

Date : 14 July 2024
Theme : Kingdom living from the Sermon on the Mount
Topic : The Beatitudes (Blessedness)
Key passage : *Matthew 5: 1-12*
Key verse : ...*Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven...
Matthew 5:2*

Introduction

Following last Sunday's message entitled *Is there Heaven and Hell*, our Lord Jesus, in the Beatitudes, defines very clearly who can possess the Kingdom of God.

What are the characteristics of Kingdom citizens?

What are the expectations of the King for citizens in His Kingdom?

Our Lord Jesus is a Master Preacher. His Sermon on the Mount is about Kingdom living. It is His covenant relationship teachings so that we could take possession of God's blessings. (*Matthew's Gospel* shows us how to relate with the King of kings and the Lord of lords).

Today, we shall address the following:

A) What does *beatitudes* mean?

B) What do blessings look like? (Characteristics)

C) What do the various conditions of the heart such as poverty, mourning etc look like?

In our past study, we learn of the conditions for blessings or cursings. *Deuteronomy 28*

Paying attention to God's Word attract blessings, refusing to obey brings curses.

It describes our actions because of the choices we make.

Our Lord in the Sermon addresses the heart conditions, the ones that determine our actions.

In *Matthew*, the Lord focuses on the causes (our heart) behind the effects (the blessings).

A) Meaning

The beatitudes is simply blessedness to have God's hand resting upon you; His approval in your life (the opposite of curses).

B) Key characteristics of Beatitudes = Blessedness

(i) True blessings bring delight or sweetness to our soul; good things that perfectly match the desires of our hearts. They cannot be found in external, material things like silver or gold. It can only be experienced within.

(ii) They must be eternal rather than a passing experience. Things in this life are transient. We are to consider and to do everything that counts for eternity. Our life on earth would be a lease. Only when we end the lease do we move into our 'free-hold' possessions. Our home in heaven is not a lease, we take possession of it forever. Therefore, the blessings we pursue must be those that yield eternal rewards. Only what is done for Christ will last. (The greatest being: a rich welcome, a crown that does not fade, overflowing joy of the Lord).

(iii) Abundance. Blessings are good things which come aplenty, not just in tiny bits. A foretaste is good but to have abundance is great. Therefore, blessings should be much rather than little, much joy is better than little.

a) What are some blessings we start enjoying here and now?

God has delivered His blessings to those who love Him, like...

i) All spiritual blessings *Ephesians 1:3*

These are blessings given to us to discern spiritual things and have spiritual power against Satan, weapons to protect ourselves and setting people free from demonic spirits. Unfortunately, because of ignorance, many Christians do not seem to take hold of them.

ii) As a Partaker of His divine nature

This blessing comes from tapping into His great and precious promises *2 Peter 1:4* to overcome lust and bondages, to have divine resources such as the Holy Spirit's guidance and revelation knowledge.

(iii) Christ's righteousness imputed on us to enter His Kingdom.

(iv) Covenant relationship with the Lord has sevenfold blessings *Exodus 23:25-29*.

A promised relationship ...*to establish us as a holy people unto Himself... Deuteronomy 28:9*

b) The level of blessing depends on our faithfulness.

All who finish running the race without dropping out will be blessed. Faithfulness is keeping the covenant relationship until the end (without denying Him or going after other gods).

Paul calls this keeping the faith. Salvation is by grace (God's part) and by faith (man's part).

Yet our part is to work out our salvation with fear and trembling.

c) Greater blessings for those who endure hardship and suffer for His sake. *1 Peter 4:13-14*.

It is one thing to stay true to enter the Kingdom and another to enter to a *rich welcome* for those who are stretched (by sacrificing for the gospel *2 Peter 1:11*).

Do not only get into heaven by the skin of your teeth. Excel in your service for Christ.

Those who aim for a *rich welcome* will need to adopt a certain character as taught in the Sermon of the Mount. The underlying heart conditions for success are the Beatitudes.

C) Conditions of our heart described in the Beatitudes

Beatitude No. 1: Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven

Every beatitude states first the duty and then the reward, the cause and the effect. The reward is delightful, worthy of our effort, unlocking the secrets of true happiness.

i) Why does this beatitude matter?

This is the foundational condition for attaining and progressing to the other blessings.

No one will receive the grace of God without poverty of spirit. Self-righteousness and self-sufficient people cannot receive from Jesus, nor appreciate the sacrifice of Jesus and to enter heaven. The beatitudes look at the heart conditions which is the heart of blessings. Heaven can only be possessed by those who are poor in spirit.

...*For theirs is the Kingdom of heaven...*

Those who stop being poor in spirit cannot enter heaven either. The Laodicean Christians had become self-sufficient, saying ...*I am rich... I need nothing...* They had become lukewarm toward Jesus – they would not enter heaven. *Revelation 3:16*

ii) What does this beatitude mean?

It means to acknowledge before God that I have nothing to merit His acceptance. Like the tax collector who recognised his unworthiness before God and standing afar off, said ...*God, be merciful to me a sinner...* *Luke 18:13*. God accepted him rather than another man who flaunted his self-righteousness...*I am not like others....*

The prophet Isaiah said our righteousness is as filthy rags.

Paul, who was more morally upright than most, called his righteousness as *dung*, seeking rather to attain the righteousness of Christ by grace.

These spiritual principles contradict what the world views as wisdom.

The world says blessed are the rich in material wealth, but the Lord says blessed are the poor in spirit (not blessed are the poor). He is referring to the spirit of man.

iii) What it does not mean?

Being poor in spirit does not mean thinking of yourself as spiritually or financially poor.

A financially poor person will show miserly behaviour, stingy on food and necessities. Neither does poor in spirit mean to give away one's wealth to live like a poor man.

Poverty of spirit is not humility but it results in humility. It is the input and humility the output. No one can be truly humble without this beatitude. Poverty of spirit acknowledges his need for the merit of Christ, his dependence on the grace of God.

My Application

- The poor in spirit depends on Christ' righteousness, wisdom and sanctification.
- The poor in spirit is humble to learn of Christ and follow in His steps.
- The poorest saint can inherit the Kingdom of heaven. Everyone who inherits the Kingdom of heaven is rich.
- Those who invest their earthly wealth in God's Kingdom now will be yet richer still. Therefore, I want to set aside a part of my God-given wealth as investment for eternity

Beatitude No.2: Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

This step 2 of blessedness, seems unpleasant, but necessary. Godly sorrow leads to repentance; worldly sorrow to death. *2 Corinthians 7:10.*

The result: we will be comforted.

- Examples of false mourning.
 - Not all forms of mourning is godly. Judas, Jesus' disciple, mourned but his was not godly. He felt sorry for his sin in betraying innocent blood and even made restitution by returning the 30 pieces of silver. He confessed *...I have sinned...* But his was not godly mourning because he probably concluded that his sin was beyond redemption. He did not see it as an offence against God. The Lord said he ended in hell.
 - King Saul's mourning was not genuine. Saul, in violation of the Lord's command, confessed *...I have sinned...* *1 Samuel 15:24*, but he did not mean it. He just mouthed the appropriate words which did not come from his heart. God rejected Him.
 - Cain mourned after killing his brother. But he was mourning the severity of his punishment, not for the wrong he had done. Others mourn only because they were caught in their sin, like the responses by adulterers and cheaters.

My Application

- Godly mourning from the heart is spontaneous and without coercion.

The prodigal son's mourning was godly when he met his father.
He said *...I have sinned against heaven and before you...* *Luke 15:21*
He did not give any excuse for his suffering.
- True mourning is firstly, a sin against the God of heaven.
 - I have betrayed Him by breaking the covenant relationship
 - ...hurt Him deeply with disrespect, hostility
 - ...blatantly rebelled against Him
 - ...sided with God's enemy when I listened to Satan instead of God
 - ...returned God's love and mercy with ingratitude and hatred
 - ...grieved the Holy Spirit who has been sent to help me.
- The nature of comfort for godly mourning

The Holy Spirit is the Comforter. He comes alongside to minister peace, joy and courage. He is the Spirit of grace, imparting grace for our faith journey and power to move on. He sanctifies and keep our hearts loyal to God.
He grows His fruit in us, namely love, joy, peaceself-control (fruit of the Spirit).
He guides us into all truth. He never leaves us.