

May 11, 2021

Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those that mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those that hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, because theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 5:3-10.

My understanding of the beatitudes has always been that they were traits I should cultivate in myself. The **attitudes** that should **be** in my life. I could get behind that idea, it made sense that my attitude **should be** one of meekness, of mercy, of peacemaking, and hungering and thirsting for righteousness. But then I ran into trouble, because that is only half of the ‘blesseds’. In fact, the first one begins with depression: *Blessed are the poor in spirit.*

Is being ‘poor in spirit’ then, something I should seek as an attitude in my life? What about *Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted?* Comfort is a wonderful thing, but –should I really cultivate an attitude of mournfulness? Doesn’t it say in Philippians 4:4: *Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice!?* Then, there is *Blessed are the pure in heart.* Is that an attitude, or a state of being?

Jesus came into a world ravaged by sin. Everywhere one looked, there was suffering and pain, sorrow and death, disease and depression. So that is where Jesus started. In a culture that celebrated prosperity as divine reward, Jesus was saying His reward was for everyone. Everyone is blessed. The depressed are blessed, the sorrowful are blessed, and those who look around the world and say ‘it’s all unfair!’ They’re blessed, too!

The beatitudes that Jesus delivered on the mountain that day were a rallying cry of encouragement to all who suffer on this sin-scorched, unfair and unjust planet. He was saying that we are blessed, **because He is here**, bringing rewards for all who long for something better. In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus was not offering ‘Blesseds’ as a template for being good enough for God. He was spelling out the Divine Rewards that were waiting for everyone: *Theirs is the kingdom of heaven, they shall inherit the earth, they shall be comforted, they shall see God, they shall be shown mercy, they shall be filled, they shall be called the children of God.*

Read the Beatitudes again and shift the focus to the rewards. Jesus said: ***Great is your reward in heaven!***

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. Matthew 5:11