

Message Summary

No one knows better how the citizens of a country should look than their king. At the beginning of the famous Sermon on the Mount, Jesus issues just this: a portrait of the ideal character of a citizen of heaven. The Beatitudes (Mt. 5:1-12) exhibit a trifold structure. They proclaim a blessing, paint a portrait, and promise a reward for disciples. The proclaimed blessing is a uniform “blessed are” (vv. 3, 4, 5, etc.). Far more than feelings or circumstances, this blessing describes divine favor and grace extended to those who by God’s grace pursue these characteristics. The rewards – comfort, an inheritance, satisfaction, mercy, adoption as God’s children, the kingdom of heaven – come together as a package deal for those who receive the new birth.

Christ begins with a posture of faith (v. 3). Essential to kingdom growth is an initial recognition of our own spiritual poverty. Next is a posture of repentance (v. 4). The natural progression of glimpsing our need and God’s greatness is the sorrow and grief that precede repentance. Having received an abundance of grace from God, the only proper response is to extend that grace to others in gentleness (v. 5). Spiritual hunger and thirst also mark the people of God (v. 6). Though the world hungers after many things, the church acknowledges that our hunger and thirst must ultimately be for God. A primary reason we don’t see more spiritual growth in our lives and churches today is surely for the neglect of solid spiritual food. Compassion and forgiveness are also inevitable (v. 7). As we taste satisfaction in Christ, so we must pour out forgiveness and compassion to those around us. A posture of integrity undergirds our dealings with God and people (v. 8). Only the pure in heart, whose affection is not polluted by idols, truly see God. Reconciliation with God also means reconciliation with others (v. 9). God pursues sinners and actively creates peace. We also are called to the ministry of reconciliation, both to preach the gospel of reconciliation to the world and live peaceful lives with our church community. Finally, we are to live with a posture of gladness amidst certain affliction for the gospel (vv. 10-12).

The Beatitudes are not another list of rules to follow to merit a righteous standing before God. They mark those who have received new life in Christ (Jn. 3:1-15). When we don’t look like the portrait of Christian character, we must trust in Christ, the only One who perfectly achieved them and who offers his perfect achievement as a gift through the gospel.

WHY IT MATTERS

Digging Deeper

Read Ephesians 2:8-16. How does the gospel achieve both vertical reconciliation with God and horizontal reconciliation with others? How does this enable us to live as meek (v. 5), merciful (v. 7) peacemakers (v. 9)?

Why are the rewards presented in both present and future tenses? In what sense will the age to come bring about the full rewards that we may not experience fully here and now?

Greg described the beatitudes as a natural progression, a “golden chain” of virtues to embody. How are they connected to each other? Why does Christ begin the chain with being poor in spirit and end with being persecuted for righteousness’ sake?

NOW WHAT DO WE DO?

Group Discussion & Application

Use the following questions to examine what the sermon and its text mean, to apply the Word to your life, and to guide how you pray. Please note that you don’t have to use all of the questions. These are just options (along with the digging deeper section) to help you frame the family/small group discussion.

1. Do you trust in Christ and the new birth to embody the portrait of Christian character, or do you still look within for your own power and discipline to achieve it?
2. Are any of the beatitudes especially relevant, convicting, or new for you? Which two or three could you especially pursue this week?
3. Are you poor in spirit (v. 3)? Do you live in humble recognition of your own spiritual poverty?
4. Do you have a posture of repentance (v. 4)? Do you see your own need of God in view of God's greatness?
5. Do you have a posture of gentleness (v. 5)? Are you content with Christ's blessing and the reward of the kingdom of heaven?
6. Do you spiritually hunger and thirst for God (v. 6)? Do you hunger for other idols instead of God? Do you replace pure spiritual milk (cf. 1 Pt. 2:2) with worldly garbage?
7. Do you show a posture of compassion and forgiveness towards others (v. 7)? Are you driven to do so because Christ has first forgiven you?
8. Are you pure in heart (v. 8)? Are you hampered from spiritual growth or fruitfulness because of idols or hidden sin (cf. Ps. 24)?
9. Do you have a posture of eager reconciliation (v. 9)? Do you long for those around you to be reconciled to Christ (2 Cor. 5:21)? Do you strive to maintain unity within the body (Eph. 4:2-3)?
10. Do you have a posture of gladness in certain affliction for righteousness' sake (v. 10-12)? Are you willing to endure hardship for the gospel? Are you faithful enough to proclaim the gospel that you might be persecuted for it?

Prayer

- Pray for Our Church:
 - Thank God for Christ, the perfect embodiment of Christian character who shares its status and rewards with those who have faith in Him
 - Pray that Christ Fellowship would, through the grace of the gospel, pursue the characteristics Jesus commanded, and that the Spirit would produce them in us.
- Pray for Our Community:
 - Pray that people in the Gadsden area would hunger and thirst for righteousness and not fake substitutes or counterfeit gods
 - Pray that the Lord draw the people of Gadsden's hearts to the things unseen, and remove the distractions of this present world.
- Pray for Our World:
 - Pray for the persecuted church around the world, especially in North Korea. Pray that believers in this heavily persecuted area would rejoice and be glad to be persecuted for righteousness' sake (vv. 11-12), that the Lord would grant special persevering grace, and that their light might shine far for many to see and believe.