

# Who is Blessed? (Part 1)

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] I want to tell you three things or talk about three things from this passage. And the first one is this.

The Sermon on the Mount reveals to us the beautiful life. The Sermon on the Mount reveals to us the beautiful life. So this is the start of a new series.

We're going to be doing a series on Sunday evenings on the Sermon on the Mount. And I just want to introduce to you the Sermon on the Mount before we dive in for a second to the Beatitudes.

Jesus is preaching here on a mountain next to the Sea of Galilee. And so far in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus hasn't said very much. Literally, he hasn't said anything, hardly at all.

He's called his disciples, he said a few sentences. But for the next three chapters, we are going to get nothing but Jesus' words. And the first time that Jesus really starts to speak in Matthew's Gospel, it's a sermon on ethics, on how to live.

[ 1 : 0 5 ] Okay? Matthew's been preparing us, readers, to get to this point, to the spoken word of Christ. This word, he says, is for the disciples.

It's the disciples, the four and the five that he's just called and the three more that he will. He's just called in just the previous chapter. Now look, Matthew has painted a picture for us thus far in the Gospels of a very particular Messiah, a very particular Christ.

Listen to what he said about Jesus in Matthew chapter two. When they had departed, this is Mary and Joseph, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, Rise, take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt and remain there until I call him out.

He's about to search for the child to destroy him. So they rose and they went to Egypt and they remained there until the death of Herod. And this was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken, out of Egypt I call my son.

Now Matthew's quoting there from Hosea 1-1, out of Egypt I called my son. And in Hosea 1-1, Hosea tells you who the son is. It's Israel.

[ 2 : 1 6 ] Out of Egypt, God called Israel. So what Matthew's doing here is he's showing you that Jesus is picturing for us in his very life an image, a parallel image of the life of Israel.

Out of Egypt, Israel was called. Out of Egypt, Jesus has now been called back to Galilee, you see. But it doesn't stop there. Listen to this in just a couple of chapters later.

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting 40 days and 40 nights, he was hungry.

So not only does he come out of Egypt, he goes into the wilderness for 40 days and for 40 nights, right? Matthew is picturing for you that this Christ is reliving the life of Israel, but he's doing it in a very different way.

When Israel left Egypt, they grumbled. They broke the law. When they were in the wilderness for 40 days and 40 years, they grumbled and said, I'd rather be back in Egypt, right?

- [ 3 : 22 ] When Jesus does these things, he does them completely differently. He does them perfectly in perfect obedience of the law. Look, he's taking the sins of Israel upon himself, the life of Israel, and doing exactly what they couldn't do, obey without sin, you see.
- So when we get to this passage, not only is Matthew panning for us a picture that Jesus is the true Israel, but there's something more. He's not only the true Israel, but what we get here is that he's the true mediator of Israel.
- Not only is he Israel, but he's the new Moses, right? So listen to the verbs here in 5.1. He went up on the mountain.
- He sat down and he opens his mouth. And then what does he teach? An ethic of the New Covenant, the law.
- You see, what's happening here is just like Moses went up onto Sinai and received the law of God and delivered it to the people whom he mediated for.
- [ 4 : 33 ] Jesus is going up onto the mountain, but there's one huge difference. Do you see it? When Moses went up onto Mount Sinai, God had to tell him the law, and Moses had to write it down, right?
- In this situation, God does not come to tell Jesus what to tell the people. Jesus just opens his mouth, you see.
- What Matthew's telling you is, yeah, this is the new and better Israel. This is the new and better Moses, but this is God. He's better because he's God.
- When he opens his mouth, you are hearing God speak. And so the type of event that's happening here is a parallel event to the giving of the Ten Commandments.
- It's the giving of a new law, and this new law, I want to say to you tonight, is the revelation of the beautiful life, the good life, the life that is right, the life that is according to our true natures, what we were meant to be.
- [ 5 : 43 ] Now, look, people in the ancient Near East and in the Greek world and the Roman world were during this time and before Christ and after him asking the question all the time, what is the good life?
- What is the beautiful life? I mean, if any of you guys have read any Plato or anything like that, you know that this is the question that was occupying every Greek mind. What is the good life? This is the question that Paul is dealing with when he goes on his journeys and talking to the philosophers.
- And what we have here is Matthew saying, you want to know what the good life is? It's Jesus Christ himself opening his mouth and speaking the true ethic.
- What does Jesus say about this life? What is the beautiful life? Look, for many of us when we think of Sinai and we think of the Ten Commandments or maybe if you think of the Sermon on the Mount and think about all the things that Jesus says not to do in the Sermon on the Mount, you think of something that's closing in on you like a prison wall, a net, it's coming down on you.
- That's what the law does to me. You give me laws and it restricts me. It pushes me down. I don't feel free under the Ten Commandments. I don't feel free under the law of Christ.
- [ 7 : 04 ] I don't feel free when people tell me what to do when they give me laws. Recently my cousins adopted a little girl from China just a couple weeks ago and I've gotten to Skype with her and she's a beautiful little one-year-old girl.
- She has some pretty severe medical issues and she needs a series of major surgeries to function normally in life. Sometimes they go to get her in China after so long of a process of trying to get her right and they get there and guess what?

She doesn't want to come with them. Of course she's been living with different people and the whole plane ride back is a disaster. Her new mother, my cousin is crying and upset because her new daughter won't even sit in her lap on the plane.

It's a catastrophe in this little one-year-old girl's eyes. You've taken me from my home. You've put me in this prison, this box with these people, this new world. This is prison for me.

It's closing in on me. It's restricting me. But look, you all can see what she can't see, can't you? Look, my cousin is a surgeon.

[ 8 : 19 ] The girl needs surgery. She'll never live a normal life without it. What she can't see is that this is the greatest catastrophe that's ever happened to her.

She thinks it's a catastrophe. Can't get that word out. Catastrophe. But it's really the ultimate source of where she's going to be happy for the rest of her life.

Look, this is what law does. This is the same thing. This is what Jesus is doing here, is giving us a beatitude, giving us a law and saying, this isn't restricting you, this is giving you the only source of freedom.

That's the sermon on the mount. That was point one. We've got two more points and we're going to go through them very quickly. Secondly, the beatitude reveals the hope for a beautiful life.

There's two things to see here, specifically in these four beatitudes. The beatitudes are describing a kind of person.

[ 9 : 20 ] The beatitudes, you can't think of them like this, like eight or nine characteristics of different people. This is one person, one type of person that's being described here. This type of person is a kingdom person.

You see that in the very first one. Bluster to the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of heaven. This type of person is a kingdom person. What type of person is a kingdom person?

Look at the first three beatitudes with me briefly. He opens his mouth and he teaches them saying, blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are those who mourn and blessed are the meek.

What are these things? The poor in spirit very quickly means that you know that you have problems. You know that you have sin.

You know that you're bankrupt. You're literally poor in the life of the spirit. You don't have what it takes. It's a denial of all sense of entitlement to the kingdom of God.

[ 10 : 23 ] There's no self-help here. There's no self-dependence in being poor in spirit. That's the first one. The second one is this. You must then mourn. You must mourn.

It's not just to say I have problems, but it's actually to be broken over them. To be in sorrow over the type of person you are.

It's not only to mourn for yourself, but to mourn with those who mourn. And G.K. Chesterton commenting on this very idea said, the problem of the universe is me.

That's the key to the first three beatitudes. The problem of the universe is me. It's to own up that we're not our own masters. And then the third one is this. It's meekness.

In other words, it's going to God and yearning for that provision that is not your own. It's to look for hope in a location outside yourself.

[ 11 : 19 ] So you see, these three are all working together in a negative way. What's the negative statement that Jesus is making here? To be a person who lives the blessed, beautiful, happy, good life is first of all a negative.

You are not it. You see, I don't know about you, but when I read these three, this is not me.

I am not the person who considers himself poor and spirit often enough. I'm not the person who's mourning over my sin all the time. I'm not the person who's very meek and mild.

I'm a man of the 21st century. And in the 21st century, I pull up my bootstraps and do things for myself. Right? I am self dependent.

I'm self dependent. When we read these things, the first thing, the first lesson of the Beatitudes is, I'm not this person. I'm not this person.

[ 12 : 18 ] I'm not this good. Self dependence and self forgetfulness is the motto. Sorry, self dependence not self forgetfulness is the motto of the 21st century.

This is not an ethic of beauty in the preaching quarters of our culture. So the first point of the Beatitudes is this, to show that there is a beautiful type of person in that in our natural disposition, this person's just not us.

Just not us. This is why the fourth Beatitude is there. Okay? I mean, if we stopped there, we would be, we would despair.

We would despair. But this is why the fourth Beatitude is there. Read it with me. Blessed are those who mourn. Oh, sorry. That's first four. I'm looking for the fourth Beatitude. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

This is Christ's turn to the positive. This is what you need to be and aren't, the first three. And in the fourth, this is what you need to become.

[ 13 : 27 ] And this is how you do it. Blessed are those who are hungering and thirsting for righteousness. The point he's making is this, the only way to become the blessed person, the person of the kingdom, is to look toward a righteousness that is not yours.

Think about this with me for a second. In Genesis chapter three, when Satan comes to Eve, he says two verbs to her. Do you remember what they were?

He says to her, take and eat. And she turns to Adam and says, take and eat. Take the fruit that is and eat it.

And ever since that moment of hungering and thirsting, taking and eating, because she was hungry, she had an appetite to be God.

It has been our natural disposition to be people who want to be God, to be our own self-dependent masters. Look, one really great commentator says this about what happens there.

[ 14 : 41 ] Eve took and she ate. So simple the act, so hard it's undoing. God himself will taste poverty and death before taking and eat once again can become verbs of salvation.

What do you hunger and thirst for in the quiet moments of life when you have a moment to think? What do you hunger and thirst for when you are walking through the city day by day?

And if you're like me in my natural state, my hunger and my thirst is for myself. It's for dominance and competition.

It's for the sins of the world. What Jesus is saying to you is this right here. He's pointing to you to one word.

Come down with me to verse six. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for. Now I want to insert a word here that you don't see in English, but it's there. It's for the righteousness.

[ 15 : 48 ] Normally, we would expect a word like this and a position like this to be something more like what's called in different languages a genitive. And I don't worry about what that means.

All it means is this. It could have said for some righteousness. But what it actually says is for the righteousness. You see, the point of what he's saying is this.

The only way you're going to become a person who can live the beautiful life, who can be a kingdom person, who can live the good life is by looking at the righteousness that is the one sitting on that mountainside right in front of you, giving you the ethic of the beautiful life.

It's him. He's saying, look, you've been hungering and thirsting for yourself and for the world and to be like God since Adam and Eve. And now I'm here saying, if you hunger and thirst after this righteousness, you will get all of that.

When Jesus sits down at the Lord's Supper, he invites us to reorient the things that we hunger and thirst for. He invites us to reorient our hunger and thirst for entitlement, for autonomy, for self dependence, for disordered loves.

[ 17 : 03 ] And he says, take and eat and for the first time in history, those verbs once again become verbs of salvation. Christ Jesus is the Lord of the feast.

And without looking to him for your righteousness, being broken over soon, being totally vacated of all self dependence, losing yourself in the fact that he is true and total righteousness, you cannot know what it is to have the kingdom life, to have the beautiful life.

The biggest difference in what Moses did at Sinai and what Jesus is doing here is this. Not only is Christ giving us a glimpse into the nature of the beautiful life, but he's teaching us that he is the only way to attain the beautiful life by his death and resurrection.

For all of you tonight, whether you believe that or don't, that's an invitation. That's an invitation. And lastly, and I'll take two minutes on this, maybe three, maybe four, probably three.

The Beatitudes finally reveal the prescription for a beautiful and happy life. The prescription. Not only did the Beatitudes tell you of your inadequacy to have the beautiful life on your own, but they also give you the prescription to getting it in Christ and to living it now.

[ 18 : 38 ] What I want you to see just because we're running out of time is this, and I'll just narrow it down to this. This is what that fourth Beatitude does not say. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for blessedness, for they will be satisfied.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for happiness, for they will be satisfied. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for the beautiful life, for they will be satisfied.

That's not what it says. Look, here's the point. When we're left to ourselves, what we always do, no matter if you're conscious of it or not, is go around and say, I just want to be happy.

What Jesus is telling you in this Beatitude is, you want to be happy? Stop trying to make happiness your end goal. Instead, what is he put there?

The righteousness, himself, you see. If Jesus Christ is not the end of your existence, the reason for which you exist, the ultimate goal, the beauty to which you are looking at, what the old medieval theologians used to call the beatific vision that's one day out in front of you, you want to see Christ and know Christ.

[ 19 : 53 ] If he's not the end game, then look, you're not going to get happiness thrown in. But what he tells you is that if you make him your life, if you make what you live for him as the ultimate goal, then you get the beautiful life with it.

You get blessedness. You get happiness. You get the coming of the kingdom. I just want to illustrate a picture of that, what that looks like. This is the close.

C.S. Lewis gives a wonderful picture of what this looks like in *The Great Divorce*. *The Great Divorce* is a book that can often be theologically specious.

You're not quite sure what Lewis means, but he does give beautiful pictures of what we're talking about. *The Great Divorce* is a thought experiment about a man who's taken up from hell to see a vision of heaven.

Lewis is, of course, just using his wild imagination here. This man goes into a part of heaven and he sees a woman. Listen to what he says about her.

[ 21 : 03 ] This is him entering into her presence. If I could remember the singing that I heard and write down the notes, no man would ever read that score again and ever grow sick or old.

Between them, there were musicians, and after these musicians, a lady in whose honor all this was being done. But I've forgotten her.

The only partly do I remember the unbearable beauty of her face. Is it, is it, I whispered to my guide, and he's saying that because he thinks this is Mary.

He thinks this is the mother of Christ. It must be. She's so beautiful. It's not her, his God says. It's someone that you've never heard of.

He says, was she famous? No. Not in the way you mean. She must have been important then. No.

[ 22 : 02 ] Not in the way you mean. Was she beautiful on earth? No. Not in the, not in the way you mean. All these people surrounding her, this must have been her family.

No. She didn't have a family in the way that you mean. But all the boys and girls that she encountered became her sons and daughters.

And every single person she came across that was weak and needy became her brothers and sisters. She gave to the least. She forgot herself.

She lived the beatitudes. She lived the life of the kingdom in a place that the kingdom was not. Now her true beauty is on display.

A fierce beauty at which no man from earth can even stand to look. The Lord's Supper is an invitation to you tonight to take and eat celebrating the righteous one Christ himself by denying your hunger and thirst for false beauties in this world.

[ 23 : 11 ] For self entitlement, for autonomy, it's an invitation to imbibe and renew and commit and pray for the kingdom ethic to be your ethic.

The ethic of true beauty, meek, mild, self forgetful, take and eat with the Lord of the Feast so that when you've tasted his grace, you may become a beautiful partaker of the kingdom.

That's an invitation. And for those of you who do not know this Lord of the Feast, this Christ, it's an invitation to you to ponder these things we've talked about and to pray and to think and to suppose what it might be like to put faith in the one who has said he is the only path to a beautiful life.

And for those who have, I give this benediction and this blessing, come now, take and eat so that by faith and prayer you may, you may in your desires be conformed to the hungering and thirsting after the true righteousness.

Let's pray. Father, we ask now that you, by your mercy and by your spirit and in the name of Jesus, would come and meet with us as we celebrate the Lord's Supper with our new members and our friends and those that are visiting with us, that you would bless us, that we might believe and grasp hold of Christ by faith if we haven't before.

[ 24 : 35 ] And if we have, then that we would renew our faith, that you would renew us in the spirit and that you would make us long to be doers of this kingdom ethic, this beautiful life, to be meek and mild, to mourn with those who mourn, to be poor before you in spirit and to hunger and thirst for your righteousness, the true righteousness.

And we pray for that in Jesus' name. Amen.