

Living In the Kingdom, Part 2
Matthew 5:5-6; Galatians 5:23; Numbers 12:1-2

Slide 1

The Sermon on the Mount starts with nine statements that began with “*Blessed are.*” We often call these statements “*the Beatitudes.*” “*Blessed*” means happy or fortunate.

If we asked people in the world today for their list of “*blessed are,*” I think they’d come up with something like this:

“Blessed are you when have lots of friends. Blessed are you when you’re successful in your job. Blessed are you when you’re wealthy. Blessed are you when you have a pretty wife.”

But Jesus had a different view of “*blessed are*” as seen in this week’s passages.

Slide 2

Matthew 5:5, “*Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.*” When most people read this verse, they immediately think of someone who’s weak, which is far from the meaning of this word.

Meekness is supreme self-control empowered by the Spirit of God dwelling within us. Meekness is patience in the presence of being wronged.

It’s neither a surrender of our rights, nor cowardice; but it’s the opposite of sudden anger or malice due to long-harbored vengeance.

Meekness is receiving the wrongs done to us with a belief that God will vindicate us.

Romans 12:19, “*Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay.”*”

If you're constantly losing control or seeking vengeance against those who've wronged you, then not only are you not meek, but you're also not allowing the Holy Spirit to operate through you in those circumstances.

Paul tried to explain this to the Galatian church in Galatians 5:23, *"Gentleness (meekness) and self-control. Against such things there is no law."*

The word translated *"gentleness,"* or meekness, in this verse carries the meaning of someone with a good blend of spiritual poise and strength; it's the gentleness of strength.

This verse is about having a sense of humility as we walk in our spiritual strength. It's referring primarily to our attitude towards God which, in turn, is reflected in how we treat people.

A good example of someone demonstrating this trait was Moses. Moses walked and talked with God just as we walk and talk with one another, but he never thought of himself as anyone special based on that relationship.

With everything Moses experienced, while in the presence of God, he never lorded his authority over the people. He was always meek even when he angrily addressed the Children of Israel's rebellion.

Even when Moses' sister and brother rose up against him, because he chose to marry an Ethiopian woman, he maintained an attitude of meekness.

Numbers 12:1-2, *"Miriam and Aaron began to talk against Moses because of his Cushite wife, for he had married a Cushite. "Has the LORD spoken only through Moses?" they asked. "Hasn't he also spoken through us?" And the LORD heard this."*

Since Miriam's name appears first, she was probably the leader of this rebellion with her little brother Aaron following her lead.

But when you read between the lines, you'll see that jealousy was the real reason she had a problem with the woman Moses chose to marry.

Maybe she and Aaron didn't like the fact that she was Ethiopian and not an Israelite, but the complaint itself was saturated in jealousy.

Not wanting to expose themselves as being jealous of their younger brother and possibly his success, they hid behind this complaint of whom he chose to marry.

But they were jealous, as highlighted in verse 2 when they said, *"Has the LORD spoken only through Moses?" they asked. "Hasn't he also spoken through us?"*

These words indicate the jealousy that was in their hearts, and they used this opportunity to level charges against him.

They felt that they were just as important as Moses as it related to the leadership of the people, but that wasn't how God felt.

In God's eyes, there was not a man on earth *"more humble"* than Moses.

Numbers 12:3, *"Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth."*

Yet, even though Miriam and Aaron came against him, Moses didn't answer their charges or lash out against them.

He didn't defend his action, nor did he try to fight with them over the leadership of the people.

Isn't it interesting that when Jesus faced all the accusations from the religious leaders, He didn't respond to them, either? From all accounts, He said nothing.

This verse tells us that Moses was very humble, in fact he was the most humble man "*on the face of the earth.*"

And, because Moses was who he was, God defended him. In fact, God called a meeting and invited Miriam and Aaron to attend.

How would you like to be called into a private meeting with God so He could set you straight about something or someone you've been complaining about? This is what happened with Miriam and Aaron.

Therefore, Miriam, as a result of her actions, got leprosy. But guess who went to God to plead for her deliverance? Moses.

My point is that Moses was a humble man who walked in the strength of God's anointing.

He stood before kings in battle and won; yet he remained humble. At his hands God performed many miracles, yet Moses remained humble.

Through the leading of God, he accomplished the impossible by delivering the Children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; and still he remained humble.

Moses understood that everything he did was through the grace and power of God. It was through that understanding that he could be humble, regardless of what he accomplished for God.

If some of us had done a fraction of what Moses had done, we'd have our own talk show, book signings, and podcasts.

We'd be a social media influencer with a huge following. We'd be on tour as a motivational speaker about "*How God Can Use Anyone*" (of course we'd be getting paid).

Not only would we be paid, but we'd also be following all of the news articles and broadcasts as they replayed our accomplishments. We'd even start to believe the press clippings about ourselves.

Because the world praises this mentality of recognition, we struggle to be meek, but this wasn't who Moses was. The communion between God and Moses was the core of their relationship.

Jesus explains this communion in Matthew 11.

Matthew 11:27-30, "*All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."*

In these verses, the word "*knows*" means more than just a cursory knowledge of someone. It implies an intimate relationship.

The communion between God the Father and Jesus His Son is the core of their relationship, just like God and Moses.

To know God in such a manner, God must reveal Himself. So, we're blessed that He did so through His Son, Jesus.

Then Jesus continues and tells us that He's meek and lowly in heart, or humble, and we should come to Him and take His yoke upon us.

Jesus is telling us that we can find our way to becoming gentle and humble when we trade off the yokes of the world: the stress of living; the trials of living righteously; the worries of the job; and everything else that we're currently carrying and take on His yoke.

When we bring all those things to Christ and trade them in for His yoke, we'll find the peace that we so desperately seek.

And, upon receiving that peace, which we can only get from God, it'll change how we see ourselves in relation to Him and others.

When we finally come to the realization that we're nothing without Jesus, then we can become meek.

Another thing about this beatitude that you may not understand is the use of the word "*earth*."

When Jesus said, "*Blessed are the meek: for they will inherit the earth*," this word "*earth*" can also be translated "*the land*."

During Biblical times the Jews often referred to great blessings as "*inheriting the land*," because it was promised that they would inherit the land of Canaan.

For a long time, the patriarchs looked forward to this and they regarded it as a great blessing.

It was spoken of for forty years in their journey in the wilderness; and their hopes were crowned when they took possession of the Promised Land.

In the time of Jesus, the Jews habitually used this promise in the Old Testament, where it perpetually occurs, as a proverbial expression to denote any great blessing, most possibly as the sum of all blessings.

Jesus used it in this sense. He wasn't saying that the meek should own great property or have many lands, but that they would possess unusual blessings.

The Jews considered the land of Canaan as a type of heaven and the Messiah's blessings. To inherit "*the land*" became an expression denoting those blessings.

When Jesus promised it here, He was saying that the meek shall be received into His kingdom and, not only partake of its blessings here on earth, but the glories of the heavenly Canaan hereafter.

Living in God's kingdom means that we must develop this character trait. If we fail to develop meekness, we'll hinder the Spirit of God from fully operating within our lives because of our pride and conceit.

When we begin to see the manifestation of the Spirit of God in our lives we may get confused and begin thinking that what we're accomplishing is all about us – that we're something special.

If you don't believe me just watch the news. You'll hear or read about celebrities who, when they've achieved some status, are changed.

They began to believe the press releases. They began to believe it's all about them and how special they are.

How many of you know that, when we start thinking we're the source, the real Source lets us be. It's at that time we learn what failing is all about spiritually?

There are many Christian leaders who've been established by God and have fallen because of their success. They began to believe it was all about them.

Whenever we begin to think that what we're doing for God is all about us, we start down a slippery slope of separation from Him.

By remaining humble through every experience and ignoring the praise of people, we're able to give God the credit for what He's doing through us.

Slide 3

Matthew 5:6, *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled."*

The word *"righteousness"* in this verse, according to the Greek, means *"whatever is right or just in itself that conforms to the revealed will of God; whatever has been appointed by God to be acknowledged and obeyed by man."*

And the phrase, *"hunger and thirst,"* is expressive of a very strong desire.

There's nothing that would better express the strong desire which we all should feel towards obtaining righteousness, than hunger and thirst.

Each of us knows what it feels like to be hungry and thirsty, and then to have both needs satisfied. In Scripture, a fervent desire for anything is often represented by hunger and thirst.

David wrote in Psalm 63:1, *"You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water."*

This is why, in this beatitude, Jesus turned one of the most essential human instincts to spiritual use.

There's happiness when we seek to understand God's will and then begin to thirst and hunger for its completion in our lives.

Everyone, at some point in their life, becomes hungry and thirsty for food, water, love, or God.

This phrase that Jesus used is interpreted as a passionate hunger and thirst for goodness, for holiness.

This isn't your average desire to see some good in the world; it's the desire you'd have for food if you hadn't eaten for days.

It's the way you search for something to drink when you've been out in the hot sun working in the yard which is different than when you're thirsty in the house under the air conditioner.

This hunger and thirst that Jesus referenced was about intensity – you've got to have it; you're longing for it; you desperately need it.

Jesus said that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness “*will be filled.*” Imagine going to your favorite restaurant or having your favorite meal at your home.

This had been planned for several days and you had been looking forward to it.

As the meal was being prepared, you imagined sitting down at the table and having that first bite and knowing you'd have more than enough to get filled.

This is the anticipation that Jesus was talking about as it related to our hunger and thirst for righteousness. Yet, hungering and thirsting after righteousness conflicts with the world.

The world has us pursuing our personal needs and ensuring they're fulfilled even though many of our “personal needs” have nothing at all to do with righteousness.

As a matter of fact, many of our personal needs lead us into sin because we continue to be in a spiritual battle with our flesh. Our fleshly desires want what it wants when it wants.

When we thirst and hunger after righteousness, it requires us to drastically shift our desires. Just imagine if you were a meat and potatoes person all your life and this was the food you craved.

Then you go to the doctor for your annual checkup, and he tells you that you must give it up for your health and you were to only eat vegetables.

Your comfort foods: the foods that made you feel good; the foods that took you back to the good old days are taken away in order for you to live longer.

The initial transition would be difficult, but over time you adjust, and begin to identify new foods that you enjoy as much as what you gave up.

Eventually you begin looking forward to these new foods as much as you did your old unhealthy ones.

This is the transition that takes place when we make the mental decision to begin thirsting and hungering after righteousness.

Paul, in his thirst and hunger after righteousness, wrote the following in Philippians 3:7-11: *“But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and*

participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.”

Remember, before Paul was saved, he was very established in the Jewish community. He had natural pride in his Jewish attainments and was the star of hope for the Sanhedrin.

He was the rising star at the time but, after encountering Christ, he walked away from it all.

You see, when he began to hunger and thirst for true righteousness, everything he had learned and aspired to became rubbish.

Paul was never satisfied with his knowledge of Christ and always craved to have more fellowship with Him.

In verse ten Paul spoke of knowing Christ and the power of His resurrection. There again he used the word “*know*.” He was speaking of an intimate relationship and knowledge of Christ and the resurrection.

This again carries a deeper understanding of the person. When he speaks of the power of the resurrection, he was speaking of the assurance believers have in immortality and our triumph over sin.

When he talked of the fellowship of Christ’s suffering, Paul considered it a prize to even be able to share in Christ’s suffering.

This was a major shift in his thinking because before, when he worked for the Sanhedrin, he was one of the causes of suffering for those who followed Christ.

When Paul wrote this, he was a changed man. He now had a hunger and a thirst for true righteousness which could only be found in Christ.

This hunger and a thirst for true righteousness couldn't be quenched by what he had already accomplished in his life.

When Jesus chose His disciples, He chose them because He knew that they had a willingness to follow Him.

They believed and followed Him even though they didn't understand everything that was happening around them.

They didn't meet man's expectations of someone who would change the world, but they met Christ's. Every one of us can have an impact on this world if we're willing, regardless of our current age.

Our impact may not be the same as someone else's, but it'll leave a lasting mark.

Even though some of us may be thinking that we can't do certain things because we don't know what others may know, I'm telling you that we have the same opportunity to learn and experience the fullness of the Spirit of God.

Jesus has made the Holy Spirit available to all of us; not just certain individuals. If we're willing, He's willing.

Slide 4

Conclusion

I want to close with something Jesus said about the Holy Spirit. We need to remember this! It applies directly to everyone that claims to be a Christian.

John 16:5-11, "But now I am going to him who sent me. None of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' Rather, you are filled with grief because I have said these things. But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away.

Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because people do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.”

I want you to understand something very clearly. The Holy Spirit convicts us and as we choose to listen, we come to know Jesus.

Many intellectuals don't accept the Bible. They struggle with the concept of Christ because intellectually Jesus doesn't make sense to them.

In their mind, if Christ was truly who He claimed to be then all denominations that claim to serve Christ would believe the same things and practice their faith the same way.

Because this isn't the case, intellectually they can't accept it. For these intellectuals the Bible has too many holes that can't be filled.

They think that if you rely on faith for everything you can't explain that it's a cop-out to reality.

While I understand their conclusion, I fundamentally believe they're wrong. I choose to believe, by faith, what the Bible says.

In verse eleven Jesus said that the “*the prince of this world now stands condemned.*” Jesus was talking about Satan. The Greek tense of this phrase show that Satan stands condemned.

Although the sinful world is in his grip, he will be cast out. When Jesus rose from the dead, He proclaimed that all power had been given to Him in heaven and in the earth. Satan was stripped of His power.

In order for us to begin hungering and thirsting after righteousness, we must believe that Christ rules and Satan has been stripped of his power.

We must believe that even though we live in this world, as disciples of Jesus we're not bound by the values of this world.

We must believe, despite all of the craziness going on around us that righteousness will prevail within those who will seek it.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.”

If we truly hunger and thirst for righteousness, then it's a guarantee that we'll be filled.