

## The Beatitudes: Growing in our walk with Jesus (Part 1)

The concept of the King and the kingdom is prominently featured in the gospel of Matthew; in fact, it is the theme of the book. The Beatitudes talks about the blessings that flow from the Kingdom of God just by aligning our hearts at the right place. It is a manual for the disciples of Christ. We are called to be the disciples of Christ and discipleship comes with a real cost. The cost of discipleship means dying to self-daily, giving up on your own desires as you submit them to the will of God through the person of Jesus.

**The basic purpose** is to understand the real meaning of the Beatitudes, concept of the Kingdom of God, the blessings that flow from it by aligning our heart and our attitude and the importance of constant dependence on the Holy Spirit.

### General outline

- It is from the Latin word 'beatus', meaning both "happy" and "blessed." Beatus – Beatitudo – Beatitudo
- Found in 2 Gospels – Mathew 5: 1-12 & Luke 6:20-23
- Beatitudo is the beginning portion / introduction of Jesus' sermon on the mount. It is like the vision statement, a manifesto declaring the intentions, motives. The Sermon extends to 3 chapters Mathew 5, 6, 7 & Luke 6: 24- 49

The whole sermon is pivoted around these beatitudes. The beatitudes are to the Sermon on the Mount as the Ten Commandments are to the Law of Moses.

- Be it the Beatitudes or sermon on the mount, Jesus modeled it for us from the beginning to the end as a perfect example. He demonstrated what it means to be poor, meek, humble, merciful, being persecuted and doing the will of the Father. Jesus reached out to the lowliest of all, the sinners, the broken, the downtrodden, the worthless people. He reached out to children, valued women, touched lepers who were the outcasts in the society, accepted the Samaritans as the Jews did not accept them.
- The Beatitudes are a manual for the 'disciples' of Jesus. It represents the standards of Christian living. The Beatitudes give a concise statement of the standards of the kingdom of heaven that Jesus has announced and summarize the principles of kingdom life that He will articulate in the Sermon that follows.
- Let's look into a bit of background setting/ the events leading up to the beatitudes from both the gospels:
  - John the Baptist prepares the way for the Messiah. (Mathew 3:1-12/ Luke 3:1-20)

- The Baptism of Jesus (Mathew 3:13-17/ Luke 3:21-22)
- The Temptation of Jesus (Luke 4:1-13/ Mathew 4:1-11)
- The public ministry of Jesus begins (Mathew 4:12 / Luke 4:14 onwards)

Jesus begins his ministry of teaching, proclaiming the good news, healing and deliverance throughout Galilee.

***In Luke 4:14 - 14 Then Jesus returned to Galilee, filled with the Holy Spirit's power. Reports about him spread quickly through the whole region. 15 He taught regularly in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.***

- Calls His first disciples - ***Mathew 3:18 -22 walking along the shore of sea of Galilee- he saw two brothers Simon (Peter) and Andrew, throwing a net into the water, for they fished for a living. 19 Jesus called out to them, "Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!" 20 And they left their nets at once and followed him. <sup>21</sup> And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. <sup>22</sup> Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.***

In addition to the calling of the first disciples, Luke 6:12-16 mentions the choosing of the twelve apostles.

- **Crowds now begin to follow Jesus:**

***Mathew 4:23 Jesus traveled throughout the region of Galilee, teaching in the synagogues and announcing the good news about the Kingdom. And he healed every kind of disease and illness. 24 News about him spread as far as Syria, and people soon began bringing to him all who were sick. And whatever their sickness or disease, or if they were demon possessed or epileptic or paralyzed—he healed them all. 25 Large crowds followed him wherever he went—people from Galilee, the Ten Towns, Jerusalem, from all over Judea, and from east of the Jordan River. Everyone tried to touch him, because healing power went out from him, and he healed everyone.***

Now let's come to the Beatitudes from the sermon on the mount:

- **Who are the Beatitudes for: Disciples**

***Mathew 5:1 One day as he saw the crowds gathering, Jesus went up on the mountainside and sat down. His disciples gathered around him, 2 and he began to teach them.***

There might have been different kinds of people in the crowd. Some just interested to get healed, get the blessing and disappear, some just as observers or followers. Here it says, Jesus began to teach/ speak to His disciples.

The Beatitudes are not for the general crowd, any Christian, any believer but a 'disciple', a 'citizen of the Kingdom of God'. The beatitudes are not given in a random order, but overflow into each other providing a complete picture of a kingdom citizen.

## Citizens of Kingdom of God:

Do we know we are part of God's kingdom? Citizens of God's Kingdom.

When we receive Christ/ born again, we enter the Kingdom of God. We have access to it. Remember, the kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom that begins when you are born again, and you surrender lordship to God in your heart. Eventually there will be a physical kingdom of God that we will see, but that will not happen until after Jesus returns and establishes his kingdom on the earth. Until then, the kingdom of God lives in our heart. But there is a journey. ***Math 7:21 Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.***

Being citizens of the Kingdom of God – we must abide by certain standards laid by the King. It is the calling of a disciple. Discipleship always comes with a cost. The standard is set high. Perfection may not be possible while on earth but at least we aim towards it.

Don't live by the standard of your fellow believer, pastor, leader or an evangelist.

God has set a standard for each one of us to follow.

## Marks of a disciple:

- A disciple is called – Not because of our worthiness, but because of His grace.
- A disciple is taught/ follower – loves the Lord more than anything, learns from the word, follows the leadings of the Holy Spirit, obedience that flows out of love for the Lord. First devotion is to the Lord.
- A disciple spends time with His master : In the hours before his arrest, Jesus yearned for time with his disciples (Luke 22: 11,39,45)
- A disciple denies himself and takes up the cross – ***Luke 9:23 And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. 24 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.*** When we deny ourselves, we hold nothing higher than God & His kingdom purpose. When we seek and prioritize God & His Kingdom, every other blessing will just follow.
- A disciple is committed - Jesus teaches that following him is not easy; it requires everything. ***"No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."*** Luke 9:57-62
- A disciple is aware of the cost involved - ***Luke 14:26 "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. 27 Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. 33 So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce (give up) all that he has cannot be my disciple.***
- A disciple is a witness of Christ, sent to proclaim the Kingdom of God.
- A disciple is a servant. Jesus' disciples got their hands dirty, distributing multiplied food to the hungry people. Sometimes walking with Jesus means picking up bread crusts and fish bones.

**Mathew 5: 3-12**

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

**4 “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.**

**5 “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.**

**6 “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.**

**7 “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.**

**8 “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.**

**9 “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.**

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

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

- Sounds Poetic
- Eight pronouncements of Blessing (5:11-12 viewed as one). 8 blessings for 8 attitudes.
- Note ending of first and eighth: “because the kingdom of heaven is theirs.” All eight have the same form: blessing followed by explanation.
- Lists the qualities of a citizen of God’s Kingdom.
- Each of these qualities come with a blessing. The Blessing connected to the Kingdom of God is different from the human or worldly understanding. How can the poor be called ‘blessed’? At the very onset of his sermon, Jesus contradicts the human expectations. The kingdom is given to the poor not rich, the feeble & meek not the mighty; to little children not the mighty soldiers.
- These qualities are not easy. They might look absolutely impossible. That’s why we are given the helper, the Holy Spirit who transforms us daily to the image of Christ. He helps by transforming our character and attitude daily.

**The beatitudes may be divided into two groups of four :**

- a. with the first group emphasizing the disciple’s vertical relationship with God
- b. the second emphasizing the disciple’s horizontal relationship with people.

1. **“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Mathew 5:3)**

Remember, Jesus is talking to the disciples who left everything . Their net, profession, livelihood, father (relationship) ...

**Poor in spirit - (Ptochos- of one who crouches and cowers, hence beggarly, poor, destitute, spiritually poor, properly, bent over; (figuratively), completely lacking resources (earthly wealth), relates to "the pauper rather than the mere peasant, the extreme opposite of the rich, helpless, powerless to accomplish an end)**

To be poor in spirit is the attitude of our hearts. Poverty of spirit' is nothing to do with weakness of character, low self-esteem, but concerns our relationship with God and dependency.

- It is to acknowledge our spiritual bankruptcy before God. We have nothing to offer, nothing to plead, nothing with which we can buy the favour of God. We were undeserving to receive His mercy.  
Poverty is having nothing else, absolutely helpless, completely empty of yourself, your strength, intellect, ability – but GOD ALONE.
- It is the realization of our unworthiness when we stand in the presence of the Lord. We come to His presence, leaving behind our smartness, intellect, self-righteousness, all our achievements and accomplishments. *Isaiah 6:5 says “Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The LORD of hosts”.*  
*1 Cor 15:9,10 For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.*
- It is the realization of the lack of our personal righteousness but the righteousness through Christ. *Philippians 3: 4- 6 though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: 5 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; 6 as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8 Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith.*
- Recognition of the need for God’s mercy and total dependency on God : *Luke 18:9 He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others*

**with contempt: 10 “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ 13 But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”**

- **Church in Laodicea in Rev 3:16** *For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.* They were rich not poor in spirit. They were self-satisfied & superficial but in God’s eyes they were wretched, pitiable and naked.
- Living in absolute dependence on the Spirit in every step. “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (Gal. 5:25). The Holy Spirit was intimately connected with Jesus throughout his entire life. From birth to tomb to throne, Holy Spirit was His constant companion.
  - At Jesus’s Birth – Angel told Mary in Luke 1:35 ***“The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God “.***
  - Baptism – Holy Spirit descended like dove (Luke 3:21/ Math 3:13)
  - Temptation – Filled with the Holy Spirit, was led by the spirit into wilderness (Luke 4:1 / Mathew 4:1)
  - Beginning of Ministry - returned to Galilee in “the power of the Spirit”
  - First sermon, He fulfilled Isaiah’s prophecy ***“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me to proclaim good news to the poor, proclaim liberty to the captives and sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed,19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”***
  - Ministry: ***If it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Matt. 12:28).***
  - In his death, Jesus offered himself as an atoning sacrifice through the Holy Spirit (***Heb. 9:14) how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.***
  - Paul tells us that Jesus was “declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead” (Rom. 1:4) ***And was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.***
  - After Jesus’ resurrection he breathed on his disciples, saying “receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:22).

When we embrace Christ as revealed in the gospel, he gives us his Spirit. The Holy Spirit remakes us after Christ’s likeness, changing us into his very image (2 Cor. 3:18). We are dependent on the Spirit for every inch of progress in our pursuit of holiness and transformation.

It is the Spirit that inflames our hearts with the fire of ardent love for God and for our neighbor. Every day he mortifies, and every day consumes more and more of the evil desires or greed in us. He sanctifies and renews us daily. The Spirit opens our eyes of understanding to know God better, strengthens hearts, enables holiness, even desire for holiness and fills us with the fullness of God. Helps us to worship and pray. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of resurrection who is with us today, giving us power to live out the resurrected life of Christ and to bring the power of the resurrection everywhere we go.