

## THE BEATITUDES (AN INTRODUCTION)

### INTRO.:

1. ILLUST.: One Sunday as they drove home from church, a little girl turned to her mother and said, "Mommy, there's something about the preacher's message this morning that I don't understand."
  - a. The mother said, "Oh? What is it?"
  - b. The little girl replied, "Well, he said that God is bigger than we are. He said God is so big that He could hold the world in His hand. Is that true?"
  - c. The mother replied, "Yes, that's true, honey."
  - d. "But Mommy, he also said that God comes to live inside of us when we believe in Jesus as our Savior and obey Him. Is that true, too?"
  - e. Again, the mother assured the little girl that what the preacher had said was true.
  - f. With a puzzled look on her face the little girl then asked, "If God is bigger than us and He lives in us, wouldn't He show through?"
  
2. That is what the Sermon on the Mount and especially the Beatitudes are about - God showing through in our lives.
  - a. It has always been God's purpose that when He entered into our lives, He would be allowed to so fill and control our life that He would "show through."
  - b. God's purpose in dwelling within us is so that He can be visible in our attitudes and actions.
  - c. In reality it is not that we try to imitate Christ, or try to do the things that Jesus would do, but rather that Christ Himself would be allowed to live in us and through us.
  - d. Let me put it a little differently by asking a few questions:
    - (1) How would life be different if Jesus were to come take your place?
    - (2) What if He took your place in the home?
    - (3) What if He performed your work on the job?
    - (4) Teenagers, what if He sat in your desk at school?
    - (5) Or what if He filled my place in the pulpit?
  - e. The point is that is exactly what He wants to do.
  - f. He desires to live within me, and shine out to the world through me.
  - g. To allow Him to do this thought, I must mortify the carnal works of this body, master the circumstances of my life, and then manifest His character as I minister to those whom my life touches every day.
  - h. But in order for Jesus to do this there are some radical changes I must make in my life.
  
3. I think that this is why that Jesus as He began his ministry and began to call people to follow Him, gave the Sermon on the Mount.
  - a. He wanted those who chose to follow Him to know just what would be expected of them.
  - b. He wanted them to know that for Him to come into their lives and live through them there would need to be a radical change in their attitudes and actions.
  
4. When we stop and take a good look at the world in which we live, one of the first things that we see is that so many things are confused and confusing.
  - a. So many people are discontented, dissatisfied, frustrated, angry, and disappointed.
  - b. So many people find life unfulfilling and keep grasping at straws.
  - c. When we look at the relationships people have in their homes, businesses, with friends, etc.
    - (1) They are all fouled up.
    - (2) There are all kinds of barriers and walls that we have erected.
  - d. Thus we are led to ask, "Why? What is needed? What needs to happen to change this situation?"
  
5. One thing that is clear is that what is needed in our lives is not another law, rule, regulation, or sermon telling us what to do.
  - a. We already have more laws and rules than we know what to do with.
  - b. We have rules that we believe are right; but we do not keep them.
  - c. We have laws we believe are good; but we often break them.

6. Thus, what is needed is not another rule or law; but rather a whole new attitude toward life itself.
  - a. A new rule merely tells you what you need to do.
  - b. Whereas a new attitude causes you to do what you know is right.
  
7. All this is by way of introducing what Christ said in Matt. 4:12-17: (Read).
  - a. Matthew tells us that Christ began His ministry by calling men to repent.
  - b. GK. METANOYA.
    - (1) META – Turn
    - (2) NOYA – Mind.
  - c. Christ began His ministry by calling people to turn their minds around; to get a whole new attitude or mindset toward life.
  - d. NOTE: Christ did not come to give us 10 new rules to follow; but a whole new life.
  
8. With this thought in mind, we can now approach the Sermon on the Mount with a clearer understanding of what Christ was teaching.
  - a. Some people see the Sermon as a whole new set of rules – of “do’s” and don’t;” but this is a total misunderstanding of Christ’s teachings.
  - b. For here Christ is explaining what it means to repent, to turn our minds around, to turn our life over to God in a radically new way.
  - c. Here he describes the person who had a whole new attitude toward life, and a whole new direction in life.
  - d. And what is true for the Sermon on the Mount, and especially true for the Beatitudes which we will be looking at first in our study of this great lesson.
  - e. As we begin to study the Beatitudes we will see God’s new way of looking at life.
  
9. When I first started preaching after I got out of college, I regarded the beatitudes as a nice little introduction to the Sermon on the Mount.
  - a. I saw them as nice little sayings, but I really did not think they contained much meat.
  - b. They were something I memorized as a child; but I did not see them as really not all that important.
  - c. Thus, I would read through the beatitudes real quick and then skip on over to the rest of the Sermon so I could get to the “meat.”
  
10. But this was a terrible mistake.
  - a. Jesus’ statements in Matt. 5:3-12 are absolutely critical if we want to begin the Christian life.
  - b. These statements are absolutely critical if we want to live the Christian life on a daily basis and allow Christ to live in us and through us.
  - c. Here Christ gives us the ABC’s of the Christian faith.
  - d. Thus I felt it is because of their importance that Christ put them first.
  - e. Simply, we must understand the Beatitudes first before we can understand the rest of the Sermon on the Mount.
  - f. ILLUST.: If you do not understand the Beatitudes, and then read Matt. 5:39 this will make not sense: (Read).
    - (1) But if you do understand and adopt this radical and new approach to life then you will understand what Jesus means when he says turn the other cheek.
    - (2) You will understand why saints through he ages rejoiced as they suffered all forms of cruelty and even violent deaths for their faith.
    - (3) They rejoiced because they knew that while men could take their life they could not take away their treasure, or reward in heaven.
  
11. In the remainder of our time this A.M., I want us to look at 2 items regarding the Beatitudes.
  - a. 1<sup>st</sup>: What Jesus meant when He said, “*Blessed are...*”
  - b. 2<sup>nd</sup>: Look at 5 keys to unlocking the meaning of the Beatitudes.

LESSON:

- I. 1<sup>st</sup>: What did Jesus mean when He said, “*Blessed (happy) are...?*”
- A. We are living in a pleasure-crazed society.
1. In our society people are seeking happiness in a number of ways.
  2. Some feel that they would be happy if:
    - a. They won the lottery.
    - b. They could have a large bank account in excess of a certain amount.
    - c. They could live in a particular neighborhood (or type of home).
    - d. They could have a secure job with good pay, maximum benefits, opportunity for advancement, etc.
    - e. They could have the freedom to do as they please without having to punch a time clock.
  3. But this is happiness on a superficial level.
  4. It is a happiness that can be lost, just as easy as it was attained.
  5. Thus, in the Beatitudes Christ gives us the secret to real, lasting happiness.
- B. When Christ said, “*Blessed are...*” He used a very special Gk. Word: MAKARIOS.
1. This word was originally used to refer to the type of happiness that only the gods could enjoy. --It was a happiness that was beyond mortal man’s grasp.
  2. In the Beatitudes Christ took this word and used it to describe the highest possible state of happiness a man can enjoy in this life.
  3. But, unlike the human forms of happiness which men in the world are striving for; here Christ describes a happiness that cannot be taken away.
    - a. Here is a joy that has the secret within itself.
      - (1) A joy that is serene, untouched, and self-contained.
      - (2) A joy that is completely untouched by the catastrophes of live.
      - (3) A joy that comes from having God living within us.
    - b. The Beatitudes speak of a joy which sorrow, pain, grief, or loss are powerless to touch; a joy which nothing in life or death can take from us.
    - c. The failure of our health, the collapse of our dreams, the changing of our fortunes, and the loss of our loved ones will not affect this joy.
  4. ILLUST.: On our first cruise we were out in the middle of the gulf in the middle of a hurricane.
    - a. The waves are rolling high and crashing over the deck.
    - b. Everything on the surface is in turmoil.
    - c. The ship is rocking back and forth like a drunken person, and many people were getting sea-sick.
    - d. But if you could see the floor of the ocean, you would have seen perfect calmness; nothing disturbed; nothing being moved violently about.
    - e. And so it is with the condition of the person Christ refers to in the Beatitudes.
  5. When Christ said, “*Blesses are...*” He referred to a special calmness or serenity we can have which will be unaffected by any of life’s changes.
- II. With these thoughts in mind, let us not turn our attention to the 5 keys we must use to unlock the meaning of these 8 Beatitudes.
- A. 1<sup>st</sup> Key: The attitudes described in the Beatitudes are attitudes for “EVERY” Christian.
1. The statements Christ gave here are not just for those who are “super” Christians and have reached great spiritual heights.
  2. These attitudes are for every single child of God.
  3. And if we leave these attitudes out of our life, we leave out the very essence of Christianity.
    - a. In these verses Jesus is calling for us to make a radical change in our life.
    - b. And without the attitude changes He calls for here there really is not much difference between our lives and the lives of the rest of the world.

- B. 2<sup>nd</sup> Key: These attitudes cannot be separated from one another.
1. We cannot approach the Beatitudes like Paul does the spiritual gifts in Rom. 12.
    - a. We are not allowed to pick and choose which Beatitudes we want to put into our life.
    - b. We cannot pick our favorite ones and leave the rest (ILLUST).
  2. Christ did not say, “Some will be pure in heart...Some peacemakers...etc.”
  3. Rather He said, “Blessed is the one who has all of the attributes in their life.”
  4. In fact, these attitudes are so closely tied together that we cannot have one without the others.
  5. They are all needed if God is going to live in us and shine through us.
  6. Further notice, that since these attitudes cannot be separated; they cannot be merely tacked on to our lives at will.
    - a. Christ is not describing characteristics you will find here and there in a Christian’s life.
    - b. Rather He is describing the entire life, or character of one who has changed – repented – turned their life around – who is truly striving to be a follower of Jesus.
- C. 3<sup>rd</sup> Key: These attitudes are radically different from what we find in the world.
1. No one is naturally like the person Christ describes here.
  2. In the world we grow up in a system, and we are taught the values and attitudes of that system.
  3. It is for this reason that Christ calls for us to repent (change); for only when we do will we be able to have the type of life he described here.
  4. To illustrate this point let me take a few moments and contrast the message of the world with that of Christ.
    - a. Who are the truly blessed?
    - b. SEE: Chart.
  5. In looking at this contrast we can readily see that the values of the world (and even that of many “religious” people) are not the same as those of Christ.
  6. To follow Christ means that we will have to step out of the crowd.
    - a. To be truly blessed we will have to be out of step with the rest of the world.
    - b. And when we do we “*will be*” persecuted.
  7. Truly the attitudes of the Beatitudes are unnatural to us and it is for this reason that one must repent first before he can put the beatitudes into his/her life.
  8. Before we go on to the 4<sup>th</sup> key, let me also add that when we look at the messages of the Beatitudes, and what they call for us to do; it is going to be painful; it is going to hurt.
    - a. They will be calling for us to change.
    - b. And change is always painful.
- D. 4<sup>th</sup> Key: These are the words of Jesus.
1. You say, “of course! How silly! I can see them in red in my Bible.”
  2. But the reason for this point is that:
    - a. When we begin to really look at the radical demands of the beatitudes, it is going to make us uncomfortable – Stepping on our toes.
    - b. We are going to be tempted to dismiss these messages by saying, “That’s just your idea Richard.”
    - c. But these are not the words of Richard Rogers, or of any other preacher, church leader, etc.; these are the words of Jesus, the Son of God.
    - d. Thus we cannot change or minimize them.
  3. When Christ said, “*Blessed are the meek*” – That is right! – Regardless of what Ann Landers, TV, etc. may say.
  4. When Christ said, “*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst...*” He meant it; regardless of what I may feel or believe.
  5. Thus as we study the Beatitudes, let us remember foremost that this is Jesus speaking directly to us.

- E. 5<sup>th</sup> Key: The Beatitudes represent the ONLY WAY TO GOD.
1. **NOTE:** This is not a description of some of the people who will be in the kingdom of God; it is a description of all the people who will be in God's kingdom.
    - a. Simply, no one will be in the God's kingdom unless they are like this.
    - b. And no one will live with God eternally unless they are the kind of person Christ describes here in the Beatitudes.
  2. Going a step further, notice that only those who have ALL these attitudes in their lives will be in God's kingdom.
  3. **ILLUST.:** Christ did not say:
    - a. "*Blessed are the poor in spirit...kingdom of heaven*" along with others.
      - He said only those who are poor in spirit will be there and no one else.
    - b. "*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst ... satisfied*" along with others.
      - (1) He said only those who Hunger and Thirst will be satisfied, and no one else.
      - (2) In Matt. 5:20 Jesus goes a step further when he said: (Read).
        - (a) Unless we do more than the Pharisees with their outward show of religion (expand), we will never enter the kingdom.
        - (b) If your attitude is, "I don't have to get involved;" then do not worry – you will never be satisfied.
    - c. "*Blessed are the merciful...mercy*" along with others.
      - Christ said only those who show mercy will receive mercy from God and no one else.
  4. Here is Christ's description of the only ones who will be in the kingdom of heaven.
    - a. Only those whose hearts are transformed.
    - b. Only those who have these attitudes in their life will inherit the kingdom of heaven and no one else.

CONC.:

1. Radical teachings! Yes, but that is what Jesus calls for if we are going to be His disciples.
  - a. Jesus is unwilling to accept a half-hearted indifferent approach to Christianity.
  - b. He says that unless we repent – change our minds, which will result in a change of our actions – we will perish with the rest of the world – Luke 13:3.
2. This radical change begins with adopting the attitudes of the Beatitudes and making them a part of our lives.
  - a. In the coming weeks as we look at them, we will see Christ did not give us merely 8 nice little sayings to "DO;" but rather a way to "BE."
  - b. And when we become this type of a person, we will do all that He asks.
3. This A.M. do you see your need to make a change in your life (repent)?