwearied in forgiveness still,

Thy heart could only love.

Oh give us hearts to love like Thee —

Like Thee, O Lord, to grieve

Far more for others' sins, than all

The wrongs that we receive.

One with Thyself, may every eye

In us, Thy brethren, see

That gentleness and grace that spring

From union, Lord, with Thee.