

THE NEW REALITY: THE BEATITUDES

Water From Rock, January 17, 2017, Tim Smith

CONTEXT FOR THE BEATITUDES

Matthew 4:17-22

¹⁷From that time Jesus began to proclaim, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.'

¹⁸As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the lake—for they were fishermen. ¹⁹And he said to them, 'Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.' ²⁰Immediately they left their nets and followed him. ²¹As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. ²²Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

THE BEATITUDES

Matthew 5:1-12

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. ²Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

³ 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴ 'Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

⁵ 'Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

⁶ 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

⁷ 'Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

⁸ 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

⁹ 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

¹⁰ 'Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹ 'Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹²Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

The term “Beatitude” comes from the Latin beatus that is a translation of the Greek makarios, that translates the Hebrew ashere. Beatitudes are

frequent in the Psalms. “Happy” is not a good translation as it denotes a subjective emotion or state, while the word “blessed” refers to an objective judgment or condition, literally meaning “an enviable state.” It speaks of someone who is to be congratulated.

Compare Jesus’ Beatitudes in Luke 6:20-23

Then he looked up at his disciples and said:

*‘Blessed are you who are poor,
for yours is the kingdom of God.*

*²¹ Blessed are you who are hungry now,
for you will be filled.*

*‘Blessed are you who weep now,
for you will laugh.*

²² Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. ²³ Rejoice on that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.

WHAT THE BEATITUDES ARE NOT

“The Beatitudes are not teachings on how to be blessed. They are not instructions to do anything. They do not indicate conditions that are especially pleasing to God or good for human beings. No one is actually being told that they are better off for being poor, for mourning, for being persecuted, and so on, or that the conditions recommended ways to well-being, before God or man...They are explanations and illustrations, drawn from the immediate setting, of the present availability of the kingdom through personal relationship to Jesus. They single out cases that provide proof that, in him, the rule of God from the heavens truly is available in life circumstances that are beyond all human hope.” (Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*)

“The beatitudes are not pious hopes of what shall be; they are not glowing, but nebulous prophecies of some future bliss; they are congratulations on what is. The blessedness which belongs to the Christian is not a blessedness which is postponed to some future world of glory; it is a blessedness which exists here and now. It is not something into which the Christian will enter; it is something into which he has entered...but for all that it is a present reality to be enjoyed here and now.” (William

Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible*)

“In the Sermon the Mount... the promises attaching, for example, to the so-called “Beatitudes” must not be regarded as a *reward* of the spiritual states with which they are respectively connected, not yet as their result. It is not *because* a man is poor in spirit that his is the Kingdom of Heaven, in the sense that the one state will grow into the other, or be its result; still less is the one the reward of the other. The connecting link is in each case Christ Himself: because He...’has opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers.” (Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*)

The Beatitudes are:

- Not entrance requirements to the kingdom
- Not ethical demands
- Not a list of people whom God blesses
- Not vague promises for the future
- Not a moral code
- Not good advice
- Not a new legalism or Pharisaism

The Beatitudes are “good news”; they are Gospel for all!

WHAT THE BEATITUDES ARE

- They are actual descriptions of those whom God blesses
- They are the kind of people to be congratulated
- They are about the availability of the kingdom of God to everyone.

In summary: the Beatitudes are not prescriptive, they are descriptive.

CONCLUSION

“So Jesus said, ‘Blessed are the spiritual zeros – the spiritually bankrupt, deprived, deficient, the spiritual beggars, those with out a wisp of ‘religion’ – when the kingdom of the heavens comes upon them.” (Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*)

