

St. John's Baptist Church
38-40 Everett Street, Woburn, MA
Rev. Dr. Larry Edmunds, Senior Pastor
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Title: **The Sermon on the Mount: The Beatitudes**
Facilitator: **Deaconess Taryn Johnson**
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INTRODUCTION: Picture this. Rolling fields of grass, the ocean flowing along the coastline and a serene picturesque scene intertwined with people. On a flat area of the mountain, the disciples and their teacher are moving into position. Suddenly, there is a cool breeze. The teacher sits down and his disciples follow him. Some, not all in the crowd of the multitude, turned their attention towards the teacher. As he opened his mouth, their eyes and mind are focused on Him- Jesus, he begins His Sermon on the Mount. "Blessed are... (Note: facilitator's comments in blue)

LESSON SCRIPTURE(s): Matthew 5: 1-48

MEMORY SCRIPTURES: Matthew 5:13 - "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. Matthew 5:14-"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Matthew 5:16 -Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." (NIV)

BACKGROUND:

Jesus instructed them in view of His announcement of the coming kingdom (4:17). Natural questions on the heart of every Jew would have been, "Am I eligible to enter Messiah's kingdom? Am I righteous enough to qualify for entrance?" (Remember, the Jews were.. oh so interested in a kingdom. An earthly kingdom). The only standard of righteousness the people knew was that which was laid down by the current religious leaders, the scribes and Pharisees. Would one who followed that standard be acceptable in Messiah's kingdom? ©Can you contrast the Pharisee's standard of righteousness to the standard of righteousness God requires as Jesus was teaching in the Sermon on the Mount? Jesus' sermon therefore must be understood in the context of His offer of the kingdom to Israel and the need for repentance to enter that kingdom. The sermon did not give a "Constitution"(established arrangement) for the kingdom nor did it present the way of salvation. The sermon showed how a person who is in right relationship with God should conduct his life. (The walk and the talk should match, right?) While the passage must be understood in the light of the offer of the messianic kingdom, the sermon applies to Jesus' followers today, for it demonstrates the standard of righteousness God requires of His people. Some of the standards are general (e.g., "You cannot serve both God and money" [6:24]); some are specific (e.g., "If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles" [5:41]); and some pertain to the future (e.g., "many will say to Me on that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name?" [7:22])¹

e.g. *exempli gratia*, for example

¹Walvoord, John F. ; Zuck, Roy B. ; Dallas Theological Seminary: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL : Victor Books, 1983-c1985, S. 2:28

LESSON CONTENT: Matthew Chapter 5: 1-20

Jesus began His sermon with “the Beatitudes,” statements beginning with **Blessed are**. “Blessed” means “happy” or “fortunate”. The qualities Jesus mentioned in this list, “the poor in spirit,” “those who mourn,” “the meek,” etc., obviously could not be products of Pharisaic righteousness. The Pharisees were concerned primarily with external qualities, but the qualities Jesus mentioned are internal. These come only when one is properly related to God through faith, and when one places his complete trust in God.²

I. The Beatitudes Collectively (5:1–12)³

The word *beatitude* is not found in your Bible. It simply means blessing and comes from the Latin word *beatus* for blessed. There is a definite progression in these verses. They show how the person begins with his or her own sense of sin and finally becomes a child of God and the results that then follow. **Note that these verses deal with attitudes—what we think in our hearts, our outlook on life. “Beatitudes”—the attitudes that ought to be in our lives if we are true Christians.**

- A. “*Poor in spirit*” (v. 3). Our attitude toward ourselves in which we feel our need and admit it.
- B. “*Mourn*” (v. 4). Our attitude toward sin, a true sorrow for sin.
- C. “*Meek*” (v. 5). Our attitude toward others; we are teachable; we do not defend ourselves when we are wrong. We are humble.
- D. “*Hunger and thirst*” (v. 6). Here our attitude toward God is expressed; we receive His righteousness by faith because we ask for it.

The rest of the Beatitudes show the results of the new life in the believer:

- E. “*Merciful*” (v. 7). We have a forgiving spirit and love others.
- F. “*Pure in heart*” (v. 8). We keep our lives clean; this is happiness to us, and we want no substitutes. However, we ask for forgiveness when we fall short.
- G. “*Peacemakers*” (v. 9). Christians should bring peace, between people and God and between those who are at odds with each other. We share the Gospel of peace.
- H. “*Persecuted*” (v. 10). All who live godly lives will suffer persecution. No question, period.

II. The Beatitudes Individually (5:1–12)⁴

- A. “*Poor in spirit*” (v. 3).

We must be empty before we can be full. The opposite of this is self-sufficiency. Our sufficiency is not of ourselves. The world promotes self-sufficiency, yet God dwells with the person whose heart is broken. This does not mean false humility or cowardice; it means a proper attitude toward self, realizing how weak and sinful we are apart from Christ. Compare the two men in **Luke 18:9–14**. ☺

²Walvoord, John F. ; Zuck, Roy B. ; Dallas Theological Seminary: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL : Victor Books, 1983-c1985, S. 2:28

³Wiersbe, Warren W.: *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament*. Wheaton, Ill. : Victor Books, 1997, c1992, S. 27

⁴Wiersbe, Warren W.: *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament*. Wheaton, Ill. : Victor Books, 1997, c1992, S. 28

B. **“Mourn”** (v. 4).

This is sincere sorrow for sin, our sin and the sins of others. How careless we are about sin! We excuse it, yet God hates it, and sin breaks God’s heart. Peter mourned with godly sorrow and was forgiven. (Mark 14:72) Think about when you accepted Jesus-true repentance. Didn’t God say in Genesis, that it repented (sorrowed) him ever creating man? This was before he sent the floods.

C. **“Meek”** (v. 5).

Meekness is not weakness! Jesus was meek (Matt. 11:29; Matt. 21:12-16) ☺, yet He drove the money changers (crooks) from the temple. Moses was meek (Num. 12:3), yet he judged sinners and even faced Aaron with his sin. Meekness means not asserting my own rights, but living for the glory of God. Christians are to show meekness (Eph. 4:1–2; Titus 3:2). (Humility)

D. **“Hunger and thirst”** (v. 6).

A true Christian has an appetite for spiritual things. (God is a spirit and we must worship him in spirit and in truth. John 4:24). Ask people what they desire. Ninety-nine percent of the time, it is not to know God and to please him- at first!

E. **“Merciful”** (v. 7).

This is not legalism, (salvation gained by good works) but merely the working of the biblical principle of sowing and reaping. If we show mercy, (compassion) because Christ has been merciful to us, then mercy will come back to us (Matt. 18:21-34; James 2:13). We do not earn mercy, but we must have hearts prepared to receive it.

F. **“Pure in heart”** (v. 8).

Not sinless but the truth within. It means a single heart, not divided between God and the world. (see Luke 16:1–15) ☺

G. **“Peacemakers”** (v. 9).

Christians have the Gospel of peace on their feet (Eph. 6:15), so that wherever they go, they bring peace. This is not “peace at any price,” for holiness is more important than a peace based on sin (see James 3:17; Heb. 12:14). Compromise is not peace, but Christians should not be contentious as they contend for the faith. (One Episcopalian Church in Boston is giving the state the right to conduct marriages. By them no longer conducting marriages in their church, they have compromised this sacred institution God has established by letting the state define marriage for them.)

H. **“Persecuted”** (v. 10). If we live godly lives, suffering will come! Note the rewards: we are in the same company as Christ and the prophets, and we shall be rewarded in heaven. (2 Tim. 3:12)

III. Salt and Light (5:13–16)⁵

There are two pictures of the Christian in closing: salt and the light. Salt speaks of inward character that influences a decaying world; light speaks of the outward testimony of good works those points to God. (not ourselves)⁵. Jesus’ followers would be like salt in that they would create a thirst for greater information. When one sees a unique person who possesses superior qualities in specific areas, he desires to discover why that person is different. Is this not true?

A **light** is meant to **shine** and give direction. Individuals Jesus described in verses 3-10 would obviously radiate and point others to the proper path. Their influence would be evident, like **a city on a hill** or **a lamp...on its’ stand**. Our good works must accompany our dedicated lives as we let

⁵ Wiersbe, Warren W.: *Wiersbe’s Expository Outlines on the New Testament*. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1997,c1992 ,S.28

our lights shine. Light-radiating people live so that others **see** their **good deeds** and give **praise** not to **them** but to their **Father in heaven**.⁶

IV. The Old and the New (5:17–48)⁷

Having declared the meaning of true righteousness, the Lord then explained the meaning of sin. He pointed out that He was not abandoning or nullifying the law but fulfilling it. (remember in the Genesis 3, and Exodus, Leviticus?) The Old Testament law dealt only with outward actions;(the laws given to the people by Moses in Leviticus) but in the kingdom, we must beware of sinful inward attitudes. Jesus fulfilled the law in His life, for nobody could accuse Him of sin; and He fulfilled it in His death and resurrection. God's people do not obey Him because of outward constraint but because of an inward life, the **power of the Spirit of God**. While the Holy Spirit is not mentioned in the Sermon on the Mount, it is clear that we cannot practice what Jesus teaches here apart from the **Spirit's help** (Rom. 8:1–13). The rest of the chapter, Jesus deals with sin (several) and offers explanations on how to deal with them. It is interesting how Jesus first taught the people. Thus they heard the truth. They followed him and some accepted him by faith. However, to truly live the new life, once Jesus had departed from the earth, man needed help. We still need this help today. The Power from on High as discussed in Acts 2.

SUMMARY:

The Sermon on the Mount basically is about *how a person who is in a right relationship with God should conduct his life*. Jesus defined the true meaning of righteousness, as he gave the beatitudes. Later, he explained the meaning of sin and pointed out that the law God, the Father gave to Moses was not abandoned or nullified, but was fulfilled. The Old Testament dealt only with outward actions, however, it pointed to the one who would show us the way once and for all. The New Testament, points to our inward attitudes and shows us how Jesus' life and death fulfilled the Old Testament. This is where the heart is important to God. Why? Because the heart is the key to becoming citizens of heaven. Without the power of the Holy Spirit, dwelling inside, we are nothing in of ourselves. *We cannot truly repent and accept Jesus and even understand his sacrifice without having a change of heart. Have you allowed your heart to be changed, thus putting off the old sinful self and allowing Jesus to enter into your heart, which creates a new person who will be a citizen of His Kingdom? If you have-Amen. If not, then what is stopping you?*

Questions for Reflection:

- 1. From the lesson, can you contrast the two: The Pharisaic (Pharisee) standard of righteousness to the Messianic (Jesus) standard of righteousness? Give examples. ☺**
- 2. Can you understand why God deals with our hearts?**
- 3. I have heard it said, "Laws are made to be broken". Aren't you so glad that God's plan of salvation (Jesus Christ) was merciful and complete than all the Laws of the Old Testament?**

⁶ Walvord, John F.;Zuck, Roy B.;Dallas Theological Seminary: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary:An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c.1985, S. 2:29

⁷ Wiersbe, Warren W.: *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament*. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1997,c1992 ,S.28