

# THE NEW REALITY: THE BEATITUDES,

Water from Rock, January 24, 2017, Tim Smith

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## **Matthew 5:1-12**

*When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. <sup>2</sup>Then 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. <sup>12</sup>Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

## **Luke 6:20-23**

*<sup>20</sup>Then he looked up at his disciples and said:*

*'Blessed are you who are poor,*

*for yours is the kingdom of God.*

*<sup>21</sup> 'Blessed are you who are hungry now,*

*for you will be filled.*

*'Blessed are you who weep now,*

*for you will laugh.*

*<sup>22</sup> 'Blessed are you when people hate you, and*

*when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you*

*on account of the Son of Man. <sup>23</sup>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.*

## INTRODUCTION

1. Jesus came calling for people to “repent” (*metanoia*), i.e. to “change their minds” because the Kingdom of God was at hand in His person (Matthew 4:17). People left their former lives and followed Jesus because of this new reality that they might live in God’s blessedness. Everything was different; nothing was the same because Christ had come.

2. The Beatitudes clarify Jesus' fundamental message about the free availability of God's Kingdom for all. The religious systems of the day left the multitudes out, but Jesus throws open the Kingdom of God to everyone. The Beatitudes proclaim that there is no human condition that excludes the blessedness of God's Kingdom through reliance on Jesus. Jesus announces that those who are the most hopeless from the human viewpoint are welcome to enter and live in God's blessedness.
3. This is the fulfillment of Isaiah and other prophecies about God's great reversal: "<sup>3</sup>*A voice cries out: In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.* <sup>4</sup>*Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain*" (Isaiah 40:3-4). Mary also celebrated God's great reversal in her song, the Magnificat: "<sup>62</sup>*He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly;* <sup>53</sup>*he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty*" (Luke 1:52-53).
4. This means that many of those who are "last" in human estimation may well be "first" in God's blessedness as they live in reliance on Jesus (Matthew 19:30). Peoples' thinking will need to be rearranged in light of the new reality; they must repent. We must respond to Jesus' Beatitudes by living in the new reality as they concern ourselves and concern others.
5. "The Beatitudes, in particular, 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...*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 Great Conspiracy*)

Luke 4:16-21

*16 When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read,<sup>17</sup> and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the*

*place where it was written:*

<sup>18</sup> *'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me  
because he has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to let the oppressed go free,  
<sup>19</sup> to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.'*

1. As Jesus told of His life mission to bring good news to the *"poor...captives...blind...oppressed*, He was likely speaking on both a literal and spiritual level. He knew that there were people who were financially poor but spiritually rich, and people who were financially rich but spiritually poor. Jesus opens the eyes of the physically blind and the eyes of the spiritually blind. The poor, captives, blind and oppressed are the same type of "lost causes" of both the Beatitudes of Matthew and Luke, who can experience the blessedness of God's Kingdom.
2. In Luke 4:19, Jesus says that He came *"to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour"*; this is the Old Testament Year of Jubilee observed every 50 years (Leviticus 25:8-12). This year of Jubilee or the Lord's favor included:
  - Freedom for all who were held captive as slaves or prisoners;
  - Restoration for all that had been lost or forfeited;
  - Favor in receiving the Lord's protection and provision;
  - Rest both naturally (fields resting) and spiritually.
3. The observances under the Law of Moses (feast days, sacrifices, etc.) were *"only a shadow of what is to come, but the substance belongs to Christ"* (Colossians 2:17). Jesus' ministry did not commence the Year of Jubilee as Israel knew it, but marked the age of God's favor, the spiritual Jubilee continuing until Christ returns.
3. Here is the new reality of the Beatitudes, living in God's freedom, restoration, favor and rest.

- **FREEDOM RESTORATION** ○ **FAVOR**
  - **REST**

Jesus ministry didn't mark a year of Jubilee as Israel knew it, but rather it marked an age of a spiritual Jubilee that will continue until He returns!

he Beatitudes simply cannot be “good news” if they are understood as a set of “how-tos”

for achieving blessedness. They would amount to a new legalism.

Similarly, unless we suffer from a remarkably restricted range of acquaintances, we all know that there are people who please God and have his blessing without being poor, hungry, grief-stricken, or persecuted. They trust Jesus with all their heart, and they love and serve their neighbors and others in his name

They serve to clarify Jesus' fundamental message: the free availability of God's rule and righteousness to all of humanity through reliance upon Jesus himself, the person now loose in the world among us. They do this simply by taking those who, from the human point of view, are regarded as most hopeless, most beyond all possibility of God's blessing or even interest, and exhibiting them as enjoying God's touch and abundant provisions from the heavens.

No human condition excludes blessedness

The religious system of his day left the multitudes out, but Jesus welcomed them all into his kingdom.

Now we pass on to those who mourn. Luke refers to them as "the weeping ones" (6:21): men or women whose mates have just deserted them, leaving them paralyzed by rejection, for example: a parent in gut-wrenching grief or depression over the death of a little daughter; people in the sunset of their employable years have lost their career or business or life savings because of an 'economic downturn' or the takeover of the company in which they had invested themselves. So many things to break the heart! But as they see the kingdom in Jesus, enter it, and learn to live in it, they find comfort, and their tears turn to laughter. Yes, they are even better off than they were before their particular disaster.

Then there are the meek...These are the shy ones, the intimidated, the mild, the unassertive. They step off the sidewalk to let others pass as if it were only right, and if something goes wrong around them, they automatically feel it must have been something to do with them. When others step forward and speak up, they shrink back, their vocal chords perhaps moving but producing no sound. They do not assert their

legitimate claims unless driven into a corner and then usually with ineffectual rage. But as the kingdom of the heavens enfolds them, the whole earth is their Father's --- and theirs as they need it. The Lord is their shepherd, they shall not want.

Next are those who burn with desire for things to be made right. It may be that the wrong is in themselves. Perhaps they have failed so badly that night and day they cringe before their own sin and inwardly scream to be made pure. Or it may be that they have been severely wronged, suffered some terrible injustice, and they are consumed with longing to see the injury set right --- like parents who learn that the murderer of their child has been quickly released from prison and is laughing at them. Yet the kingdom of the heavens has a chemistry that can transform even the past and make the terrible, irretrievable losses that human beings experience seem insignificant in the greatness of God. He restores our soul and fills us with goodness of righteousness.

The merciful are here also. The worldly wise will, of course, say, "Woe to the merciful, for they shall be taken advantage of." And outside heaven's rule there is nothing more true. My mother and father went bankrupt and lost their clothing business in the early 1930's, just before I was born. Those were the depression years, and they simply could not make people pay for what they needed. Clothing was given 'on credit' when it was clear there would be no payment.

The merciful are always despised by those who know how to 'take care of business.' Yet outside the human order, under the great profusion of heaven's goodness, they themselves find mercy to meet their needs, far beyond any 'claim' they might have on God.

Then there are the pure in heart, the ones for whom nothing is good enough, not even themselves. These are the perfectionists. They are a pain to everyone, themselves most of all. In religion they will certainly find errors in your doctrine, your practice, and probably your heart and your attitude. They may even be harder on themselves. They endlessly pick over their own motivations. They wanted Jesus to wash his hands even though they were not dirty and called him a glutton and winebibber.

Their food is never cooked right; their clothes and hair are always unsatisfactory; they can tell you what is wrong with everything. How miserable they are! And yet the kingdom is open to them, and there at last they will find something that satisfies their pure heart. They will see God. And when they do they will find what they have been looking for, someone who is truly good enough.

The peacemakers are here too. They make the list because outside the kingdom they are, as is often said, called everything BUT a child of God. That is because they are always in the middle. Ask the policeman called in to smooth a domestic dispute. There is no situation more dangerous. Neither side trusts you. Because they know that you are looking at both sides, you can't possibly be on their side. But under God's rule there is recognition that in bringing good to people who are in the wrong (as both sides usually are) you show the divine family resemblance, "because God is himself kind to the ungrateful and the wicked". The peacemaker deals precisely with the ungrateful and the wicked, as anyone who has tried it well knows.

And then we have those who are attacked because of their stand for what is right. These often not only suffer momentary harassment, but see their lives ruined or killed simply for refusing to be compliant with what is wrong.

Laws are sometimes passed to protect 'whistle-blowers' in certain cases, but what the law cannot protect you from falls far short of the damage that is often done. Most of what is wrong in human affairs can't be dealt with by law. Yet these, too, can be possessed by the kingdom of the heavens, and when they are, that is enough to allow them to enjoy a blessed life. They experience an unshakable security in which they cannot be harmed.

v. 6 "righteousness" dikaiousunen

v. 8 hoi katharoi te kardia

Thus by proclaiming blessed those who in the human order are thought hopeless, and by pronouncing woes over those human beings regarded as well off, Jesus opens the kingdom of the heavens.

By proclaiming blessed those who in the human order are thought hopeless, and by pronouncing woes over those human being regarded as well off, Jesus opens the kingdom of the heavens to everyone.

### **Luke 4:16-21**

*16 When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read,*

*<sup>17</sup> and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:*

*<sup>18</sup> 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
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*He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to let the oppressed go free,*

*<sup>19</sup> to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.'*

*<sup>20</sup> And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. <sup>21</sup> Then he began to say to them, 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.'*

Jesus let his townspeople know that he was the very one through whom these blessings would come.

Their response was violent. They tried to kill him because they understood clearly that he was claiming to be God's anointed leader.

But notice who is among those listed by Jesus using the words of the prophet: the poor, the captives, the blind, and the oppressed. Clearly this is the same type of list found in the Beatitudes of both Matthew and Luke. It is a list of people humanly regarded as lost causes, but who yet, at the hand of Jesus, come to know the blessing of the kingdom of the heavens.

### **Matthew 11:1-6**

*Now when Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and proclaim his message in their cities.*

*2 When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his\* disciples<sup>3</sup> and said to him, 'Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?'<sup>4</sup> Jesus answered them, 'Go and tell John what you hear and see:<sup>5</sup> the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them.<sup>6</sup> And blessed is anyone who takes no offence at me.'*

John had all along been very limited in his understanding of Jesus. It was not his job to understand him. But he became increasingly concerned when Jesus did not do what he any red-blooded Messiah would do: take the government in hand and set the world right.

Jesus directed John's disciples simply to report back to him what they had heard and seen around Jesus.

Matthew 11:6 The word "blessed" makarios, is the same as that used in Matthew 5 and Luke 6. It refers to the highest type of well-being possible for human beings, but it is also the term Greeks used for the highest kind of blissful existence characteristic of the gods. More important, however, note the list of "hopeless cases" that are blessed through the sufficiency of God to meet them in their appalling need. The personal ministry of Jesus from his present kingdom brings them beatitude.

The great inversion is the perhaps the most pervasive them of the biblical writings.

The reign of God over life is the good news of the whole Bible.

The God-based inversion is expressed in Jesus' often repeated sayings about the "firsts" and the "lasts."

Jesus knows that much of what people think is important is not really so, and that what they think to be of no importance is often of great significance before God. Their thinking would have to be rearranged.

Many of those regarded as cursed or "last" in human terms may well be blessed or "first" in God's terms, as they rely on the kingdom of Jesus.

Many, but not necessarily all,...the Beatitudes are lists of human “lasts”, who at the individualized touch of the heavens become divine “firsts”.

The gospel of the kingdom is that no one is beyond beatitude because the rule of God from the heavens is available to all. Everyone can reach it, and it can reach everyone.

We respond appropriately to the Beatitudes of Jesus by living as if this were so, as it concerns others and it concerns ourselves.

You are really walking in the good news of the kingdom if you can go with confidence to any of the hopeless people around you and effortlessly convey that they can now enter a blessed life with God.

Who would be on your list of “Hopeless Blessables” as found in today’s world? Certainly all of those on Jesus’ lists, for though they are merely illustrative, they also are timeless. Who would you regard as the most unfortunate people around you?

The flunk-outs, drop-outs, burnt-outs. The broke and the broken. The drug heads and the divorced. The HIV positive and the herpes-ridden. The brain-damaged the incurably ill. The overemployed, the underemployed, the unemployed. The unemployable. The swindled, the shoved aside, the replaced. The parents with children living on the street, the children with parents not dying in the ‘rest’ home. The lonely, the incompetent, the stupid. The emotionally starved or emotionally dead.

The condition of life sought for by human beings through the ages is attained in the quietly transforming friendship of Jesus.

1 Corinthians 6 “And such were some of you....”

As one beggar found bread, I can go to them and tell them were I found bread. I can go to a murderer and say “You can be blessed in the kingdom of God. There is forgiveness for you.”

Any spiritually healthy group of believers will more or less look like these.....

1 Corinthians 1:26-31 Here are the foolish, weak, lowly, despised of the world.

The Beatitudes are not a list of the spiritual giants Often you will discern a particular nobility and glory on and among those "blessed" ones. But it is not from them. It is the effulgence of the kingdom among them.

xxx

THIS FRIDAY.....  
...INAUGURATION OF 45<sup>TH</sup>  
PRESIDENT

INAUGURATION --- MARKS  
BEGINNING OF A NEW 4 YEAR TERM  
OF PRESIDENT OF U.S.

SINCE 1937 --- ON JANUARY 20

TERM OF PRESIDENT BEGINS....

....WHEN TAKES OATH OF OFFICE

MOST OF EVENTS OF DAY....

....GOVERNED BY TRADITION  
RATHER THAN CONSTITUTION

THE ONLY THING MANDATED

.....OATH OF OFFICE

OATH OF OFFICE --- ANYONE

....THOUGH TRADITIONALLY THE  
CHIEF JUSTICE

IN 1<sup>ST</sup> INAUGURATION....

...WASHINGTON ADDED WORDS:

*"SO HELP ME GOD"*

DONALD TRUMP ---- TAKE OATH

.....LINCOLN'S 1<sup>ST</sup> INAUGUARATION  
BIBLE

GOING BACK TO WASHINGTON

....TRADITION OF NATIONAL  
PRAYER SERVICE

...ON DAY AFTER INAUGURATION

TRADITION --- INAUGURAL ADDRESS

WASHINGTON'S ---2<sup>ND</sup> ADDRESS

..SHORTEST --- 135 WORDS

INAUGURAL ADDRESS.....

....STATEMENT OF PRINCIPAL

...WHAT IS TO CHARACTERIZE THE  
NEW TERM OF OFFICE

I THINK OF BEATITUDES....

....JESUS' INAUGURAL ADDRESS

DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

....OF HIS REIGN

**BEATITUDES ----- NEW REALITY**

GOD AND KINGDOM ----- REAL

WHEN WE GET AWAY FROM GOD AND  
KINGDOM....

.....WE ARE IN UNREALITY

BEATITUDES.....

....REGARDED AMONG THE  
LITERARY AND RELIGIOUS  
TREASURES OF HISTORY

WE HONOR THEM.....SAVOR THEM...

....MEDITATE ON THEM

COMMON TO SEE BEATITUDES

...ON PLAQUES....NEEDLE-POINT

QUESTION IS -----

...HOW DO WE LIVE IN  
RESPONSE TO THEM???

WHAT TO DO WITH BEATITUDES??

WHAT DO BEATITUDES MEAN FOR  
US?????

**MARK TWAIN: It ain't what you  
don't know that gets you into  
trouble. It's what you know for  
sure that just ain't so. Mark Twain**

ILLUS. YOUNG CHURCH STAFF

MEMBER

BEATITUDES.....

....OFTEN MADE TO BE  
PRESCRIPTIVE RATHER THAN  
DESCRIPTIVE

WE OFTEN USED BEATITUDES

...AS CHECK LIST FOR SPIRITUAL  
ATTAINMENT

AM I POOR ENOUGH IN SPIRIT.....

...THAT I INHERIT THE KINGDOM??

AM I MEEK ENOUGH.....

...THAT I INHERIT THE EARTH??

THE BEATITUDES.....

....ABOUT THE AVAILABILITY OF  
THE KINGDOM OF GOD TO ALL

## **CONTEXT FOR THE BEATITUDES**

Matthew 4:17-22

*<sup>17</sup>From that time Jesus began to proclaim, 'Repent, (METANOIA) for the kingdom of heaven (KINGDOM OF GOD) has come near.'*

*18 As 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. <sup>19</sup>And he said to*

*them, 'Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.'* <sup>20</sup>*Immediately they left their nets and followed him.* <sup>21</sup>*As 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.* <sup>22</sup>*Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.*

## **THE BEATITUDES**

Matthew 5:1-12

*When Jesus saw the crowds,*

IN BEATITUDES -----

..JESUS DESCRIBING WHAT HE  
SEES

STANDING AROUND HIM....

....PEOPLE OF NO SPIRITUAL  
QUALIFICATIONS

HE SEES A LOT....

...SPIRITUALLY POOR PEOPLE

....MISFITS

THEY ARE PEOPLE

...DESPERATELY TRYING TO HOLD  
LIFE TOGETHER

JESUS SEES PEOPLE....

....RELIGIOUS SYSTEM OF DAY

....LEFT OUT

JESUS IS WELCOMING THEM....

...INTO HIS KINGDOM

*When Jesus saw the crowds,  
he went up the mountain; (JESUS  
NEW MOSES) and after he sat down,  
his disciples came to him. <sup>2</sup>Then he  
began to speak, and taught them,  
saying:*

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

POOR IN SPIRIT ---- BLESSED

....NOT BECAUSE POOR IN SPIRIT

BLESSED -----

....BECAUSE KINGDOM OF GOD IS  
OFFERED TO THEM

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

NOTE: --- PRESENT TENSE

....*"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. <sup>12</sup>Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

SO MANY THINGS HERE.....

....THAT BREAK YOUR HEART

- MOURNING
- PERSECUTION
- SPIRITUAL POVERTY

BUT THE KINGDOM OF GOD HAS  
COME

....AND THEY ENTER IN

...THEY FIND COMFORT, HELP,

NOTES:

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:*

ONCE AGAIN.....

....JESUS IS JUST LOOKING AT THE  
PEOPLE SURROUNDING HIM

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

SERMONS SERIES ON BEATITUDES

....NEVER PREACHED FROM LUKE 6  
VERSION

ARE YOU BETTER OFF FOR BEING  
POOR?

NO!!!!!!

..... BETTER OFF....

## ....BECAUSE THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS AT HAND

<sup>21</sup> *'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. <sup>23</sup>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**

*(DallasWillard, *The Divine Conspiracy*)*

“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."

(William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible*)

"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."

(Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*)

"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.'"

WE DON'T BELIEVE IN SALVATION BY WORKS.....

...NOR DO WE BELIEVE IN SALVATION BY ATTITUDE

- POOR IN SPIRIT
- MEEK
- HUNGER AND THIRSTING

**The Beatitudes are not:**

- 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 prescriptive, they are descriptive.

## CONCLUSION

(Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*)

“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.”

I WANT YOU.....

....TO WRITE YOUR OWN  
BEATITUDES

BLESSED ARE YOU.....

...WHO HAVE CANCER BECAUSE  
THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS HERE

BLESSED ARE YOU...

....IN BROKEN MARRIGE BECAUSE  
THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS HERE

MATTHEW 6 ----- "PRAY IN THIS WAY"

*9 'Pray then in this way:  
Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name.  
10 Your kingdom come.  
Your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.*

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## Water From Rock, January

17, 2017, Tim Smith

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### CONTEXT FOR THE BEATITUDES

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### THE BEATITUDES

#### Matthew 5:1-12

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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. <sup>12</sup>Rejoice 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.*

<sup>21</sup> *Blessed are you who are hungry now,  
for you will be filled.*

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

<sup>22</sup> *Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. <sup>23</sup>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:

- 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 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*)

## INTRO.

It ain't what you don't know that gets you into trouble. It's what you know for sure that just ain't so. Mark Twain

First there is a question of which life is good. What is genuinely in my interest, and how may I enter true well being?...What came to be called the Beatitudes were given by him to help clarify this matter.

Who is it, according to Jesus, that has the good life?

The Beatitudes are among the literary and religious treasures of the human race. Along with the Ten Commandments, the Twenty-third psalm, the Lord's Prayer, and a very few other passages from the Bible, they are acknowledged by almost everyone to be among the highest expressions of religious insight and moral inspiration. We can savor them, affirm them, meditate on them, and engrave them on plaques to hang on our walls. But a major question remains: How are we to live in response to them?

## QUOTES

Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah:*

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."

[The beatitudes] are a summons to live in the present in the way that will make sense in God's promised future, because that future has arrived in the present in Jesus of Nazareth. It may seem upside down, but we are called to believe, with great daring, that it is in fact the right way up. Try it and see. (Tom Wright again) **Matthew for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-15**

NT Wright **Matthew for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-15**

"Jesus is not suggesting that [the Beatitudes] are simply timeless truths about the way the world is, about human behavior. If he was saying that, he is wrong. Mourners often go uncomforted, the meek don't inherit the earth, those who long for justice often take that longing to the grave. This is an upside-down world, or perhaps a right-way-up world; and Jesus is saying that with his work its starting to come true. This is an announcement, not a philosophical analysis of the world. It's about something that's starting to happen, not about a general truth of life. It is gospel: good news, not good advice.

NT Wright **Matthew for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-15**

The life of heaven—the life of the realm where God is already king—is to become the life of the world, transforming the present 'earth' into a place of beauty and delight that God always intended. And those who follow Jesus are to begin to live by this rule here and now. That's the point of the Sermon on the Mount, and these 'beatitudes' in particular. They are a summons to live in the present in the way that will make sense in God's promised future; because that future has arrived in the present in Jesus of Nazareth. It may seem upside down, but we are called to believe, with great daring, that it is in fact the right way up. Try it and see."

William Barclay, *Daily Study Bible*: 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.

Barclay: *Daily Study Bible* The greatness of the beatitudes is that they are not wistful glimpses of some future beauty; they are not even golden promises of some distant glory; they are triumphant shouts of bliss for a permanent joy that nothing in the world can ever take away.

**BEGINNING OF NOTES FROM DALLAS WILLARD, *THE DIVINE CONSPIRACY*** 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.

## CONTEXT/SETTING

In chapter 4 of Matthew we see Jesus proclaiming his basic message (v. 17) and demonstrating it by acting with God's rule from the heavens, meeting the desperate needs of the people around him (4:23-25).

Jesus teaches his apprentices, along with all who hear, about the meaning of the availability of the heavens.

No doubt Jesus had many exhibits from this category in the crowd around him.

Standing around Jesus are people with no spiritual qualifications or abilities at all. You would never call on them when 'spiritual work' is to be done. They don't know their Bible, they don't know the Law.

The religious system of his day left the multitudes out, but Jesus welcomed them all into his kingdom.

Jesus was speaking to the crowd and was describing what he saw. He saw a lot of spiritually poor people. He saw the misfits and outcasts. He saw those who did not have it together.

They are explanations and illustrations, drawn from the immediate setting, of the present availability of the kingdom through personal relationship to Jesus.

Jesus was speaking to the crowd and was describing what he saw. He saw a lot of spiritually poor people. He saw the misfits and outcasts. He saw those who did not have it together.

Jesus was turning everyone's expectations upside down.

They are explanations and illustrations, drawn from the immediate setting, of the present availability of the kingdom through personal relationship to Jesus.

And why are they such wonderful news? Because something quite momentous has happened. Jesus is outlining to his disciples that the world's values have been turned upside down, because he has come

Jesus was the "new Moses"

## BLESSED/MAKARIOS

There are a number of reasons why the word "blessed" is a better translation. The term "happy" denotes a subjective emotion or state, while the word "blessed" refers to an objective judgment or condition, literally meaning "an enviable state."

This word, too, has several meanings. It can indicate special favor, unique

standing, permission, empowerment, endowment, and more.

To be blessed feels like you have someone's unconditional regard. It feels like you are not and will not be alone, like you will be accompanied wherever you go. Being blessed feels like you have the capacity to rise above present circumstances, like you are more than the sum of your parts or past experiences. Being blessed feels like you have worth -- not because of something you did or might do, but simply because of who you are, simply because you deserve it.

The term 'beatitudes comes from a latin word for blessed 'beatus'. '

Makarios has been translated 'blessed' as we read in the NIV, or 'happy' in the Good News Bible. But others (Tom Wright included) want to say it's more than that. It's someone who is to be congratulated.

Makarios can be better translated as 'wonderful news for'

Greek word, "Makarios" In this sense then, it refers to more than everyday happiness, but the great happiness that comes as a gift from God.

## BECAUSE OF JESUS/KINGDOM

The poor in spirit are blessed as a result of the kingdom of God being available to them in their spiritual poverty.

**BEGINNING OF NOTES FROM DALLAS WILLARD, *THE DIVINE CONSPIRACY*** Jesus did not say, "Blessed are the poor in spirit BECAUSE they are poor in spirit." He did not think, "What fine thing it is to be destitute of every spiritual attainment or quality. It makes people worthy of the kingdom." And we steal away the much more profound meaning of his teaching about the availability of the kingdom by replacing the state of spiritual impoverishment – in no way good in itself – with some supposedly praiseworthy state of mind or attitude that 'qualifies' us for the kingdom. In doing so we merely substitute another banal legalism for the ecstatic pronouncement of the gospel. Those called poor in spirit are called 'blessed' by Jesus not because they are in a meritorious condition, but because, **precisely in spite of and in the midst of their ever so deplorable**

**condition**, the rule of the heavens has moved redemptively upon and through them by the grace of Christ.

They were blessed because God had come to THEM right in that moment.

No, we are blessed in the fact that we know Jesus. All blessing comes through faith in Christ, not in any merit of our own.

God regularly and relentlessly shows up just where we least expect God to be in order to give to us freely what we can neither earn nor achieve: blessedness.

## WHAT THE BEATITUDES ARE NOT

The Beatitudes, in particular 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.

In many ways it is easier to say what the beatitudes are not:

- They are not a list of people whom God blesses
- They are not a list of pious aims
- They are not vague promises for the future
- They are not outlining a moral code
- They are not good advice
  
- But rather they are 'good news'. Wonderful news, even. They are 'gospel'.

Eugene Peterson suggests that these are not "entrance requirements" to the Kingdom of Heaven, but are tools that can be used to uncover a vital faith. They are not "ethical demands," but are instead, "congratulatory announcements"

The Beatitudes simply cannot be 'good news' if they are understood as a set of 'how-tos' for achieving blessedness. They would then only amount to a new legalism. They would not serve to throw open the kingdom –

anything but. They would impose a new brand of Phariseeism, a new way of closing the door – as well as some very gratifying new possibilities for the human engineering of righteousness.

## BEATITUDES MISUNDERSTOOD

We have managed to turn it into a spiritual attainment just by acknowledging it. And we escape the embarrassment of receiving pure mercy, for our humble recognition makes blessedness somehow appropriate.

Here we have full-blown, if not by works, then possibly salvation by attitude. Or even by situation and chance, in case you happen to be persecuted, for example --- meritorious attitude or circumstance guarantees acceptance with God!

we have used the Beatitudes as a checklist of spiritual attainment.

Unfortunately, we have taken these words of grace and have turned them around into another "law." We have tried to be spiritually poor. We have tried to mourn, believing that if we do, THEN we will experience God's comfort. Some have even gone so far as to court persecution so that God will bless them. In all of this, we show our self righteousness in believing that the blessings of God can be courted by our merit or behavior.

we have *tried* to become spiritually poor so that we would in turn, inherit the Kingdom of God.

## WHAT BEATITUDES ARE

No human condition excludes blessedness.

This is a list of people humanly regarded as lost causes, but who yet, at the hand of Jesus, come to know the blessing of the kingdom of the heavens.

Jesus is describing the actual position of those who are blessed by God.

If you find yourself in spiritual destitution, do not worry, because God is

coming to you.

The Beatitudes are about the availability of the Kingdom of God

But rather they are 'good news'. Wonderful news even. They are 'gospel'.

What if rather than saying 'try hard to live like this' Jesus is saying 'the people who are living like this are in good shape, and so they should be congratulated.

## MISC.

### **BEGINNING OF NOTES FROM DALLAS WILLARD, *THE DIVINE CONSPIRACY***

What we have come to call the Sermon on the Mount is a concise statement of Jesus' teachings on how to live in the reality of God's present kingdom available to us from the very space surrounding our bodies. It concludes with a statement that all who hear and do what he says will have a life that can stand up to everything – that is, a life for eternity because it is already eternal (Matt. 7:24-25).

“So he 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.”

It is deeply revealing of how we think about God to see the way translators struggle to make this condition of 'spiritual poverty' something good in its own right and thus deserving of blessing. Those who do not give the literal meaning indicated most commonly put something like being 'humble-minded' in its place.

But the mistranslations noted remain attractive because they suit our human sense of propriety, which cries out against God's blessing on people

just because of their need and just because he chooses --- or perhaps just because someone asked him to.

The Beatitudes take those who, from the human point of view, are regarded as hopeless, most beyond all possibility of God's blessing or even interest, and exhibiting them as enjoying God's touch and abundant provision from the heavens.

So many things to break the heart! But as they see the kingdom in Jesus, enter it, and learn to live in it, they find comfort, and their tears turn to laughter. Yes, they are even better off than they were before that particular disaster.

They had thought that if they were rich or did everything right, then that was the sign that God was blessing them. But, Jesus said no to that.

He is saying what millions then and now desperately want to hear, and could hear if only his followers would get off their whatevers and do what he said.

Are these so-called 'beautiful attitudes' the ones we should be aiming for as Christians? Trying to become as sad, as poor, as persecuted as possible?

These beatitudes reflect that upside down nature. This is 'upside down' living. Or rather its living the right way up (God's way up) in an upside down world.

Living upside down, or rather 'the right way up in a world that is still upside down' is going to cause us problems and conflicts.

Living out this upside down way of life is going to make us look unworldly, foolish even

Wonderful news. It is the world we're in that's upside down. God's world is the right way up.

The wonderful news is that Jesus has come and has turned the world upside down, or rather the right way up. Jesus is calling the disciples to live that upside down way.

most people think that wonderful news consists of success, wealth, long life, victory in battle. Jesus is offering wonderful news for the humble, the poor, the mourners, the peacemakers.

present possession. Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven *belongs* (present tense) to them"

We know how life here on earth works – for the rules are well-established and obvious to all:

## LUKE 6

Luke 6: 20 *Then he looked up at his disciples and said:*

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

<sup>21</sup> *'Blessed are you who are hungry now,  
for you will be filled.*

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

<sup>22</sup> *'Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you \* on account of the Son of Man. <sup>23</sup> 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.*

Luke 6: Sermon on the Plain. These are, once again, precisely people from the crowd surrounding him. Truly it would be difficult to make these kinds of people look good. I have yet to find anyone attempting to translate the first beatitude of Luke as "Blessed are those who think they are poor."

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 listed are recommended ways to well-being before God or man.

Billy Graham called them the 'beautiful attitudes'. It's certainly a way of remembering them. But what's so beautiful about them? Is it really beautiful to be poor, to be mourning, to be persecuted? All situations where if we're honest we wouldn't feel very blessed!

XXXXXX

Blessed are the rich: for they have everything a person could ever want or need. Blessed are the tough: for they never let life hurt them.

Blessed are the complainers: for they get their way in the end.

Blessed are the morally indifferent: for they never feel regret.

Blessed are the slave-drivers: for they get results. Blessed are the worldly wise: for they know how to get things done. Blessed are the trouble-makers: for they make people take notice of them. Adapted from J. B. Phillips, *Good News*, as quoted in Philip Yancey,

The problem is that the majority of people in our society still think that the 'wonderful news' is success, wealth, long life. RE

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## CONTEXT

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Jesus teaches his apprentices, along with all who hear, about the meaning of the availability of the heavens.

“So he 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.”

The poor in spirit are blessed as a result of the kingdom of God being available to them in their spiritual poverty.

Today the words 'poor in spirit' no longer convey the sense of spiritual destitution that they were originally meant to bear. Amazingly, they have come to refer to a praiseworthy condition.

No doubt Jesus had many exhibits from this category in the crowd around him.

Standing around Jesus are people with no spiritual qualifications or abilities at all. You would never call on them when 'spiritual work' is to be done. They don't know their Bible, they don't know the Law.

It is deeply revealing of how we think about God to see the way translators struggle to make this condition of 'spiritual poverty' something good in its own right and thus deserving of blessing. Those who do not give the literal meaning indicated most commonly put something like being 'humble-minded' in its place.

Jesus did not say, "Blessed are the poor in spirit BECAUSE they are poor in spirit." He did not think, "What fine thing it is to be destitute of every spiritual attainment or quality. It makes people worthy of the kingdom." And we steal away the much more profound meaning of his teaching about the availability of the kingdom by replacing the state of spiritual impoverishment – in no way good in itself – with some supposedly praiseworthy state of mind or attitude that 'qualifies' us for the kingdom. In doing so we merely substitute another banal legalism for the ecstatic pronouncement of the gospel. Those called poor in spirit are called 'blessed' by Jesus not because they are in a meritorious condition, but because, **precisely in spite of and in the midst of their ever so deplorable condition**, the rule of the heavens has moved redemptively upon and through them by the grace of Christ.

Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*:

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.”

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The Beatitudes simply cannot be ‘good news’ if they are understood as a set of ‘how-tos’ for achieving blessedness. They would then only amount to a new legalism. They would not serve to throw open the kingdom – anything but. They would impose a new brand of Phariseeism, a new way of closing the door – as well as some very gratifying new possibilities for the human engineering of righteousness.

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So many things to break the heart! But as they see the kingdom in Jesus, enter it, and learn to live in it, they find comfort, and their tears turn to laughter. Yes, they are even better off than they were before that particular disaster.

This is a list of people humanly regarded as lost causes, but who yet, at the hand of Jesus, come to know the blessing of the kingdom of the heavens.

#### **END OF NOTES FROM DALLAS WILLARD, *THE DIVINE CONSPIRACY***

we have used the Beatitudes as a checklist of spiritual attainment.

we have *tried* to become spiritually poor so that we would in turn, inherit the Kingdom of God.

Jesus is describing the actual position of those who are blessed by God.

If you find yourself in spiritual destitution, do not worry, because God is coming to you.

Jesus was speaking to the crowd and was describing what he saw. He saw a lot of spiritually poor people. He saw the misfits and outcasts. He saw those who did not have it together.

They were blessed because God had come to THEM right in that moment.

Jesus was turning everyone's expectations upside down.

They had thought that if they were rich or did everything right, then that was the sign that God was blessing them. But, Jesus said no to that.

Unfortunately, we have taken these words of grace and have turned them around into another "law." We have tried to be spiritually poor. We have tried to mourn, believing that if we do, THEN we will experience God's comfort. Some have even gone so far as to court persecution so that God will bless them. In all of this, we show our self righteousness in believing that the blessings of God can be courted by our merit or behavior.

No, we are blessed in the fact that we know Jesus. All blessing comes through faith in Christ, not in any merit of our own.

The Beatitudes, in particular 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 listed are 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.

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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 listed are 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.

The Beatitudes simply cannot be "good news" if they are understood as a set of "how-tos" for achieving blessedness. They would then only amount to a new legalism.

Generally the Beatitudes are treated as kingdom attitudes or values revealed and taught to Jesus by his disciples.

We will be truly blessed if we learn these values and live according to them.

The Beatitudes are about the availability of the Kingdom of God

There are a number of reasons why the word “blessed” is a better translation. The term “happy” denotes a subjective emotion or state, while the word “blessed” refers to an objective judgment or condition, literally meaning “an enviable state.”

This word, too, has several meanings. It can indicate special favor, unique standing, permission, empowerment, endowment, and more.

To be blessed feels like you have someone’s unconditional regard. It feels like you are not and will not be alone, like you will be accompanied wherever you go. Being blessed feels like you have the capacity to rise above present circumstances, like you are more than the sum of your parts or past experiences. Being blessed feels like you have worth -- not because of something you did or might do, but simply because of who you are, simply because you deserve it.

God regularly and relentlessly shows up just where we least expect God to be in order to give to us freely what we can neither earn nor achieve: blessedness.

He is saying what millions then and now desperately want to hear, and could hear if only his followers would get off their whatevers and do what he said.

The term ‘beatitudes comes from a latin word for blessed ‘beatus’. ‘

Billy Graham called them the ‘beautiful attitudes’. It’s certainly a way of remembering them. But what’s so beautiful about them? Is it really beautiful to be poor, to be mourning, to be persecuted? All situations where if we’re honest we wouldn’t feel very blessed!

Are these so-called ‘beautiful attitudes’ the ones we should be aiming for as Christians? Trying to become as sad, as poor, as persecuted as possible?

Makarios has been translated ‘blessed’ as we read in the NIV, or ‘happy’ in the Good News Bible. But others (Tom Wright included) want to say it’s more than that. It’s someone who is to be congratulated.

What if rather than saying 'try hard to live like this' Jesus is saying 'the people who are living like this are in good shape, and so they should be congratulated.

'These beatitudes aren't a list of pious hopes of what will be. They are not glowing but vague prophecies of some future bliss. They are congratulations on what is' (William Barclay p102)

They are not a list of people whom God blesses

They are not a list of pious aims

They are not vague promises for the future

They are not outlining a moral code. They are not good advice

But rather they are 'good news'. Wonderful news even. They are 'gospel'.

And why are they such wonderful news? Because something quite momentous has happened. Jesus is outlining to his disciples that the world's values have been turned upside down, because he has come

These beatitudes reflect that upside down nature. This is 'upside down' living. Or rather its living the right way up (God's way up) in an upside down world.

[The beatitudes] are a summons to live in the present in the way that will make sense in God's promised future, because that future has arrived in the present in Jesus of Nazareth. It may seem upside down, but we are called to believe, with great daring, that it is in fact the right way up. Try it and see. (Tom Wright again) **Matthew for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-15**

The problem is that the majority of people in our society still think that the 'wonderful news' is success, wealth, long life.

Living upside down, or rather 'the right way up in a world that is still upside down' is going to cause us problems and conflicts.

Living out this upside down way of life is going to make us look unworldly, foolish even

Wonderful news. It is the world we're in that's upside down. God's world is the right way up.

Makarios can be better translated as 'wonderful news for'

What if rather than saying 'try hard to live like this' Jesus is saying 'the people who are living like this are in good shape, and so they should be congratulated.'

In many ways it is easier to say what the beatitudes are not:

- They are not a list of people whom God blesses
- They are not a list of pious aims
- They are not vague promises for the future
- They are not outlining a moral code
- They are not good advice
  
- But rather they are 'good news'. Wonderful news, even. They are 'gospel'.

The wonderful news is that Jesus has come and has turned the world upside down, or rather the right way up. Jesus is calling the disciples to live that upside down way.

Spending time with Jesus makes it more natural to live life 'upside down'

The term 'beatitudes comes from a latin word for blessed 'beatus'. '

Billy Graham called them the 'beautiful attitudes'. It's certainly a way of remembering them. But what's so beautiful about them? Is it really beautiful to be poor, to be mourning, to be persecuted? All situations where if we're honest we wouldn't feel very blessed!

Are these so-called 'beautiful attitudes' the ones we should be aiming for as Christians? Trying to become as sad, as poor, as persecuted as possible?

There's a noticeable difference isn't there, between saying 'blessed are' the poor and 'wonderful news for' the poor.

What if rather than saying 'try hard to live like this' Jesus is saying 'the people who are living like this are in good shape, and so they should be congratulated.'

NT Wright **Matthew for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-15**

"Jesus is not suggesting that [the Beatitudes] are simply timeless truths about the way the world is, about human behavior. If he was saying that, he is wrong. Mourners often go uncomforted, the meek don't inherit the earth, those who long for justice often take that longing to the grave. This is an upside-down world, or perhaps a right-way-up world; and Jesus is saying that with his work its starting to come true. This is an announcement, not a philosophical analysis of the world. It's about something that's starting to happen, not about a general truth of life. It is gospel: good news, not good advice.

Jesus is beginning a new era for God's people and God's world. From here on, all the controls people thought they knew about are going to work the other way round. In our world, still, most people think that wonderful news consists of success, wealth, long life, victory in battle. Jesus is offering wonderful news for the humble, the poor, the mourners, the peacemakers.

No: the clue comes in the next chapter, in the prayer Jesus taught his followers. We are to pray that God's kingdom will come, and God's will be done, 'on earth as it is in heaven.'

NT Wright **Matthew for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-15**

The life of heaven—the life of the realm where God is already king—is to become the life of the world, transforming the present 'earth' into a place of beauty and delight that God always intended. And those who follow Jesus are to begin to live by this rule here and now. That's the point of the Sermon on the Mount, and these 'beatitudes' in particular. They are a summons to live in the present in the way that will make sense in God's promised future; because that future has arrived in the present in Jesus of Nazareth. It may seem upside down, but we are called to believe, with great daring, that it is in fact the right way up. Try it and see."

present possession. Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven *belongs* (present tense) to them"

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We know how life here on earth works – for the rules are well-established and obvious to all:

Blessed are the rich: for they have everything a person could ever want or need. Blessed are the tough: for they never let life hurt them.

Blessed are the complainers: for they get their way in the end.

Blessed are the morally indifferent: for they never feel regret.

Blessed are the slave-drivers: for they get results.

Blessed are the worldly wise: for they know how to get things done.

Blessed are the trouble-makers: for they make people take notice of them. Adapted from J. B. Phillips, *Good News*, as quoted in Philip Yancey,

Jesus was the “new Moses”

Eugene Peterson suggests that these are not “entrance requirements” to the Kingdom of Heaven, but are tools that can be used to uncover a vital faith. They are not “ethical demands,” but are instead, “congratulatory announcements”

Greek word, “Makairos” In this sense then, it refers to more than everyday happiness, but the great happiness that comes as a gift from God.

William Barclay, *Daily Study Bible*: 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.

Barclay: *Daily Study Bible* The greatness of the beatitudes is that they are not wistful glimpses of some future beauty; they are not even golden promises of some distant glory; they are triumphant shouts of bliss for a

permanent joy that nothing in the world can ever take away.

**THE NEW REALITY: THE BEATITUDES**

DALLAS WILLARD, *THE DIVINE CONSPIRACY*

- GROWING UP IN SOUTHERN MISSOURI WHERE THEY HAD NO ELECTRICITY
- THE REA (RURAL ELECTRIFICATION ACT)

REA ---- EXTENDED POWER LINES INTO RURAL MISSOURI

.....ELECTRICITY WAS AT HAND

ALMOST EVERYONE HOOKED UP TO THE ELECTRICITY....

...BUT SOME DIDN'T

THEY DIDN'T WANT TO CHANGE....

....OR COULDN'T AFFORD IT

THAT IS --- KINGDOM OF GOD

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS AT HAND

.....AVAILABLE TO EVERYONE

SOME TAKE IT ----- SOME DON'T

....THEY GO ON LIVING THEIR  
LIVES AS IF THERE IS NOT NEW  
REALITY

**THE NEW REALITY –**

**.....THE BEATITUDES**

THE KINGDOM OF GOD ---- AT HAND

GOD & HIS KINGDOM ---- ARE REAL

...WHEN YOU DEPART FROM GOD &  
HIS KINGDOM

...YOU DEPART FROM REALITY

.....LIVING IN AN UNREAL  
WORLD

NOTES:

The Gospel of Matthew concludes with  
Jesus' Great Commission sending His  
disciples to the whole world:

EPHIPHANY ---- WISE MEN

.....GENTILE WORLD INCLUDED

MATTHEW IS ----- JEWISH GOSPEL

....MEANT FOR WHOLE WORLD

GOOD NEWS OF JESUS.....

.....FOR THE WHOLE WORLD

## **Matthew 28:18-20**

*<sup>18</sup>And Jesus came and said to them,  
'All authority in heaven and on earth  
has been given to me. <sup>19</sup>Go therefore  
and make disciples of all nations,  
baptizing them in the name of the  
Father and of the Son and of the Holy  
Spirit, <sup>20</sup>and teaching them to obey  
everything that I have commanded*

*you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'*

WHAT ARE WE TO GO INTO WORLD...

.....AND TEACH????

The Beatitudes and the remainder of His Sermon on the Mount are at the heart of the things Jesus teaches and must be at the heart of our lives and witness.

## **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.*

*<sup>2</sup>Then 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. <sup>12</sup>Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

## **CONTEXT OF THE BEATITUDES:**

## **Matthew 4:17-22**

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

*18 As 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. <sup>19</sup>And he said to them, 'Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.' <sup>20</sup>Immediately they left their nets and followed him. <sup>21</sup>As 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. <sup>22</sup>Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.*

- 1. "Repent for the kingdom of heaven has come near." When**

you read "the kingdom of heaven" in Matthew, read it as "the kingdom of God." Matthew is a Jew writing to Jewish readers and does not want to cause offense by using the sacred word "God". Thus, when speaking of the "kingdom God" he says "kingdom of heaven." It is clear that these two expressions speak of the same reality, e.g. Matthew 5:3 and Luke 6:20).

- 2.** To say that the kingdom of heaven has come near does not mean it "will come soon", but that it has come. The verb form indicates a past, completed action. The kingdom of God is dawning. The coming of Jesus inaugurates the long-awaited reign of God in

the world, a reign that will  
culminate in the new creation.

GOD'S FUTURE ---

.....ARRIVING IN PRESENT

.....IN PERSON AND WORK OF  
JESUS CHRIST

YOU CAN LIVE IN THIS ----- NOW

**3.** Those who follow Jesus may now participate in the reign of God's kingdom, no matter their present situation. All are welcome! God's grace is for all! The blessings are here now for you in Jesus! It is possible for Jesus'

followers to practice a new life now in anticipation of God making all things new.

- 4.** Dallas Willard writes in *The Divine Conspiracy*: “God’s own ‘kingdom,’ or ‘rule,’ is the range of his effective will, where what he wants done is done. The person of God himself and the action of his will are the organizing principles of his kingdom.”
  
- 5.** God’s kingdom, or rule of God, is among us, and is accessible now.
  
- 6.** Dallas Willard adds: “There is no suggestion in scripture that the kingdom hasn’t happened yet or is

about to happen or about to be here. Where God's will is being accomplished, the kingdom of God is right beside us. It is indeed "The Kingdom Among Us." Christ calls us to follow Him and be partners in His Kingdom.

7. Throughout the Gospel of Matthew Jesus speaks of the kingdom as any place where God reigns, where His will is done. Here is a present reality Jesus invites us "to receive", "to inherit", and "to enter." In Jesus, God's great future is now present!

## **REFLECTING ON THE BEATITUDES**

**1.** The location of The Sermon the Mount is not by chance (as well as The Beatitudes): "*When Jesus saw the crowds; he went up the mountain*" (5:1). Matthew wants to show the symmetry between the Law-giver Moses on Mount Sinai, and Jesus in The Sermon on the Mount. Jesus is not simply a man, but the greater Moses, the Messiah.

**2.** "Blessed" is the translation of the Greek makarios which translates the Old Testament Hebrew ashere. Beatitudes are frequent in the psalms (1:1; 2:12; 32:2; 40:4, etc.). The word "blessed" is more of an expression than a word, an exclamation that might be translated: "O the

blessedness of such a person").  
In contrast to "happiness" which depends on what "happens", blessedness comes from God and is stable. The world cannot take away blessedness.

IT IS REMARKABLE.....

....FIRST TEACHINGS OF JESUS  
CONTAIN BLESSINGS

- 3.** Jesus' Beatitudes are dealing with life's profound question, "Who are well off in life?"

THE REST OF SERMON ON MOUNT

....DEALS WHO IS A REALLY GOOD  
PERSON

BUT BEATITUDES....

..WHO ARE THE REALLY WELL-OFF  
IN LIFE

UNDERSTANDING BEATITUDES

.....IS THE KEY THAT UNLOCKS  
JESUS' WISDOM

- 4.** It is important to note that The Beatitudes are not instructions for how to become a Christian, a disciple. Jesus is speaking to those who are already His disciples.

**5.** The Beatitudes are Jesus' announcement of the dawning of God's kingdom; they are descriptive rather than prescriptive. The Beatitudes are not commands, (NOT RULES OF BEHAVIOR) but illustrations of the blessedness of living under God's rule. Dallas Willard says The Beatitudes "are explanations and illustrations, drawn from 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 is truly available in life circumstances that are beyond all human hope." (*The Divine Conspiracy*)

**6.** The Beatitudes are announcement of grace, of good news for all, the poor in spirit, grieving, and persecuted. Like other Gospel passages, including Mary's Magnificat, they announce the presence of God's upside down Kingdom: <sup>51</sup> *"He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. <sup>52</sup>He has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly"* (Luke 1:51-52)

**7.** The "blessedness" is not in the person's condition, but in being a participant in the kingdom of God.

THERE IS NO LIMIT....

...TO WHOM YOU CAN GO

....AND SAY "BLESSED"

WRITE YOUR OWN BEATITUDE

....SOMONE ON THE HUMAN SCALE

THOUGHT NOT TO BE BLESSED

THEY ARE BLESSED....

...BECAUSE THE KINGDOM OF  
GOD IS AVAILABLE TO THEM

**"BLESSED ARE THE UNEMPLOYED"**

**"BLESSED ARE THOSE ON  
DIALYSIS 3 TIMES A WEEK..."**

THAT'S HOW RADICAL – BEATITUDES

....IT'S A NEW REALITY

HERE IS GOOD NEWS.....

...FOR THOSE WHO HAVE LITTLE  
OR NO HOPE

GOOD NEWS.....

...FOR THOSE WHO APPEAR TO  
HAVE LITTLE TO OFFER TO WORLD

GOOD NEWS.....

....FOR THOSE THOUGHT "LOSERS"

GOOD NEWS.....

....FOR THOSE ON FRINGE OF  
SOCIETY

GOD'S BLESSING....

....CAN BE YOURS IN CHRIST!

THERE IS NO HUMAN CONDITION

...THAT DISQUALIFIES ANYONE  
FROM GOD'S BLESSING

THIS IS WHY ---- JESUS SAID:

"THE LAST WILL BE FIRST"

**THE FIRST BEATITUDE: *Blessed  
are the poor in spirit, for theirs  
is the kingdom of heaven.***

*THE MESSAGE: "YOU'RE BLESSED  
WHEN YOU'RE AT THE END OF  
YOUR ROPE."*

NOTES:

1. There are two words in the Greek New Testament translated as "poor"; one is penes which describes a person with nothing to

spare. He has zero denarii in his savings, but at least has not gone into debt. It is not penes that Jesus uses in this beatitude, but the word ptochos. This describes a person so poor that he is destitute, living in abject poverty, under a mountain of debt. In the kingdom of God such a person experiences “blessedness”, and well-being.

2. Note the tense of the verb:  
*“theirs **IS** the kingdom of heaven.”*  
Here is the present tense experience of the kingdom God rules.

## **The Beatitudes (*The Message*)**

**3** “You’re blessed when you’re at the end of your rope. With less of you

there is more of God and his rule.

**4** "You're blessed when you feel you've lost what is most dear to you. Only then can you be embraced by the One most dear to you. **5** "You're blessed when you're content with just who you are—no more, no less. That's the moment you find yourselves proud owners of everything that can't be bought. **6** "You're blessed when you've worked up a good appetite for God. He's food and drink in the best meal you'll ever eat. **7** "You're blessed when you care. At the moment of being 'care-full,' you find yourselves cared for. **8** "You're blessed when you get your inside world—your mind and heart—put right. Then you can see God in the outside world. **9** "You're blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That's when you discover who you really are, and your place in God's family. **10** "You're blessed when your

commitment to God provokes persecution. The persecution drives you even deeper into God's kingdom. **11-12** "Not only that—count yourselves blessed every time people put you down or throw you out or speak lies about you to discredit me. What it means is that the truth is too close for comfort and they are uncomfortable. You can be glad when that happens—give a cheer, even!—for though they don't like it, *I* do! And all heaven applauds. And know that you are in good company. My prophets and witnesses have always gotten into this kind of trouble.

## THE NEW REALITY:

## THE BEATITUDES

Water from Rock, January 10, 2017, Tim Smith

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The Gospel of Matthew concludes with Jesus' Great Commission sending His disciples to the whole world:

## Matthew 28:18-20

<sup>18</sup>And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup>Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'

The Beatitudes and the remainder of His Sermon on the Mount are at the heart of the things Jesus teaches and must be at the heart of our lives and witness.

## 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. <sup>2</sup>Then 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.  
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## CONTEXT OF THE BEATITUDES: Matthew 4:17-22

<sup>17</sup>From that time Jesus began to proclaim, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.'  
18 As 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.  
<sup>19</sup>And he said to them, 'Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.'  
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*father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. <sup>22</sup>Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.*

8. **“Repent for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”** When you read “the kingdom of heaven” in Matthew, read it as “the kingdom of God.” Matthew is a Jew writing to Jewish readers and does not want to cause offense by using the divine word “God”. Thus, when speaking of the “kingdom God” he says “kingdom of heaven.” It is clear that these two expressions speak of the same reality, e.g. Matthew 5:3 and Luke 6:20).
9. To say that the kingdom of heaven has come near does not mean it “will come soon”, but that it has come. The verb form indicates a past, completed action. The kingdom of God is dawning. The coming of Jesus inaugurates the long-awaited reign of God in the world, a reign that will culminate in the New Creation.
10. Those who follow Jesus may participate now in the reign of God’s kingdom, no matter their present situation. All are welcome! God’s grace is for all! The blessings are here for you in Jesus! It is possible for Jesus’ followers to practice a new life now in anticipation of God making all things new.
11. Dallas Willard writes in *The Divine Conspiracy*: “God’s own ‘kingdom,’ or ‘rule,’ is the range of his effective will, where what he wants done is done. The person of God himself and the action of his will are the organizing principles of his kingdom.”
12. God’s kingdom, or the rule of God, is among us, and is accessible now.
13. Dallas Willard adds: “There is no suggestion in scripture that the kingdom hasn’t happened yet or is about to happen or about to be here. ‘Where God’s will is being accomplished, the kingdom of God is right beside us. it is indeed The Kingdom Among Us.’ Christ calls us to follow Him and be partners in His Kingdom.
14. Throughout the Gospel of Matthew Jesus speaks of the kingdom as any place where God reigns, where His will is done. Here is a present reality into which Jesus invites us “to receive”, “to inherit”, and “to enter.” In Jesus, God’s great future is now present!

REFLECTING ON THE BEATITUDES

8. The location of The Sermon the Mount is not by chance (and The Beatitudes): *“When Jesus saw the crowds; he went up the mountain”* (5:1). Matthew is wanting to show the symmetry between the Law Giver Moses and Jesus in The Sermon on the Mount. Jesus is not simply a man, but the greater Moses, the Messiah.
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10. Jesus’ Beatitudes are dealing with life’s profound question, “Who are well off?”
11. It is important to note that The Beatitudes are not instruction for how to become a Christian, a disciple. Jesus is speaking to those who are already His disciples.
12. The Beatitudes are Jesus’ announcement of the dawning of God’s kingdom; they are descriptive rather than prescriptive. They are not commands, but illustrations of living in the blessedness of God’s rule. Dallas Willard says that The Beatitudes “are explanations and illustrations, drawn from 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 is truly available in life circumstances that are beyond all human hope.” (*The Divine Conspiracy*)
13. The Beatitudes are announcement of grace, of good news for all. Like other passages, including Mary’s Magnificent, they announce the presence of God’s upside down Kingdom: <sup>51</sup> *“He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. <sup>52</sup>He has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly”* (Luke 1:51-52)
14. The “blessedness” is not in the person’s condition, but in being a participant in the kingdom of God.

THE FIRST BEATTITUDE: ‘

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

3. There are two words in the Greek New Testament translated as “poor”  
One is penes which describes a person with nothing to spare. He has zero denarii in his savings, but at least has not gone into debt. It is not penes that Jesus uses in this beatitude, but the word ptochos. This describes a person so poor that he is destitute, living in abject poverty, under a mountain of debt. In the kingdom of God he experiences “blessedness”, well-being.
4. Note the tense of the verb: “theirs **IS** the kingdom of heaven.” Here in the present tense experience of God’s kingdom he experiences God’s rule.

God and his kingdom are real...when you depart from that you depart from reality

The kingdom of God is where well-being is found. That is fundamental as everyone is wanting well-being.

God is where we are--- the kingdom of God is here

There is no limit to whom you can go and say ‘blessed’

Write your own beatitude (someone on the human scale is thought to be nothing, not blessed, people thought to be unblessable) they are blessed because the kingdom is available to them, not because of the condition they are in. “Blessed are the unemployed...” “Blessed are those who are alone...”

The blessing is not in the condition, it is in the kingdom

All of those whom human beings regard as unblessable, are blessable, if they enter into the kingdom

This is a radical message that will upset most churches.....you are breaking down the pecking order, the social barriers that most people in our churches assume to be valid.

Sermon on Mount deals with 2 questions: 1) who is well off? And 2) is a really good person

God and his kingdom are real...when you depart from that you depart from reality

The kingdom of God is where well-being is found. That is fundamental as everyone is wanting well-being.

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Write you own beatitude (someone on the human scale is thought to be nothing, not blessed, people thought to be unbleisable) they are blessed because the kingdom is available to them, not because of the condition they are in. "Blessed are the unemployed..." "Blessed are those who are alone..."

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This is a radical message that will upset most churches.....you are breaking down the pecking order, the social barriers that most people in our churches assume to be valid.

Sermon on Mount deals with 2 questions: 1) who is well off? And 2) is a really good person

You see, the people who led him to Jesus failed to tell him something. Just because the kingdom of God is at hand doesn't mean that we automatically access it just because we're Christians. There is something that we have to do to access it.

Dallas Willard compares it to electricity. Willard lived in southern Missouri when he was a child and no one there had electricity. But then the REA extended electrical lines into the area and electricity was at hand.

Almost everyone took the electricity by hooking up to it. But a few people didn't. They didn't want to change or couldn't afford it and so they didn't take the electricity.

That is the way it is with the kingdom of God. It is at hand and available to everyone. Some take it but most don't. They go right on living their lives as if it weren't at hand. That shows us that it is one thing for the kingdom of God to be at hand and an entirely different thing for us to take it.

The Sermon on the eMount represents the largest block of Jesus' teachings in Scripture. What Jesus teaches us here is revolutionary, counter intuitive,

counter cultural, upside down or right side up ---so radical that even these descriptors may be lost on us. If we cannot read this text without being challenged, convicted, or uncomfortable, we may be asleep at the wheel.

Overall, the Sermon on the Mount is a call to transformation from the inside out,

It is remarkable that the first teachings to come from Jesus contain blessing.

These qualities display a direct opposition to culturally prized ethics of power, dominance, affluence and entitlement of Jesus' time, and they continue to do the same today.

The Beatitudes logically and powerfully condition all the teachings that follow in the Sermon on the Mount.

Have you ever wondered why this teaching is called the Sermon on the Mount? We read in 5:1-2, "Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them." The location of the sermon is not a chance occurrence. While the effect may be lost on us, Matthew is interested to show the symmetry between Jesus and Moses - Mount Sinai and the giving of the Law → Galilean mountain and the Sermon on the Mount. But Jesus is not simply a new and greater Moses, he is the Messiah, God with us.

The immediate response to Jesus' teachings is found at the close of the Sermon – 7:28-29, "Now when Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority and not as their scribes."

Importantly, the Sermon on the Mount is not an instruction list for how to become a Christian. Jesus is speaking to those who already were –and are—his disciples.

*Oswald Chambers says, If Jesus is a teacher only, then all He can do is to tantalize us by erecting a standard we cannot come anywhere near. But if by being born again from above we know Him first as Savior, we know that He did not come to teach us only: He came to make us what He teaches we*

*should be. The Sermon on the Mount is a statement of the life we will live when the Holy came to make us what He teaches we should be. The Sermon on the Mount is a statement of the life we will live when the Holy Spirit is having his way with us*

N.T. Wright, **After You Believe**. *God's future is arriving in the present, in the person and work of Jesus, and you can practice, right now, the habits of life which will find their goal in that coming future. (p. 103)*

According to the author, the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount are not:

- *Mere laws or rules of behavior.* Jesus did not set forth his teaching to be taken in a legalistic sense "that by behaving this way, we will gain rewards from God.
- *Mere instructions to believers.* Jesus did not present his teaching as, "I'm doing my work, and now that you believe in me, here are the works you must do in response."

Wright puts Jesus' instructions in the Sermon in their proper salvation-historical context.

*What Jesus is saying, rather, is, "Now that I'm here, God's new world is coming to birth; and, once you realize that, you'll see that these are the habits of heart which anticipate that new world here and now." These qualities "purity of heart, mercy, and so on "are not, so to speak, "things you have to do" to earn a "reward," a "payment." Nor are they merely the "rules of conduct" laid down for new converts to follow...They are, in themselves, the signs of life, the language of life, the life of new creation, the life of new covenant, the life which Jesus came to bring. (p. 106)*

It is Jesus' coming to inaugurate God's kingdom and the dawning of God's new creation in him, that makes it possible for his followers to begin to practice a new life now, in anticipation of the future consummation when all will be made new.

Like many commentators on Matthew and even some NT translations, **N.T. Wright takes the Beatitudes as a list of virtues**. He doesn't so much argue as assume this in his book. For him, Jesus' moral teaching begins right at the outset of the Sermon, setting forth how those who enter the Kingdom may now live.

**The Beatitudes are better heard as Jesus' *announcements* of the dawning of the Kingdom.**

They form the preface to this discourse which subsequently presents the "righteousness" of that Kingdom, giving specific examples of the virtues and actions that exemplify the life of the new creation.

The Beatitudes are not those virtues, rather they describe the new state that has now arrived in Jesus in which those virtues may be practiced. It is a state in which even the most unlikely may receive the gift of divine blessedness and become the "light of the world."

For Willard, the Beatitudes...

*...are explanations and illustrations, drawn from 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. (p. 106)*

Taking this general approach, I hold that the Beatitudes are *pronouncements of grace*. They announce that:

- those who have little or no hope,
- those who appear to have little to offer to the world,
- those who are on the fringes of society (and religious society in particular),
- those who live in ways that the world considers weak, unproductive, and unsuccessful,
- those who are considered the "losers" "â€"

all are welcome to share in the Kingdom blessings that Jesus brings. There is no human situation that excludes one from being blessed in Jesus. The world and its evaluation of who wins and who loses will not have the final say. In Jesus, God has the last word.

- Even if you are spiritually bankrupt (*poor in spirit*),
- Even if you are overwhelmed by the sadness of life in this world (*those who mourn*),
- Even if you are the kind of person who doesn't stand up for yourself or

- assert your rights (*meek*),
- Even if you are fed up with and broken by injustice (*those who hunger and thirst for righteousness*),
  - Even if your heart is soft, you are always giving to others, and easily taken advantage of by needy people (*merciful*),
  - Even if you are so concerned with having a clear conscience that others think you a prude (*pure in heart*),
  - Even if you are always trying to pacify others and care more about diffusing conflict than any other objective (*peacemakers*),
  - Even if your convictions and actions get you in constant trouble with those who set the rules (*persecuted*),

God's blessings may be yours in Jesus! No human condition, no matter how hopeless it may appear, no matter how despised by the world, no matter how "unsuccessful" or insignificant others may deem it, disqualifies anyone from God's grace in Christ. *The last shall be first.*

The Beatitudes are pronouncements of pure grace. Like other great passages, such as **Mary's Magnificat**, they announce the inbreaking of God's upside-down Kingdom.

God is not bound by the current, fallen, corrupt value system that expects him to shower blessings on rich, successful, and powerful people, on "worthy ones" who are universally recognized and applauded by the world. *He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; He has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. (Luke 1:52-53)*

he first sets the *eschatological context* in which that righteousness may be lived out. The Kingdom is dawning! Jesus is inaugurating the God's long-awaited rule in the world, a reign that will culminate in a new creation.

Those who follow Jesus may participate in that new creation reality now, no matter what their present condition. God's grace is available to all. All are welcome. All may come. The blessings are here for you in Jesus.

## POOR IN SPIRIT

WILLIAM BARCLAY, *Gospel of Matthew, Volume 1:*

- Blessed is the man who has realized his own utter helplessness, and who has put his whole trust in God.
- If a man has realized his own utter helplessness, and has put his whole trust in God, there will enter into his life two things which are opposite sides of the same thing. He will become completely *detached from things*, for he will know that things have not got it in them to bring happiness or security; and he will become completely *attached to God*, for he will know that God alone can bring him help, and hope, and strength. The man who is poor in spirit is the man who has realized that things mean nothing, and that God means everything.
- The poverty which is blessed is the poverty *of spirit*, when a man realizes his own utter lack of resources to meet life, and finds his help and strength in God.
- The Kingdom of God is the possession of the poor in spirit, because the poor in spirit have realized their own utter helplessness without God, and have learned to trust and obey.

OSWALD CHAMBERS IN 'MY UTMOST FOR HIS HIGHEST'

- The teaching of the Sermon on the Mount produces despair in the natural man – the very thing Jesus means it to do. As long as we have a self-righteous, conceited notion that we can carry out Our Lord's teaching, God will allow us to go on until we break our ignorance over some obstacle then we are willing to come to Him as paupers and receive from Him. "Blessed are the paupers in spirit," that is the first principle in the Kingdom of God.
- The bedrock in Jesus Christ's kingdom is poverty, not possession; not decisions for Jesus Christ, but a sense of absolute futility – I cannot begin to do it. Then Jesus says – Blessed are you. That is the entrance, and it does not take us a long while to believe we are poor!
- The knowledge of our own poverty brings us to the moral frontier where Jesus Christ works.
- The thing I am blessed in is my poverty. If I know I have no strength of will, no nobility of disposition, then Jesus says – Blessed are you, because it is through this poverty that I enter His Kingdom. I cannot enter His Kingdom as a good man or woman. I can only enter it as a complete pauper.

Scripture often speaks of the 'poor man' (Ps. 34:6; Is. 41:17)

The spiritually poor person is one who is afflicted and unable to save himself; his reliance on God for salvation leads to the blessing of the kingdom of heaven.

The kingdom of heaven is for those who are so utterly bankrupt spiritually that they have nothing to merit God's approval.

MARTYN LLOYD JONES

It is not surprising that this is the first, because it is obviously, as I think we shall see, the key to all that follows.

There is, beyond any question, a very definite order in these Beatitudes. Our Lord does not place them in their respective positions haphazardly or accidentally; there is what we may describe as a logical sequence to be found here.

This of necessity, is the one which must come at the beginning for the good reason that there is no entry into the kingdom of heaven, or the kingdom of God apart from it. There is no one in the kingdom of God who is not poor in spirit.

We cannot be filled until we are first empty. You cannot fill with new wine a vessel which is partly filled already with old wine, until the old wine has been poured out.

There has to be a kind of emptying before there can be a filling.

...it at once condemns every idea of the Sermon on the Mount which thinks of it in terms of something that you and I can do ourselves, something that you and I can carry out.

It is poverty of spirit. In other words, it is ultimately a man's attitude towards himself.

What emphasis the world places on its belief in self-reliance, self-confidence and self-expression! Look at its literature. If you want to get on in this world, it says, believe in yourself.

It is what Isaiah said (52:15): "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and revive the heart of the contrite ones."

Poor in spirit means a complete absence of pride, a complete absence of self-assurance and of self-reliance.

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You will notice the first Beatitude and the last Beatitude promise the same reward, 'for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' What does that mean? Our Lord starts and ends with it because it is His way of saying that the first thing you have to realize about yourself is that you belong to a different kingdom. You are not only different in essence; you are living in two absolutely different worlds.

God's poor, were already a clearly defined group in the OT, and Matthew will have been correct to translate "poor in spirit". For 'the poor' were not so much the poverty stricken as the pious who --- partly because they were needy, downtrodden, oppressed or in other ways afflicted – had put their faith and hope in God.-

To be poor in spirit is to acknowledge our spiritual poverty, our bankruptcy before God. (Stott)

This is an indispensable condition for receiving the kingdom of heaven

Why is it so difficult for us to admit our spiritual poverty?

The poor, *anawim*, that is, the dispossessed and abandoned, on whose behalf the prophets speak: Isa 11:4; 29:19; 32:7; 61:1; Amos 2:7; 8:4; Zeph. 2:3

The general thought seems to be that they trust in God more profoundly than most because they have no hope in this world.

'in spirit' --- brings out the notion of despondency or loss of hope

The *anawim* are represented as people who have an unusually strong hope (in God), the accent on spiritual poverty here redefines them as people who may be on the verge of giving up. Thus, in Matthew's gospel the poor in spirit are not people who trust in God because they have no reason for hope in this world. They are people who have no reason for hope in this world period. (Powell, p. 124)

The real sense of the apodosis....'heaven rules them'

5:3 The "poor in spirit" are those who recognize their natural unworthiness to stand in God's presence and who depend utterly on Him for His mercy and grace (cf. Ps. 37:14; 40:17; 69:28-29, 32-33; Prov. 16:19; 29:23; Isa. 61:1). They do not trust in their own goodness or possessions for God's acceptance. The Jews regarded material prosperity as an indication of divine approval since many of the blessings God promised the righteous under the Old Covenant were material. However the poor in spirit does not regard these things as signs of intrinsic righteousness but confesses his or her total unworthiness. The poor in spirit acknowledges his or her lack of personal righteousness. This condition, as all the others the Beatitudes identify, describes those who have repented and are broken (3:2; 4:17).

"'Poverty in spirit' is not speaking of weakness of character ('mean-spiritedness') but rather of a person's relationship with God. It is a positive spiritual orientation, the converse of the arrogant self-confidence which not only rides roughshod over the interests of other people but more importantly causes a person to treat God as irrelevant."

Such a person can have joy in his or her humility because an attitude of personal unworthiness is necessary to enter the kingdom. This kingdom does

not go to the materially wealthy only but to those who admit their spiritual bankruptcy. One cannot purchase citizenship in this kingdom with money as people could purchase Roman citizenship, for example.

What qualifies a person for citizenship is that person's attitude toward his or her intrinsic righteousness.

One writer believed that Jesus was not talking about entering the kingdom but possessing it (i.e., it will be theirs in the sense that the poor in spirit will reign over it with Jesus [cf. Rev. 3:21]).<sup>285</sup>

Have you considered how odd these words must have sounded to their ears?

Then, as now, few would consider poverty of spirit a blessing; few would discover deep satisfaction in an empty soul.

Emerging from this blessing is a promise: "Theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

These blessings at first sound more like curses until one hears the promise attached to each one. Being poor in spirit is no blessing all by itself, but when attached to the promise, it possesses life-changing power.

Poor in Spirit The one who is poor in spirit is the one who is not full of self and therefore has room for God.

It is humility rather than arrogance.

Jesus says here that the one who lives in reliance upon God is already living in the kingdom.

There is an eschatological note to the nine beatitudes, especially v. 12. It is important, however, to note the present implications of verses 3 and 10 "Theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

As Matthew uses kingdom of heaven for kingdom of God, (see introductory notes on Matthew) the kingdom of God is not simply a future reality, but something that invades the present -- "the kingdom of heaven is at hand"

Matthew as portraying the poor in spirit as being those who acknowledge their total dependence upon God. See Ps. 40:17.

The poverty which is "blessed" is that poverty which leads to dependence upon God. In Matthew this translates to humility.

Note: "The kingdom of heaven is theirs..." This is present i.e. "It is theirs". Not when they die and go to heaven -- but the kingdom is their now. Because, they live in dependence upon God.

beggars before [God](#)" humbly acknowledging their need of Divine help.

But the opposition of "rich" ([Luke 6:24](#)) points especially to the common and obvious meaning, which, however, ought not to be confined to economical need and distress, but may comprehend the whole of the painful condition of the [poor](#): their low estate, their social dependence, their defenceless exposure to [injustice](#) from the rich and the mighty.

The [blessed](#) ones are the poor "in [spirit](#)", who by their [free will](#) are ready to bear for [God's](#) sake this painful and [humble](#) condition

Inasmuch as poverty is a state of [humble](#) subjection, the "poor in [spirit](#)", come near to the "meek", the subject of the second [blessing](#). The *anawim*, they who humbly and meekly bend themselves down before [God](#) and [man](#), shall "inherit the land" and possess their inheritance in peace. This is a phrase taken from [Psalm 36:11](#), where it refers to the Promised Land of [Israel](#), but here in the words of [Christ](#), it is of course but a symbol of the [Kingdom of Heaven](#), the spiritual realm of the [Messiah](#). Not a few interpreters, however, understand "the earth". But they overlook the original meaning of [Psalm 36:11](#), and unless, by a far-fetched expedient, they take the earth also to be a symbol of the [Messianic kingdom](#), it will be hard to explain the possession of the earth in a satisfactory way.

*ptochoi* (poor) is used to translate *anawim* in the LXX -- the dispossessed and abandoned ones in Israel. However, it is likely that Matthew extends the image beyond Israel to the "dispossessed and abandoned people *of the world* in general"

The *anawim* were often "noted as much for their piety as for their poverty. The general thought seems to be that they trust in God more profoundly than most because they have no hope in this world" [Powell, p. 123].

However, Matthew's inclusion of "in spirit" indicates something more than just financial poverty, but also spiritual poverty -- the loss of hope.

Thus, in Matthew's Gospel the poor in spirit are not people who trust in God because they have no reason for hope in this world. They are people who have no reason for hope in this world, period.

From the time of the composition of the Psalms, "The poor" had been understood as a characterization of the true people of God, those who know their lives are not in their own control and that they are dependent on God. ... What is at stake in the phrase for both Qumran and Matthew is neither economics nor spirituality, but the identity of the people of God -- a Matthean theme (1:21). [p. 178]

Being "poor in spirit" is not a characteristic one would seek, but it is a characteristic of the people of God.

Powell suggests that in the apodosis of this beatitude, rather than taking the genitive "of them" as possessive -- "theirs", it might be understood as the object of the "kingdom of heaven" or "heaven's rule" -- "heaven's rule is over them" -- or Powell's translation: "heaven rules them".

This can help us understand *basileia* as the authority or power to rule, rather than the place where one rules.

The Kingdom of Heaven which is mentioned three times in these twelve verses is not referring to a place we go to when we die, but to God's reign experienced and lived on earth.

God's reign is known and possessed by those who are poor -- not just financially, but also in 'spirit', in themselves, in their humanity, in their lack of dignity and acknowledgement from the rest of the world.

The kingdom of heaven (not heaven, but Matthew's way of expressing the kingdom of God, God's reign) will be for people like this and if you want to enter it, these are the attitudes and behaviours you need to develop.

Let's see if, when we manifest humble dependence on God's grace, God can make us contributors to the divine reign on earth (5:3).

But the poor, the hungry, and the sorrowing will never confuse these things as being their salvation. And **THAT** is the blessing. They **KNOW** their need of God.

Illus. Steve Prusinski preaching to homeless; they are blessed, because they truly know their need for God

We are blessed when - whatever our circumstances - we know our need of God.

Because knowing our need of God allows us to enjoy the good things of this life without expecting them to be our salvation.

Because knowing our need of God allows us to endure the bad things of life knowing they cannot utterly destroy us.

The “poor in spirit” (v. [3](#)) are probably detached from wealth and dependant on God alone.

*Verse 3:* “poor in spirit”: Isaiah [66:2](#) says: “... this is the one to whom I will look, to the humble and contrite in spirit, who trembles at my word”. See also Isaiah [11:4](#); [57:15](#); [61:1](#).

those who feel a sense of spiritual emptiness in the general religious environment of Jesus’ day.

Fortunate are the humble ones. Such people are not the "poor" in this world's things. Jesus is speaking of the person who is broken before God. This person throws themselves on the mercy of God, they put their trust in him, depend on him. They stand in contrast to the "wicked".

The poor became the "poor in spirit," those who know they depend on God for all things [5:3].

The Lord’s answer to the question, who are the spiritually rich, is rather startling: the spiritually empty.

Modern society does not teach, blessed are the poor in spirit. In fact, the modern ideas are quite different. It’s ideas of blessedness are something like this: blessed is the man who is always right; blessed is the man who is satisfied with himself; blessed is the man who is strong; blessed is the man who rules; blessed is the man who is popular; blessed is the man who enjoys life; blessed is the man who is rightly adjusted.

It comes as a shock, and it opens a whole new realm of thought to realize that not one of these men entered our Lord's mind when he spoke on the subject of blessedness.

blessed are the poor in spirit. So he is not speaking about material things.

I am sure that we all learn many things by being poor, materially. But that is not what Jesus Christ is speaking about.

The first thing that he states is that the consequences of spiritual poverty are blessedness.

He is saying blessed – that is, the man who is poor in spirit is the man who has the kind of life that characterizes the gods, or in the Christian sense, the life that characterizes the one who has a relationship with the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

There are two words in Greek for poverty or poor. There is one word, penes, which means a person has nothing superfluous. When your bank account reaches zero, but you're not in debt, then you are penes. Penes is to have nothing superfluous but to have nothing in addition. There is another word in Greek which means abject poverty: tokos. That adjective means that we have nothing at all. That's the word for abject poverty. That's the word for the person who does not have anything but who has nothing but needs. That's the word that's used here. Blessed are the poor in spirit – blessed are those who are abjectly poor in spirit, who have absolutely nothing at all in spirit, who have come to realize that, doctrinally, they are depraved. They are spiritually unable to save themselves, that they do not have anything with which they commend themselves to God.

Luther said, "We are all beggars," and he was Scriptural in that statement.

Now we don't pray that in the 20th Century. Those of us who are associated with the general Protestant testimony in the Western world, we pray, O God, I thank Thee that I am not like this Pharisee. And in our pride we express ourselves in that way.

They have heard the Lord Jesus say, "Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens is at hand." They have responded in repentance, and they have come to faith in the Son of God and because of their recognition of their abject poverty, spiritually, the disciples have entered the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus, and

they are blessed for having become citizens of that kingdom that is to come in the future.

This beatitude is, in a sense, a commentary on the whole Bible. blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of the heavens is theirs.

The answer to the question, what is the secret of happiness – and there is an answer to the question – is found right here. And it involves the conviction of sin, first of all. Then, the conviction that the Lord Jesus has offered a sacrifice in his blood that is availed for all who come to him. And that through this there comes the gift of new life in Christ. That's the secret of happiness.

I have made the claim – I hope it is supportable – that it is not for the world, not for the salvation of society, or the salvation of the individual.

It has to do with those who are rich in faith but poor in spirit.

Samuel Rutherford said, “Stoop, man, stoop. The door into the kingdom is low.” That's what is meant, I think, by the statement, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

We have looked at the first of them: blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven—blessed are those who have a sense of sin. That's really where all spiritual life begins.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven—that's where we all begin.

As a matter of fact, these Beatitudes give us a description of those who have believed in the Lord Jesus.

So when it comes to the Beatitudes, we must remember that they are grounded in grace. They are not given us as a plan of salvation.

And incidentally, you'll notice as you read through these beatitudes that for the Lord Jesus, true spiritual joy surely does not consist in outward possessions or in happiness, but in the inward graces that are produced by the Holy Spirit.

Magnificat: He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; He has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. Luke 1:52-53

Martin Luther died February 18, 1546, in Eisleben, Germany, where he was born. Having come full circle he wrote his last words and placed them on his bedside table. His last words sum up his many volumes of words and the words of the first beatitude: “We are beggars. This is true.”

As Willard explains in *The Divine Conspiracy*, “God’s own ‘kingdom,’ or ‘rule,’ is the range of his effective will, where what he wants done is done. The person of God himself and the action of his will are the organizing principles of his kingdom, but everything that obeys those principles, whether by nature or by choice, is within his kingdom.”[3] This kingdom is among us, and is accessible now.

There is no suggestion in scripture that the kingdom hasn’t happened yet or is about to happen or about to be here. “Where God’s will is being accomplished, the kingdom of God is right beside us. It is indeed The Kingdom Among Us.”[5] Christ invites us to take part in it now, as partners with God in the “divine conspiracy.”

Kingdom of heaven, i.e. kingdom of God (Matthean)

This exhilarating role as co-conspirators with God, agents mixed into the ordinary workings of the world, is the task for which we were born,

We were created to participate in the “kingdom among us”

“According to Gallup surveys, 94 percent of Americans believe in God and 74 percent claim to have made a commitment to Jesus Christ. About 34 percent confess to a ‘new birth’ experience. These figures are shocking when thoughtfully compared to statistics on the same groups for unethical behavior, crime, mental distress and disorder, family failures, addictions, financial misdealings, and the like.”[9]

The Cosmic Conspiracy to Overcome Evil with Good

stretched my understanding of who the “blessed” truly are. He claims that the Beatitudes are addressed to the “hopeless blessables” and to the seriously crushed.[26] “The flunk-outs and drop-outs and burned-outs. The broke and the broken. The drug heads and the divorces. The HIV-positive and the herpes-ridden. The brain-damaged, the incurably ill. The barren and the pregnant too-many-times or at the wrong time. The overemployed, the underemployed, the unemployed. The unemployable. The swindled, the shoved aside, the replaced. The parents with children living on the side of the street, the children with parents not dying in the ‘rest’ home. The lonely, the incompetent, the stupid. The emotionally starved or emotionally dead.”[27] “Even the moral disasters will be received by God as they come to rely on Jesus, count on him, and make him their companion in his kingdom. Murderers and child-molesters. The brutal and the bigoted. Drug lords and pornographers. War criminals and sadists. Terrorists. The perverted and the filthy and the filthy rich.”[28]

That understanding removes the “them and the “us” from any people we may encounter. “If I, as a recovering sinner myself, accept Jesus’ good news,

“Speaking to these common people, ‘the multitudes,’ who through him had found blessing in the kingdom, Jesus tells them it is they, not the ‘best and brightest’ on the human scale, who are to make life on earth manageable as they live from the kingdom (Mt. 5: 13-16). God gives them ‘light’- truth, love, and power – that they might be the light for their surroundings. He makes them ‘salt’ to cleanse, preserve, and flavor the times through which they live.”[31]

This is [Jesus’ Greatest Teaching](#) and it is based on a divine order that makes obeying his teaching possible.

Understanding the beatitudes is the key that unlocks Jesus’ wisdom.

Dallas says that from start to finish in his sermon Jesus is not giving us commands, but *illustrations of the blessings of living under God’s rule*.

For instance, Jesus shows us some people who are living in poverty: they

don't have any money and yet they're happy! You scratch your head wondering why. Then you hear the poor saying things like, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." Or, "I don't have any money, but I have the Lord — he's good to me and his hand is at work in my life."

Next Jesus points out some people who are grieving — a loved one has died or their business has failed or a family member has turned against them. They are sad because of what they've lost and perhaps because God has not answered their prayers the way they want him to and yet they smile with happiness. "How can this be?" you ask. Jesus answers, "They have found comfort under the wing of the Lord."

Matthew 4:17-22

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

*18 As 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. <sup>19</sup>And he said to them, 'Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.'<sup>20</sup>Immediately they left their nets and followed him. <sup>21</sup>As 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. <sup>22</sup>Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.*

Matthew 5:1-12

*When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. <sup>2</sup>Then 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. <sup>12</sup>Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. <sup>2</sup>Then 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. <sup>12</sup>Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

In the beatitudes Jesus is revealing what the reign of God looks like as His will is done on earth as it is in heaven. N. T. Wright helps put Jesus' beatitudes in their historical context:

They are announcing a new state of affairs, a new reality which is in the process of bursting into the world. They are declaring that something that wasn't previously the case is now going to be; that the life of heaven, which had seemed so distant and unreal, is in the process of coming true on earth (*After You Believe*).

There are two words in the Greek New Testament translated as "poor". One is the word *penes* which describes a person as poor with nothing to spare. He has zero denarii in his savings, but at least has not yet gone into debt. It is not *penes* that Jesus used in this beatitude, rather the Greek

word *ptochos*. This word *ptochos* describes a person so poor that he is destitute, penniless, living in abject poverty under a mountain of debt. That is what makes this beatitude so startling, that Jesus blesses those who are destitute and bankrupt.

Notice that it is not the poor and destitute financially, but the poor in spirit who are blessed.

John Stott helps us here as he points out that to be poor in spirit “is to acknowledge our spiritual poverty, our bankruptcy before God” (*The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*).

Jesus blesses the poor in spirit who do not trust in their own goodness, but throw themselves upon the infinite goodness of God. And that is what it means to be truly blessed: to always know our utter need for grace. It is this day by day, moment by moment reliance upon God’s goodness that opens to us the riches of kingdom life.

Towards the beginning of my spiritual quest I thought that I might one day arrive. I thought that I might get my act together spiritually. I fancied that with just enough determination, new dedication, and right theology, I would grow beyond the need for amazing grace. But here I am today, spiritually bankrupt before God, a pauper in spirit, rejoicing in being so blessed.

Henri Nouwen, a keen observer of the spiritual life, emphasized the need to own our spiritual neediness: “Those who think they have arrived, have lost their way. Those who think they have reached their goal, have missed it. Those who think they are saints, are demons” (*The Genesee Diary*).

This is where the spiritual life begins: the realization of our spiritual poverty. We face up to being unworthy to be a part of God’s kingdom. The old Scottish preacher Samuel Rutherford barked: “Stoop, man, stoop. The door into the kingdom is low.”

Notice the tense of Jesus’ verb in this beatitude: “*theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*” Here is the present tense experience of God’s kingdom right now, not when we die and go to heaven, but when we live in reliance on God in this moment. Throughout the Gospel of Matthew Jesus speaks of the kingdom of heaven as any place where God reigns. Here is a present reality

as Jesus invites us to “receive”, “inherit”, and “enter”. God’s kingdom is already at hand, so stoop low. In Jesus the future is now present

The Gospel of Matthew uses the term “kingdom of heaven” while other Gospel writers use the term “kingdom of God”. As a Jew, writing specifically to Jews, Matthew is hesitant to use the most holy word “God”, as in “the kingdom of God”, lest he offend his readers. It is clear that these two expressions, “the kingdom of heaven” and “the kingdom of God” speak of the same reality (compare Matthew 5:3 with Luke 6:20).

- How do you see yourself as spiritually poor?
- What do you sense the Spirit of God is saying to you about your spiritual poverty?
- What would it mean for you to live reliantly on God today?

What do you think the Apostle Paul means by “exercise dominion in life through the one man, Jesus Christ”?

Martin Luther died February 18, 1546, in Eisleben, Germany, the same town where he was born. As his life came full circle Luther scribbled his last written words and placed them on his bedside table. Those last few words sum up Luther’s many volumes of words: “We are beggars! That is true.” Yes, we are beggars! How true! Here is the wondrous mystery: the more miles we follow Jesus

Peter Kreeft, in his book, *Back to Virtue*, writes of spiritual poverty: “If we come to God with empty hands, he will fill them. If we come with full hands, he finds no place to put himself. It is our beggary, our receptivity, that is our hope”.

The world’s idea of the blessed life would include: blessed are those who are sure of themselves; blessed are those who are always right; blessed are those who are powerful; blessed are those who are popular; blessed are those who have their lives ‘together’.

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- The Greek word is *makarios* and translates the Hebrew *ashere*. The Hebrew word is really more of an expression than just a word. It

is an exclamation which might well be translated *O the blessedness of...* In this sense the Hebrew *ashere* emphasizes that something is being described more than prescribed.

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- In taking up this term to translate the Hebrew *ashere*, the New Testament teaches on the stability of beatitude, if it is from God. It is, to a large degree a stable, deep and serene beatitude not sharply affected by the vicissitudes of this world. Since the world does not give it, the world cannot take it away.
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- Too many people seek to locate their happiness in a world that is unstable and fickle. But the Lord wants to confer on us an inner beatitude that is deeply rooted, stable, and not easily swept away by worldly conditions. This helps explain the paradox of some of the beatitudes. Thus, one is still blessed even when poor, mourning, and persecuted.