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BEATITUDE CHAPTER

Matthew 5:1-12

When we come to chapter 5 of Matthew, we come to the beginning of what is commonly referred to as the Sermon on the Mount which comprises chapters 5-7. These chapters have been referred to in various ways by commentators. They have been classified as:

- The Constitution of the Kingdom
- The Magna Carta of the Kingdom
- The Manifesto of the Kingdom

However we classify these chapters, they contain principles that we find repeated throughout the New Testament. This Sermon on the Mount was the longest recorded discourse that Jesus gave when on earth. Its importance cannot be overestimated.

The chapter opens with these words: *“And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them....”* (vs.1-2)

Let us the first 12 verses in chapter 5 as follows: The Terminology That Jesus Used, The Traits That Jesus Emphasized and The Triumphs That Jesus Promised.

THE TERMINOLOGY THAT JESUS USED

The first word out of His mouth was *“blessed!* In the first 12 verses of His discourse He uses the word 9 times! He was speaking about the chief attitude of the citizens who are in the heavenly Kingdom – its people are happy people regardless of their circumstances.

The word *“Blessed”* that Jesus used is the Greek word *“makarios”* which means *“happy”* or *“blissful.”* The Greeks described *“makarios”* as a state of contentment and bliss unaffected by circumstances. This is the meaning behind the word translated *“blessed.”* God desires his children to live in a state of joy and happiness. That is why Scriptures speak of *“the Joy of the Lord.”*

- *“The joy of the Lord is your strength”* – (Nehemiah 8:10)
- *“The king shall have joy in Your strength, O LORD.”* (Psalm 21:1)
- *“Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous; and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!”* (Psalm 32:11)
- *“I will joy in the God of my salvation.”* (Habakkuk 3:18)

These first 12 verses are usually referred to as “The Beatitudes” – that is, attitudes of being – what attitude characterizes our being? Sadness or gladness? Facial Christianity is a way to witness to a watching world of the joy that we have within.

Did you hear about the little girl who came home from school and upon entering the house she said to her mother, "Mom, I saw a Christian down the street just now." Her mother replied, "How do you know he was a Christian?" She replied, "Mom, he must have been, he looked so sad! Our face sends a message – what message do people see in our faces?"

Jesus is not a killjoy! The first recorded address that he gave started out with the word "*blessed*" – meaning "happy," "blissful." Are you one of the happy people that Jesus talks about? Are you sure? If you are not, do you really want to be? Let us see what these happy people are like.

THE TRAITS THAT JESUS EMPHASIZED

There are 9 traits of the citizens of the Kingdom of God that Jesus emphasizes in the introduction to His mountain sermon. They are: the humble, v.3; the mournful, v.4; the meek, v.5; the hungry, v.6; the merciful, v.7; the pure, v.8; the peacemakers, v.9; the persecuted, v. 10 and the reviled, v. 11.

The world has its own idea of a happy person, doesn't it? Those who are strangers to the Kingdom of God would not list the traits that Jesus lists. Their list would look something like this:

Blessed are the proud, not the humble;
Blessed are the merrymakers, not the mournful;
Blessed are the self-assertive, not the meek;
Blessed are those with fleshly appetites, not spiritual appetites;
Blessed are the selfish, not the merciful;
Blessed are the impure, not the pure;
Blessed are the troublemakers, not the peacemakers;
Blessed are the compromisers, not the persecuted;
Blessed are the revilers, not the reviled.

But then, the world's philosophy doesn't produce genuinely happy people either, does it? Let us look again at the traits of the persons whom Jesus calls happy:

The Humble. v.3

"Blessed are the poor in spirit."

Jesus is not extolling poverty here; He is talking about the "*poor in spirit.*" That is, "*humble in spirit.*" To be humble in spirit is to have a humble opinion of ourselves; to realize that we are sinners, and have no righteousness of our own; to be willing to be saved only by the rich grace and mercy of God. He is talking about those who have a sense of spiritual poverty.

Micah 6:8 says, "*What does the Lord require of you, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.*"

On another occasion Jesus said, "*Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.*" And He took them up in His arms,

laid His hands on them, and blessed them." (Mark 10:14-16) Being humble is like becoming in spirit like a little child.

The Mournful. v.4

"Blessed are they that mourn."

The reference here is to those who mourn over sin, who are exceeding sorrowful for sin. Christ came to preach repentance and to cause men to mourn over their sins and forsake them. *"Godly sorrow works repentance to salvation."* (2 Cor. 7:10)

There is much mourning in the world today but little mourning for sin. There are tears of frustration, carnality, sinfulness but only tears of genuine sorrow are rewarded by God.

The Meek. v.5

"Blessed are the meek."

Meekness is patience or long-suffering while we are being injured. We should not mistake meekness for weakness. We read of Moses that, *"The man Moses was very meek."* (Numbers 22:3) However, Moses was no weakling!

Jesus himself said, *"I am meek."* (Matthew 11:29) meekness is not a sign of weakness but on the contrary, it is a sign of strength.

The Hungry and Thirsty. v. 6

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness."

Some people hunger and thirst for wealth, fame, pleasure or success, etc. But these never satisfy an appetite for righteousness. That hunger and thirst can only be quenched by the Bread of Life and the Water of Life.

The psalmist said, *"As the deer pants after the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, Oh God! My soul first for God, for the living God."* This is the thirst about which Jesus was speaking.

The Merciful. v.7

"Blessed are the merciful."

God's mercy has been described as "The hand of God that holds back the judgment of God." As sinners, we deserve the wrath of God. However, God has shown mercy to us. Each day we are the recipients of that mercy. Nowhere do we imitate God more than by showing mercy to others.

The Pure. v.8

"Blessed are the pure in heart."

When we speak of pure air, pure water, pure gold, we mean the absence of any impure

elements. The Bible tells us that *"The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked."* And yet our hearts can be cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ and made pure.

The Peacemakers. v.9

"Blessed are the peacemakers."

This has reference to those who prevent contention, strife and war. The reference also is to those who seek to make peace between God and man by bringing to them the Good News, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, by and through which those who enemies become reconciled .

The Persecuted. v.10

"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake."

People who possess the above traits will stand out in a crowd and are not understood by the majority of worldlings. Therefore, they are sometimes persecuted. Notice that the verse does not say, "Blessed are you when you are persecuted because people do not agree with your political views." Jesus said *"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake."*

The Reviled. v.11

"Blessed are you when men shall revile you and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my namesake, rejoice and be exceedingly glad."

To be reviled is to be verbally attacked with vile and/or abusive language. To be reviled is to have people *"say all kinds of evil against you falsely"* for Jesus sake. There are people who hate Christ and Christians and attack them verbally.

In summation, Jesus has been describing the traits of his Kingdom's citizens. He declares them to be happy in spite of external situations. Are you one of the happy people that Jesus is talking about? Is your joy based on internal principles or external happenings? Do you possess within the peace of God that *"passes all understanding"*? (Philippians 4:7)

Jesus goes a step further and tells what the future holds for the citizens of His Kingdom whose traits He has described.

THE TRIUMPHS THAT JESUS PROMISED

Let it be clearly understood that Jesus said these persons are happy now! He said *"Blessed are ..."* that is these persons are, in the present, *"Blessed!"* However, he goes on to say that the greater happiness is yet to come. Look once again at these happy people and noticed that to each group a promise is made:

The Humble. v.3

"Blessed are the poor in spirit - for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

That is, all the resources of heaven are theirs in the here and now and they shall enter heaven hereafter.

The Mournful. v.4

*"Blessed are they that mourn - **for they shall be comforted.**"*

Both those who mourn over sin and those who mourn over sinners shall be comforted.

The Meek. v.5

*"Blessed are the meek - **for they shall inherit the earth.**"*

"The earth is the Lord's" said the psalmist, and He can give it to whomever it pleases Him! Psalm 149:4 furthermore states, "He will beautify the meek with salvation."

The Hungry and Thirsty. v. 6

*"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness - **for they shall be filled.**"*

He fills the hungry soul with goodness. (Psalm 107:9)

The Merciful. v.7

*"Blessed are the merciful - **for they shall obtain mercy.**"*

Those who show mercy shall be shown mercy.

The Pure. v.8

*"Blessed are the pure in heart - **for they shall see God.**"*

David asked the question, "Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart." (Psalm 24:3-4)

The Peacemakers. v.9

*"Blessed are the peacemakers - **for they shall be called the children of God.**"*

The followers of the Prince of Peace are akin to God.

The Persecuted. v. 10

*"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake - **for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**"*

The persecuted may not be welcome in this world but they are received with joy in the world to come!

The Reviled. v.11

*"Blessed are you when men shall persecute you and revile you - **great is your reward in heaven.**"*

The "blessed" are reproached here but rewarded in heaven!

Summation

Jesus describes basic traits of heaven's happy people and He said, "That is not all, the best is yet to come!" The Greeks had a saying, "Call no man happy till he dies." Jesus was saying, "You can live a happy life now and be assured of a happier life in the future!"

Conclusion

When He had finished His sermon we read about the listener's response at the end of chapter 7 – *"And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching...."* (Matt. 7:28)

It was not necessarily Jesus' intention to astonish His listeners but to arouse them to action. Jesus' half-brother, James, had this to say about the responsibility that truth hearers have: *"Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."* (James 1:22)

I have preached many sermons to the same persons year after year and in some cases have seen absolutely no positive changes in their lives. These same persons were very gracious and said things like, "Pastor, that sure was a good sermon!" But they had no intention of putting the truth into action. James said they are self-deceived. It is not astonishment but acceptance and action that God expects from hearers of His truth.

To His audience in Matthew 13 Jesus said,

"He who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."

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