

The Beatitudes

A Sermon Collection

By Bradley S. Cobb

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This book is dedicated to:

The wonderful person who has always been an encouragement, and who has always stood behind me in the work of the Lord, and who suggested that I collect these sermons into book form. To my Jesse. Thank you.

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Introduction

First, I want to thank you for taking the time to pick up this book. It means a lot to me, and I just want to let you know I appreciate it.

The Beatitudes have been a source of comfort and instruction for Christians for almost two thousand years. Their message is timeless, and the one who spoke them is wiser than anyone on earth. If you want to know how to live a better life, read the Beatitudes. If you want to know how to get to heaven, read the Beatitudes. If you want to know how to bring others with you, read the Beatitudes.

The sermon outlines in this collection were written to be preached. After all, I'm a preacher, and that's why I wrote them. If you find them worthwhile, then by all means *preach* them. Whenever I got an idea or a quote from another source, I've tried to give credit in these outlines. Some references may be to "someone," which means that I heard it at some point in my thirty-something years of life, but I can't remember who said it or where.

I hope that you find these outlines useful, informative, and most of all true to the Word of God. Perhaps they will give you ideas for other sermons.

I have long been of the conviction that I don't want people quoting me from the pulpit. So, if you happen to preach any of these sermons, don't bother mentioning me when you do. Now, if you put it in print (like in the bulletin) or reference part of it in an article, I'd appreciate if you could put my name on it.

Again, I thank you for taking the time to look at this book. And may God bless its use.

-Bradley Cobb

Lesson 1

Introduction to the Beatitudes

and

"Blessed are the Poor in Spirit"

Introduction:

1. The greatest preacher ever to walk the earth gave what many people consider to be the greatest sermon ever preached.
 - a. The preacher: Jesus Christ.
 - b. The sermon: the Sermon on the Mount.
2. In this sermon, Jesus struck at the heart of being a child of God.
 - a. Living in the kingdom of God requires that we be honest about our spiritual condition.
 - b. Living in the kingdom of God requires that we focus on our heart, for all that we do is an outgrowth of our thoughts and attitudes.
 - c. Living in the kingdom of God requires that we not worry about how other people will view us.
 - d. Brethren, the kingdom of God is among us today.
 - i. God is here among us, Jesus Christ is in our midst, and the Holy Spirit is offering us guidance through the Holy Scriptures.
 - ii. But we must be very aware that there is a real danger that exists of Jesus saying that we are not letting out light shine, and thus we will no longer have him in our midst (Revelation 2-3).

3. The Almighty God of heaven sees your thoughts and knows your feelings.
 - a. There is no “faking it” where God is concerned.
 - b. The Sermon on the Mount, spoken by the blessed Son of God, gives us the building blocks we need to be pleasing and acceptable to our Maker.
 - c. The Sermon on the Mount also gives us the building blocks for having the most rewarding and fulfilling life on this earth.
 - d. The Sermon on the Mount gives us the building blocks for better relationships with others.
 - e. Every one of these building blocks reflect the need for inner change.
 - i. It is only when Christ has control of our hearts that we truly bring glory to him.
 - ii. It is only when we are changed inside that our outer actions have true meaning.
 - f. It is no wonder that many people have called this “Christian living in a nutshell.”
4. Today we are going to begin a study of this fantastic section of God’s inspired word by looking into some of the Beatitudes.
 - a. The word “Beatitude” is interesting.
 - b. It comes from the Latin word, “Beati” which means “happy,” “joyful,” or “blessed;” and from the English word “attitude.”
 - c. So, literally, these are the attitudes that will make you happy, or the “attitudes of blessedness.”
 - d. The Beatitudes are not normal.
 - i. They are not at all things that come naturally to people.
 - ii. Nor do they make sense with the way the world thinks.
 - e. Jesus is not describing eight different groups of people, but a series of inter-related qualities that would come to define his true disciples.

I. Introduction to the Beatitudes.

- A. Each of the beatitudes starts off with the words, “blessed are the...[or they...]”

- i. It is said by some Hebrew experts that this phrase has the effect of Jesus exclaiming, “Oh the blessedness of the poor in spirit!” or “Oh, the blessedness of the meek!”
 - ii. The word “blessed” is sometimes translated “happy” (Good News Version, “the Living Oracles,” Young’s Literal Translation).
 - iii. This must have immediately captured the attention of the multitude that heard him speak.
 - 1. After all, isn’t happiness that which all of us are seeking?
 - 2. It is amazing that Satan and the rest of the world tells us we won’t be happy unless we have things, but Jesus says we will be happy when we mourn, when we are poor, when we hunger.
 - 3. That is completely opposed to everything that “human nature” tells us is true.
 - iv. Jesus has the secret; Jesus has the answer for true lasting happiness.
- B. Some have divided the Beatitudes into three sections:
 - i. The first four (the poor in spirit, they that mourn, the meek, they that hunger and thirst after righteousness) deal with inner attitudes.
 - ii. The next three (the merciful, the pure in heart, and the peacemakers) deal –to an extent—with our attitude towards others.
 - iii. The last two (the persecuted) deal with responses to the actions of others.
- C. Each of the Beatitudes builds on the previous one.
 - i. Without being poor in spirit, you will have a very hard time enduring persecution without lashing back.
 - ii. It is hard to be a peacemaker without first being meek.
- D. Often we focus on the outward sins of others when those are just symptoms of their real problem.
 - i. Jesus, through the Beatitudes and the rest of the Sermon on the Mount, is teaching us that we need to fix the root

of the problem (our heart) and the rest will come much easier.

- ii. When we are truly his on the inside, then it won't seem so difficult to live for him on the outside too.

II. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:3).

A. Oh the blessedness of the poor in spirit!

- i. Imagine someone getting up before a graduating class of high school students and proudly proclaiming, "Being poor will make you happy!" and saying it with conviction.
- ii. Jesus begins with these words, and it goes against what their religious leaders (the Pharisees) had been teaching them all along.
 - 1. The Pharisees were proud, haughty people who bragged that they were righteous because of their outward acts.
 - 2. Jesus used a Pharisee as an example of what NOT to be when discussing prayer (Luke 18:10-14).
 - 3. Jesus said he did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance (Matthew 9:13).
 - a. But we know that there is none righteous in and of himself (Romans 3:10).
 - b. All are sinners in need of repentance (Romans 3:23).
 - c. The problem was that the Pharisees were righteous in their own eyes because they were doing all the right things outwardly.
 - 4. As opposed to the Pharisees, Jesus said that those who were poor in spirit were the ones who had the kingdom of heaven.

B. Poor in spirit.

- i. There are different words used in Greek for "poor."
 - 1. One word describes someone who makes very little, barely making ends meet (Luke 21:2 – the widow is called "poor").

2. The word Jesus uses here is one of being completely destitute, one reduced to begging because he has nothing at all.
 - a. It is translated “beggar” when describing Lazarus (Luke 16).
 - b. Interestingly enough, in Luke 21:3, Jesus uses this word to describe that same widow after she gave her mites.
3. The person who is this kind of poor lives only off the alms and kindness of others.
- ii. Destitute in spirit, what does that mean?
 1. We know what “destitute” means in reference to money or food, right?
 2. Being destitute in spirit means that you understand you are completely dependent on someone else for spiritual life and nourishment.
 - a. That “someone” is God.
 - b. You have to realize that we absolutely have to depend on God.
 - i. This goes against everything we’ve been taught to do as humans.
 - ii. We’ve been taught to be independent.
 - iii. We’ve been taught to be self-sufficient.
 - iv. Depending on someone else for anything is viewed as a sign of weakness.
 - c. The kingdom of heaven is made up of those who truly understand that they have nothing on their own.
 3. One person said that we need to feel like we are starving beggars who have found a constant source of food.
 - a. A direct result of this is that we should be going out and telling the rest of the starving beggars where to get the food.
 4. There will be no prideful peacocks in heaven.

- a. When we think that somehow we are good enough on our own merits, we deny our absolute dependence on God.
 - b. This is why Jesus so chastised the Pharisees – they thought that by merely doing the outward things, they were in God’s good graces.
 - c. They thought with pride that they were so much better than everyone else and that God owed them a place in heaven.
 - i. See the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican.
 - d. Those of God’s people who think they are better than others are just like the Pharisees.
- iii. Simply put, being “poor in spirit” means you are truly humble and recognize your need for God.
- C. “For theirs is the kingdom of heaven”
 - i. The kingdom of heaven is made up of those who are saved (Matthew 8:11, Colossians 1:13).
 - 1. The faithful under the Old Testament (like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) and the faithful under the New Testament (Revelation 2:10) make up the kingdom of heaven.
 - ii. The kingdom of heaven belongs to those who know they need God.
 - 1. Did King David know he needed God?
 - 2. Did the people on Pentecost know they needed God?
 - 3. Do YOU know you need God?
 - iii. The kingdom is made up of humble people.
 - 1. These people realize that without God, they are truly lost.
 - 2. These people realize that their very existence depends on God.
 - 3. These people realize that they are NOT self-sufficient.

Conclusion:

1. I have a question for you:
 - a. Knowing now that Jesus said the kingdom is made up of humble people who truly depend on God, was he talking about you?
 - b. Do you view yourself as truly destitute without the help of the Father?
 - c. Do you truly depend completely on Him and on the blood of His Son?
2. None of us are worthy, so we need to completely throw that idea out the window, otherwise we are like the Pharisees.
 - a. The question is: do you recognize your spiritual situation for what it really is?
3. God's grace is shed forth to those who humbly come and accept it through obedience to His commands.
 - a. God said that you must believe the good news (gospel) that He has offered a way of salvation through His Son (Mark 1:15).
 - b. As a result of realizing your need to be saved, you must repent of your sins, turn away from them (Acts 2:38).
 - c. You must gladly confess your belief in Christ (Acts 8:37).
 - d. And then you must be buried in baptism, and God will wash your sins away (Acts 22:16).
4. After becoming a Christian, you still must continue to rely on God and stay faithful to Him.
 - a. If, as a Christian you have let pride and selfishness get in the way of serving God, pray to Him and ask for forgiveness.

Lesson 2

"Blessed are those who Mourn"

1. A little child is running, playing with his puppy.
 - a. When suddenly the puppy runs out into the street and is hit by a passing vehicle.
 - b. The child cries, wails because of what has happened.
 - c. Then the little boy's mother comes to him, puts her arms around him, and tells him, "there, there. It'll be alright."
 - d. The child was mourning.
 - e. What was the mother doing for that child? Comforting him, right?
2. Today, we are going to continue our look at the Beatitudes of Jesus in Matthew 5.
 - a. Last time, if you recall, we said that each of the Beatitudes builds on the previous one.
 - b. The first building block we need, from an attitude standpoint, is to be poor in spirit.
 - i. We must realize that we are spiritually destitute without God.
 - ii. We are totally dependent upon God for all our spiritual needs.
 - iii. We can only be happy/joyful when we realize that we are not in this on our own: God is there ready to help us!
 - c. Today, we will look at the next of the building blocks: mourning.

1. What does it mean to mourn?

- A. Mourning is more than just sadness.

- i. Some people get sad when their team loses a game.
 - ii. Others get sad at movies (like when Old Yeller died).
 - iii. Jesus isn't talking about getting sad over something inconsequential.
- B. Mourning is something from within.
- i. Mr. Leslie Thomas, a gospel preacher from about 50 years ago, wrote that "The original word for mourning indicates a sorrow that begins in the heart, takes possession of the whole person, and is outwardly manifested—too deep for concealment" (The Sermon on the Mount).
 - ii. Mourning therefore is not fake or external.
 - 1. In the time of Christ, there were professional mourners who were hired to come to funerals and cry over the one who had died—whether they knew the person or not.
 - 2. Can you imagine this scene today: someone says, "I always cry at funerals." Someone else then says, "That's great! I want to hire you to come to my brother's funeral tomorrow."
 - iii. True mourning occurs because someone feels a deep sense of personal loss or sadness.
 - 1. It is something personal to them.
 - 2. When you read the obituaries, and see the name of someone you've never met or heard of, do you mourn over that person?
 - a. Of course not. You may be saddened a bit by the fact that people are dying, but you are not in mourning over that one.
 - b. But there are people who were close to that one who passed away, and it affects them differently—because it is someone that was close to them.
- C. So, when Jesus says, "Blessed are they that mourn," he is referencing people who have a deep personal sorrow over something.

- i. But exactly what is Jesus talking about people mourning over?

II. Mourn over what?

- A. Jesus is not pronouncing a blessing upon all people who mourn for any reason.
 - i. I am sure that you know people who have lost someone important to them.
 - 1. That person may have mourned and mourned over their loss.
 - 2. And instead of moving on, it made them bitter: bitter towards God, toward family, toward friends.
 - ii. Not all people who mourn find comfort.
 - 1. I know a man who, though he has done his best to move on, still cannot bring himself to come to services when they have singing nights.
 - a. His now-departed wife loved those services, and it tears him up to be there.
 - b. He still has not gained complete comfort in his sadness.
 - 2. Since there are some who continue to mourn for years, even for decades, how can Jesus say that those who mourn would be comforted?
- B. We must place this in context of Jesus' sermon.
 - i. Jesus began preaching, and everything in the Sermon on the Mount ultimately goes back to inward attitudes and thoughts.
 - ii. These are the attitudes that will make us pleasing to God.
 - iii. These are therefore attitudes that reflect spiritual thinking.
- C. Blessed are those who mourn over sin.
 - i. We need to realize that we are completely helpless and destitute, spiritually, and depend completely on God (Blessed are the poor in spirit).

- ii. We then need to understand that it is our own sinfulness that has separated us from God (Isaiah 59:2).
- iii. We must mourn over our sinful condition.
 - 1. Does it really tear you up when you realize you have sinned?
 - 2. When it finally sank in to King David that he had sinned with Bathsheba, he was an emotional wreck, weeping, being hard on himself (and rightfully so).
 - 3. When you realize you have sinned, how do you react?
- iv. More than that, however, we ought to be people who mourn over the sins of others.
 - 1. Jesus looked over Jerusalem and wept vigorously because of their sin (Luke 19:41).
 - a. One man said it this way: “Jesus wept over the people of Jerusalem, then went out to die to save those very people.” (Roland Q. Leavell, “Studies in Matthew: the King and the Kingdom”).
 - b. The sins of others caused Jesus great anguish.
 - 2. Paul’s spirit was stirred within him when he saw Corinth was wholly given to idolatry (Acts 17:16).
 - 3. How do you react when you see the sins of others?
 - a. I knew a man who would get visibly upset when he saw Christians doing things that were sinful.
 - i. He didn’t get angry and combative, but instead he shook and would say, “don’t they know what they’re doing is wrong?”
 - ii. He would literally get exhausted because it took so much out of him.
 - b. Have we, as Christians, gotten so numbed to sin that we don’t even notice the cussing on TV, movies, and even on the radio airwaves nowadays?

- i. A Christian once recommended a movie to me, but it was filled with cussing.
 - ii. When asked, “did you realize it had so much cussing in it?” the man said he didn’t remember any cuss words being in the movie.
 - c. Many Christians today have even fallen into using the phrase “Oh, my God” when they are not thinking about God and have no intention of addressing Him.
- D. Jesus proclaims blessedness on those who truly mourn over sin.
 - i. Especially in their own lives, but also in the lives of others.

III. How do I know if I am mourning over sin?

- A. As we discussed earlier, mourning is something that starts from within you, but manifests itself outwardly as well.
 - i. Mourning over the loss of a loved one can manifest itself in weeping, shaking, or sometimes just silence.
 - ii. True mourning over sin, then, also will have outward manifestations.
- B. Mourning over your own sins should be shown by your actions.
 - i. For the one who is not a Christian, mourning over your sins should cause you to ask “What shall I do?” (Acts 2:37).
 - 1. It should cause you to say, “here is water, what hinders me from being baptized?” (Acts 8:36).
 - 2. In short, when you realize that you have sinned, you should desire to do whatever it takes to make things right: by becoming a Christian.
 - ii. For the one who is already a Christian, mourning over your sins should cause you to plead with God for forgiveness.

1. You have hurt the God of heaven by your sins, and you should confess them and ask for His forgiveness (I John 1:7, Acts 18:22).
 2. The Prodigal Son was part of the Father's family, and mourned over what he had done, but it wasn't enough...he had to return home.
- C. Mourning over your own sins isn't feeling sorry for yourself, but sorry for what you have done.
- i. Peter, when it finally hit him that he had denied Christ, ran off and wept bitterly (Matthew 26:75).
 - ii. It isn't feeling sorry that you got caught, but being sorrowful that you sinned in the first place.
- D. The apostle Paul summed up the need for mourning over sin and the outward manifestation of that mourning.
- i. "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.
 - ii. Why is it that Jesus pronounces a blessing on those that mourn over their sinful condition?

IV....for they shall be comforted.

- A. The word "comforted" is much more than someone saying "it'll be all right."
- i. It doesn't mean a soothing of someone's pain.
 - ii. Instead, the word means to be braced up.
 - iii. Literally, the word means "to call to one's side."
 1. Jesus is described as our "advocate" (I John 2:1), but it is the same word as is used here.
 2. The Holy Spirit was called the Comforter (John 14:26), but it is also the same word as is used here.
 3. The word often translated "exhort" is the same word found here in Matthew 5:4.
- B. Ultimately, those who mourn over their sins, and manifest that mourning by the proper actions will come to Christ.
- i. So Jesus will stand them back up, and brace them so they need not fall.

- ii. Only those who truly mourn over their sins will be comforted.

Conclusion:

1. So, I ask once more: how do you respond to sin in your life?
 - a. Do you act as if it is no big deal and try to just brush it off?
 - b. Or do you truly mourn over the fact that you have again let God down?
 - c. Do you determine even more not to continue in that sin?
Or do you say, “oh, God will forgive that if I do it again?”
2. The blessing of comfort (the Comforter being Jesus Christ, according to I John 2:1) comes only to those who mourn over their sin.

Lesson 3

"Blessed are the Meek"

Introduction:

1. A scrawny, quiet kid always walks around with his head down.
 - a. He never bothers anyone, rarely even speaks.
 - b. It is as if he is afraid to speak to anyone.
 - c. My friends, according to the way people use the term today, this kid is “meek.”
 - d. Today, “meek” is equated with “weak.”
 - e. But that isn’t what it means when the Bible says someone is meek, does it?
 - f. Does being meek mean you are a frightened weakling?
2. So, what does Jesus mean when He said, “Blessed are the meek”?
 - a. Did He mean that the wimps of this world will receive the earth?
 - b. Or did He mean something else?
3. Today we are going to look at what it means to be meek, why we should be meek, and what it means to inherit the earth.

I. What does it mean to be meek?

- A. Meek means power under control.
 - i. Look at the example of Moses.
 1. The Bible says that Moses was the meekest man in the earth (Numbers 12:3).
 2. Yet this same Moses had the ability to overpower and kill an Egyptian taskmaster (Exodus 2).
 3. This is the same Moses of whom it was said that when he died, “his eye was not dim, nor was his natural force abated” (Deuteronomy 34:7).

4. Moses was still every bit as strong when he died as he was when he killed the Egyptian.
 5. But Moses became the meekest man in the face of the earth.
 6. It is because Moses kept his power or might under control.
 7. With very few exceptions, Moses is shown to us as a man who did not over-react, who showed quiet strength.
- ii. Look at the example of Jesus.
1. Jesus said of Himself that He was “meek and lowly in heart” (Matthew 11:29).
 2. Jesus is the man who had the strength to drive the money changers (and there would have been more than a few) out of the temple.
 - a. Do you realize how large the temple area was?
 - b. Do you realize just how many money changers there probably were—especially considering it was around the Passover and Jews from around the world had gathered there in Jerusalem?
 - c. This cleansing of the temple would have been quite a large event.
 3. Yet Jesus is the man who didn’t put up a fight when Judas betrayed him to the soldiers.
 4. Jesus is the man who had the power to get himself off the cross, but he didn’t do it.
 5. Jesus kept His might under control.
 6. Jesus didn’t over-react.
- B. One man said that meek is defined by an acronym:
- i. Mighty
 1. True strength is found in being able to remain calm in the face of adversity.
 2. True strength is not rage, or muscle, or being abusive.
 3. Having the strength to control one’s self is might.
 - ii. Emotionally stable
 1. The meek people keep their cool.

2. They do not over-react to things.
 3. They have a good handle on controlling their emotions.
 4. They have their ups and downs, but they don't allow any of those things to distract them from their goal of getting to heaven.
- iii. Educable (teachable)
1. They understand that they don't understand everything.
 2. The meek are the ones who are ready and wanting to learn from those who know more about a subject.
 3. The meek person is not a know-it-all who gets defensive and upset if you contradict him on something.
- iv. Kind
1. Without kindness, you don't have "meek", you just have "mee."
 2. The meek person seeks the good of others and does not have any problem whatsoever with placing himself third (behind God and others).
- C. But when we place the concept of meekness into the context of Jesus' sermon, we come to an even deeper understanding of meekness.
- i. Being meek means strength under control, but who is the one controlling it?
 1. The one time we read of Moses taking control as leader of Israel, he lost the right to enter the Promised Land (when he struck the rock instead of speaking to it).
 2. When Jesus prayed to the Father in the garden, He prayed "not my will, but thy will be done" (Luke 22:42).
 - ii. Meekness is putting your strength under the control and will of God.
 1. We bend ourselves to HIS will.
 2. We put ourselves under HIS control.

3. We realize that it doesn't matter what WE want, but what JESUS and the FATHER want from us.
- D. Now let us put this in the context of the Beatitudes.
- i. We must realize that we are spiritually bankrupt without God.
 - ii. We must mourn over the sins which have separated us and others from God.
 - iii. Now we must place our power under God's control and live for Him instead of ourselves.

II. *Why should we be meek?*

- A. Because our supreme example of living—Jesus Christ—was meek.
 - i. Paul said to follow him as he followed Christ.
- B. Because meekness is part of the fruit of the spirit (Galatians 5:22-25).
- C. Because meekness is among the things we are to follow (seek) after (I Timothy 6:11).
- D. Because meekness is commanded.
- E. Because God gave all commands for a reason.
 - i. A meek person is one who is willing to do God's will instead of his own.
 - ii. A meek person is usually more respected by his peers.
 - iii. A meek person is FAR better suited to bringing people to Christ.
 - iv. Would you rather spend time with a meek person or a boisterous, self-absorbed person?
- F. We should be meek because Jesus promises that the meek shall "inherit the earth."

III. *What does it mean to "inherit the earth"?*

- A. It does not mean that meek people will own all the land.
 - i. Do you know of any non-meek people who are wealthy and own lots of land?
 - ii. What about women who are meek? In the first century, women didn't own ANY land, as a general rule.
- B. It does mean that the meek (before God) will inherit the New Heaven and New Earth.

- i. In Revelation, the New Heaven and New Earth is a reference to the church (Revelation 21:1-10).
 - 1. The new heaven and new earth is also called “new Jerusalem” which is the “bride” of the Lamb (Christ).
- ii. Jesus referenced Isaiah 61:1 which says good tidings are preached to the meek, when He told John’s disciples to report what they had seen (Matthew 11:5).
 - 1. Isaiah is the one who--just a few chapters later—prophesied about the new heaven and new earth (Isaiah 65:17).
- iii. Peter said that he looked forward to the new heavens and new earth: the church’s eternal home in heaven (II Peter 3:13).
 - 1. Only the meek will make it to heaven.
 - 2. Faithful Christians will inherit heaven!
- C. But does it have an application for the here and now?
 - i. The Jews of Jesus’ day were looking forward to a military Messiah who would come lead them on a conquest of their homeland, wiping out the Roman army and influence.
 - 1. And then Jesus, the true Messiah, tells them, “the meek shall inherit the earth.”
 - 2. Can you imagine how amazingly shocking this would have been to the people who had waited for their great prophesied general (in their eyes, at least) to come?
 - 3. Some of them must have thought Jesus was crazy.
 - 4. More of them probably left there positive that Jesus was NOT the Messiah because of this statement.
 - ii. The meek DO inherit the earth, in that they can have true joy in enjoying the blessings that God gives us.
 - 1. It is not that the meek will get more than anyone else, but he will get more out of it.
 - 2. The meek will have a true appreciation for the blessings that God graciously bestows upon him.

3. The meek person is satisfied with what he has been given, and enjoys it.
 4. The meek person will look at all that he has, feel overwhelmed by the graciousness of God, and feel like he has more than he could ever have asked for.
 5. Jesus promised us abundant life (John 10:10).
- D. Ultimately, the promise is of inheriting the kingdom of heaven.

Conclusion:

1. Look at yourself.
 - a. Are you meek?
 - b. Do you keep your reactions in check or do you “fly off the handle” semi-frequently?
 - c. Are you emotionally stable in that you don’t let emotions override your goal of getting to heaven?
 - d. Are you teachable, or do you think you already know all there is to know about the Bible?
 - e. Are you kind to others, putting them ahead of yourself because you’ve already put Christ ahead of yourself and you seek to emulate Him?
2. Only the meek will inherit the kingdom of heaven.
 - a. Jesus said that those who put Him above their earthly possessions and family will inherit eternal life (Matthew 19:29).
 - b. Jesus said the faithful will inherit the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world (Matthew 25:34).
 - c. Those who put aside their own desires and live under God’s loving rule will enter heaven.
3. You must realize that without God, you are spiritually destitute.
4. You must mourn that you are the cause of being separated from God because of your sins.
5. You must then bow to His will and follow His commands, giving your strength over to His will.

6. Only then can you be able to inherit the kingdom of heaven and eternal life.

Lesson 4

"Blessed are Those who Hunger and Thirst after Righteousness"

Introduction:

1. A man from Oklahoma was stranded in Death Valley.
 - a. He had lost his sense of direction, and had been wandering aimlessly for two days.
 - b. During that time, he had completely run out of food, and had nothing to drink.
 - c. Because of the heat, he had become dehydrated.
 - d. What he desired more than anything was to find water.
 - e. He found a shack that had long since been abandoned.
 - f. Outside of that shack was a well spigot.
 - g. He lifted and shoved down on the handle over and over, hoping that there was still water in the well.
 - h. He was excited to see that first drop of water form around the edge.
 - i. He quickly stuck his head under it and was thrilled to feel that singular drop of water as it touched his mouth.
 - j. This man truly had a thirst and was excited by even the prospect of a small drop of that which had the power to quench it.
2. In our study on the Beatitudes, we have seen the attitudes that are necessary to transform someone into what God wants.
 - a. We must recognize our spiritual needs, and that only God can supply them.
 - b. We must understand that it is our own fault that we are lost, and mourn over that fact.
 - c. We must turn over control of our lives to God, becoming meek for the Master.
3. It is worth noting that every beatitude ends with a promise.

- a. Each of those promises are different ways of saying the same thing: you will be saved from your sin and spend eternity with the Father in heaven.
 - b. “Theirs is the kingdom of heaven”
 - c. “They shall be comforted”
 - d. “They shall inherit the earth”
4. Today, we are going to look at the fourth beatitude: Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.

I. What is it to hunger and thirst?

- A. It has been said that hungering and thirsting are the two strongest desires of the human body.
 - i. A person can not live but a few days without liquids.
 - 1. When someone stops eating and drinking, it is only a matter of days before they die.
 - 2. It is said that the only place you will find people who don’t hunger and thirst is in a graveyard.
 - ii. Intense hunger has led some people to cannibalism, even in Bible times.
 - 1. During the siege of Jerusalem in 586 BC, a woman was seeking justice against another woman.
 - 2. They had agreed to cook and eat one of their children one day, and then the other woman’s child on the next.
 - 3. The first woman was seeking justice because the other woman changed her mind and wouldn’t kill her son for food.
 - iii. You can see that these are powerful desires that God has placed within the human body to need food and drink.
- B. When Jesus mentioned hungering and thirsting, to what extent did He mean?
 - i. I hear my kids say, on occasion, “I’m hungry” when lunch is not ready yet.
 - ii. After Jesus fasted for 40 days, the Bible says He was “hungered.”

- iii. One Bible dictionary said that the word here means pining, intensely desiring something, famished, craving something.
- iv. Just as our body craves food (and sometimes specific foods) and drink, we should be craving righteousness.
- v. It should be a strong, constant desire.
- vi. It should be as though we are starving and cannot get enough.

II. What does it mean to hunger and thirst after righteousness?

- A. What is righteousness?
 - i. We are told to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto us (Matthew 6:33).
 - ii. Righteousness is doing those things which are right in God's eyes (some call it "right-doing").
 - iii. Righteousness is what God possesses, so seeking after the righteousness of God is seeking to know Him, and to be more and more like Him.
- B. Examples of hungering and thirsting after righteousness.
 - i. David said that he meditated on the word of God day and night (Psalm 1:1-2).
 - ii. Jesus said that His meat (food) was to do the will of the Father (John 4:34).
 - iii. We are to, like newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word (I Peter 2:2).
 - iv. But more than that, we should be desiring the deeper things of God's word: the meat (Hebrews 5:12).
- C. Do you hunger and thirst after righteousness?
 - i. Do you crave more time in study of God's word?
 - ii. Do you strongly desire to come to worship and study with other Christians?
 - iii. Do you hunger for opportunities to spread the word of God to others?
 - iv. A Christian who is not hungering and thirsting after righteousness is spiritually dead.

- D. Other things people hunger after.
 - i. Many people hunger after money instead of God.
 - ii. Many people thirst for power instead of righteousness.
 - iii. Many crave attention from others instead of attention from God.
 - iv. And have you noticed that those kind of people are never satisfied? They never have peace!
- E. What are you feeding on?
 - i. If you feed on nothing but cookies and chocolate, chips and fatty foods, what shape is your body going to be in?
 - ii. But if you eat a healthy, balanced diet, you will feel better and your body will be healthier.
 - iii. What are you feeding on, spiritually?
 - 1. Are you trying to satisfy yourself with shallow, empty things like money, materialism, power, fame, prestige?
 - 2. Are you trying to ignore your hunger by spending all your time in front of a screen (TV, Computer, Movie)?
 - 3. Or are you honestly feasting on the spiritual riches found in God's word...constantly?

III. Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled.

- A. The word "filled" means "satisfied," or as one dictionary put it: "fattened."
 - i. Remember that most people who seek for money and power are never satisfied with what they have.
 - ii. They never seem to have peace.
 - iii. But the one who seeks after righteousness is satisfied.
- B. What kind of satisfaction does that person have?
 - i. Realizing that each of the beatitudes promises the same blessing, but in different ways, then we can know that the one who hungers after righteousness will be filled or satisfied by being in heaven.
 - ii. Do you remember that Jesus offered living water, that if one drinks from it, they will thirst no more?
 - iii. We have free access to that river of life as a Christian.

- iv. We never have to go spiritually hungry again, because we always have access to the source of food.
- v. We don't have to starve anymore!
- C. But why is it that so many Christians are starving themselves?
 - i. Do you read your Bible every day? How about every other day? Every week? Do you EVER read your Bible when you are outside the walls of this building?
 - ii. Why is the church weak in so many areas? Because the members are starving themselves, spiritually.
 - iii. Why is it that the church in many places isn't strong enough to fight off the diseases of liberalism and other sins? Because the members are already unhealthy to begin with!
 - iv. The members are feeding themselves with spiritual poison, never realizing that they are ignoring the food that will cure them!
- D. Only those who strongly desire and do God's will have the promise of being satisfied.

Conclusion

1. In studying the beatitudes, we have seen that we must first realize our lost condition.
2. We must understand that it is our own fault that we are lost.
3. We must turn control of our lives over to God.
4. Then we must desire to do His will.
5. What is His will?
 - a. First, His will is that you become a Christian, if you are not already one.
 - b. If you are a Christian, His will is that you live for Him and teach others to do the same thing.
6. How's your spiritual appetite?

Lesson 5

"Blessed are the Merciful"

Introduction:

1. The Son of God, who some thought was going to be their military Messiah, went atop a mountain and sat down.
 - a. The people climbed the mountain as well, and anxiously awaited what this Man of God would tell them.
 - i. Would He proclaim the way to strengthen their army?
 - ii. Would He instead give them the ways of surprise like God gave to Gideon?
 - iii. Would He instead give them the tactics of defeating the enemies like God did for Joshua?
 - iv. It has been said that at no other time in the history of Israel were the people more anxious for war—and also anxious for their Messiah—than in the first century.
 - b. Instead of hearing a message of how to overcome the Romans—which they would have expected, given that Jesus was proclaiming the kingdom was at hand—they heard a message of peace.
 - i. What was this Man of God doing?
 - ii. Doesn't He know that we are ready to throw off the oppressors?
 - iii. This Man cannot possibly be the Messiah!
2. The Son of God, Jesus the Christ, instead addressed their spiritual needs (just like almost every true prophet of God did).
 - a. He began by proclaiming that those who realize they are spiritually destitute will inherit the kingdom of God.
 - i. Do what, Jesus? We can't overthrow the Romans unless we are poor in spirit?
 - ii. You can imagine that there was some confusion among those who heard this.

- iii. But as we discussed, Jesus was referring to the need to understand that we are completely lost without God.
- b. Then He proclaimed that the mourners are blessed (happy, joyful) because they will be comforted.
 - i. *Now wait, Jesus. Sad people are the ones who will be comforted?*
 - ii. *What about those of us who aren't sad, but are ready to fight and overthrow those Romans? Are you saying that we won't be comforted by defeating them?*
 - iii. Of course, Jesus was referencing those who mourned over their spiritual condition being comforted because God offers the opportunity to be saved from their sins.
- c. Then Jesus really blew their minds by saying, "blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."
 - i. The meek are those who control their temper, keep their power under control.
 - ii. These Jews wanted to lash out and let their anger lead them to freedom!
 - iii. But then Jesus said that only the meek would inherit the earth (or land).
 - iv. We remember that Jesus was saying those who control their temper and live their lives under the control of God will gain the new heavens and the new earth (the church), eternal life in the paradise of God, but will also live happier and more contented life with the things they have here on this earth.
- d. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.
 - i. At this point, anyone who didn't realize Jesus was speaking about spiritual things probably started to understand.
 - ii. There is a need to realize our lost condition, mourn over the fact that it is our fault, turn our lives over to God's control, hunger and thirst to do His will.
- e. Then we come to today's Beatitude: Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

- i. I can hear their thoughts right now: Wait, What? We're supposed to have mercy on even these Romans? They've not shown any mercy to us, why should we have mercy on them? No, Jesus, you're wrong! We should show no mercy because they've not shown any mercy!
 - ii. All the beatitudes are things which are contrary to our normal inclinations.
- 3. Please open your Bibles to Matthew 5.

I. What is mercy?

- A. Mercy and grace are often used interchangeably by people today, but let us make a distinction.
 - i. Grace is giving something good which is not deserved.
 - ii. Mercy is not giving that which is deserved.
 - iii. You don't hear about people throwing themselves on the grace of the court, but on the *mercy* of the court.
 - 1. They don't want to get the punishment, so they plead for mercy.
- B. Mercy is also translated "compassion" (Jude 22) and "pity" (Matthew 18:33).
 - i. To show mercy on someone (like the Good Samaritan to the Jew) is to show compassion to them, to have pity on them.
 - ii. Mercy is not holding things against someone, but instead showing love and kindness to them.
 - iii. The Samaritan did not hold against the Jew those things which pretty much all Jews said and thought about the Samaritans; instead he showed him pity and compassion.
- C. Mercy is forgiveness.
 - i. If we request mercy of God, are we not asking for His forgiveness?
 - ii. Mercy does not mean ignoring the sins of another person against us, but it does mean that we make a conscious decision to forgive the person.
- D. Mercy is needed.

- i. If we were to look at the Bible and see what types of things are condemned, then look at our own lives, would we conclude that we are saved or condemned?
- ii. It has been said by at least one author that mercy is man's greatest need.
- iii. If someone has sinned against you, and they ask forgiveness, you (if you are really a Christian) will give them mercy.
 - 1. I can hear the replies now: but he/she doesn't deserve mercy!
 - 2. If he/she deserved it, it would not be mercy.

II. Blessed are the merciful.

- A. The people who have mercy, are they not the ones you can look at in your past and be happy about?
 - i. The parents who forgave you and gave you another chance to show you could handle responsibility?
 - ii. The teachers who patiently taught you, even if you were a handful at times?
 - iii. The spouse who quickly forgives any mistakes you make?
- B. The people who do not show mercy to others usually don't show mercy on themselves, either (the following is based on Dr. Robert Shuller's book "the Be-Happy Attitudes").
 - i. They usually have a low self-esteem.
 - ii. They still hold on to past hurts.
 - iii. They think that since they don't think highly of themselves, no one else does either.
 - iv. Then they often inflict wounds on themselves by over-reacting negatively to circumstances, taking things out of context or reading too much into peoples words and actions.
 - v. These people who do not show mercy on themselves often do not show mercy on others either.
 - vi. They refuse to forgive, they respond—not with compassion, pity, or mercy, but with retaliation, retribution, and anger.

- C. There is a reason that people who are quick to forgive are generally happier (this is also advice from Dr. Shuller on how to get past hurt).
 - i. Don't nurse their anger, keeping it alive and helping to grow.
 - ii. Don't curse the situation, turning bitter.
 - iii. Don't rehearse the hurts, running them over and over in your mind.
 - iv. Instead, try to reverse the problem.
 - v. Seek to immerse (drown) any anger quickly, as well as immersing yourself in showing mercy to others.
- D. When Jesus said that the merciful are happy, He gave the main, over-riding reason (for they shall receive mercy), but there are other reasons as well.
 - i. We discussed this last Sunday quite a bit, so we will not dwell on them here.
 - ii. Those who forgive will be healthier (lower blood pressure, less stress, generally a better immune system).
 - iii. Those who forgive will be happier (have more friends, have less worry).
 - iv. Those who forgive will show appreciation for God's forgiveness.
 - v. Those who forgive realize that "all have sinned..." and that all have a need for mercy AT ALL TIMES.

III. "For they shall obtain mercy"

- A. If for no other reason than this, we should forgive others because in doing so, we will receive forgiveness from God.
 - i. Jesus said that when we pray, our prayer should include "forgive us our debts [sins] as we forgive our debtors [those who have sinned against us]"
 - ii. Jesus said that unless we forgive FROM THE HEART, we will receive zero mercy from God.
 - iii. Therefore, if we refuse to make the conscious decision to show mercy, then God will refuse to grant us any mercy either.

- iv. Listen closely and make sure you take this to heart: You will go to hell if you do not forgive people, because God's forgiveness of you is equal to your forgiveness of others.
- B. But let us make it more practical:
 - i. When you forgive others, others are more likely to forgive you.
 - 1. Have you ever made a mistake and needed to ask for forgiveness?
 - 2. If you need to ask someone for forgiveness, and you've shown an unwillingness to forgive that person in the past, how do you think they are likely to respond?
 - ii. When you show mercy to others (kindness, compassion, pity) you will be MUCH more likely to receive mercy, kindness, compassion, and pity from them in return.
 - 1. Ecclesiastes 11:1 – cast your bread upon the water, for thou shalt find it after many days.
 - 2. It has been said, “be nice to the people you meet on your way up, because you’ll meet the same people on your way down.”
 - 3. Do you want other people to overlook your mistakes or to forgive you when you’ve messed up? Then you had better be willing to forgive them and overlook their mistakes when they mess up.

Conclusion:

- 1. When Jesus said, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy,” He wasn’t saying “it’d be nice if people showed more mercy.”
 - a. When Jesus said this, what He was saying was that ONLY the merciful will obtain the mercy of God.
 - b. Have you ever met a Christian who holds a grudge?
 - c. Have you ever met a Christian who would rather leave the congregation than to forgive?

- d. That Christian, according to Jesus, does not have the forgiveness of God.
- 2. Let's look back again at the Beatitudes we have covered:
 - a. The kingdom of God is made up of those who realize they cannot make it on their own: they need God's help.
 - b. Those who mourn over their sinful condition (realizing it is their own fault) will be comforted.
 - c. The ones who shall inherit the new heaven and the new earth are those who turn control of their lives over to God (the meek).
 - d. Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness (now live to do what God's will is) will be satisfied.
 - e. Those who are forgiving will be forgiven.
- 3. Do you match up with this description of the saved?

Lesson 6

"Blessed are the Pure in Heart"

Introduction:

1. A man once freely loaned out money to those in need.
 - a. He was known by all as a friend to the poor.
 - b. He could always be counted on to help when someone was down and out and couldn't pay some of their bills.
 - c. However, as the years went by, he made his move.
 - i. He went to each person to whom he loaned money and demanded repayment immediately.
 - ii. Those who were unable to pay were kicked out of their houses and he took possession.
 - iii. Within a month, this man owned almost half of the small town.
 - d. He went from being known as a friend to the poor to being a hypocrite who had planned for years to take possession of these poor people's homes.
 - e. Though on the outside, he had appeared to be pure, on the inside his heart was anything but.
2. Jesus dealt with people during his time on earth that gave an outward show of being religious, but inwardly they were rotten.
 - a. Jesus described them as whitewashed tombs (Matthew 23:27).
 - b. The Pharisees were hypocrites who believed that so long as they did the right thing outwardly, it didn't matter what they did inwardly.
3. Today, we are going to look at the beatitude: Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God (Matthew 5:8).
 - a. Remember that each beatitude builds on the others, and that it basically gives us the plan of salvation.
 - b. Realize your need (5:3)

- c. Realize your sin causes your need and do something about it (5:4)
- d. Turn your life over to God (5:5)
- e. Study His word constantly (5:6)
- f. Forgive others (5:7)
- g. Purify your heart (5:8)

I. What does it mean to be “pure in heart”?

- A. To be pure in heart is to be honest, making our outward actions of faithfulness be matched with a heart of faithfulness as well.
 - 1. Hugo McCord said:
 - a. “Hands that shed innocent blood” and “Feet that are swift in running” to do evil very obviously have an unclean heart guiding them.
 - b. But sometimes just as impure a heart puts on a front of goodness and an appearance of clean hands.
 - c. The second is worse than the first.
 - i. (Quote from Spiritual Sword Lectures #7, page 45).
 - 2. Jesus himself declared that even though outward actions can be sinful, the inward attitudes (the thoughts of the heart) are just as sinful.
 - a. Adultery is sinful, but it is just as sinful to look at a woman with lust in your heart (5:27-28).
 - b. Murder is sinful, but it is just as sinful to be angry at your brother without cause (5:21-22).
 - 3. Cain tried to give an outward show of righteousness.
 - a. When asked about his brother, Cain said he didn’t know where his brother was.
 - b. He did this, trying to make it appear outwardly as if he was innocent.
 - c. How many people today do the same thing, acting innocent when they are guilty!
 - 4. A false friend is one of the most despised things you can be.

- a. Who wants someone who acts like their friend, but who goes around speaking bad about you behind your back?
 - b. These are those people who are not pure in heart, but who are hypocrites.
- 5. Ananias and Sapphira sure looked right on the outside, selling their land and giving a large chunk of it to the church (Acts 5:1-11)
 - a. But their motive was selfish.
 - b. They wanted praise.
 - c. They wanted the benefits of giving, but also the benefit of keeping part of the money.
 - d. The sin was not in keeping part of it, the sin was in lying about it so that they would look good.
- 6. If we are to be pure in heart, then we must be right from the inside and let that control our lives on the outside.
- B. Being pure in heart means that you will hold yourself to the same standards you demand for others.
 - 1. If you expect others to be honest and truthful with you, then being pure in heart means you will do the same thing for them.
 - 2. If you expect others to be forgiving of you, be forgiving of them (blessed are the merciful...).
 - 3. You cannot create or demand a double standard.
- C. Being pure in heart is what allows you to truly enjoy the Christian life.
 - 1. Are hypocrites ever truly happy with who they are and what they are doing?
 - 2. Can someone who isn't right on the inside really enjoy going through the motions of doing God's will on the outside?
 - 3. Do you ever feel like there should be more to this Christian life?
 - a. Have you ever experienced a time where God and Christ just didn't feel "real" to you?

- b. Part of that is likely because you are still holding on to something that is keeping you from being “pure in heart.”

II. How do we become “pure in heart”?

A. One author said that in order to be “pure in heart,” you must do the following things:

1. Wise up – realize that God created us to instinctively be religious and to seek Him. Understand that we have a built-in need for God, and embrace it.
2. Clean up – remove the negative feelings in your life towards yourself and towards others.
 - a. If you have been hurt by someone in the past, pray to God asking for that person to be forgiven, and then ask for help for yourself to forgive them.
 - b. If you are jealous of someone else, say a prayer asking for God to bless them.
 - c. Don’t give in to doubt.
3. Give up - look at your life and remove those things that are keeping you from embracing God.
 - a. It is difficult to hug your child when there is something large between the two of you—like a car.
 - b. So imagine how hard it is to embrace God when you’ve let something else come between you and him.
 - c. It may not even be something that is inherently sinful, but if it is keeping you from leaning completely on God, get rid of it! (eye, hand, etc... according to Jesus).
 - d. Perhaps it is holding on to something in the past (against yourself or against others).
 - e. Whatever it is, get rid of it!
4. Take up – Take up the cross of Christ and start doing his work.
 - a. Being pure on the inside without doing the external things will not get you to heaven.
 - i. Faith without works is dead (James 2:24).
 - b. Throw yourself into the work of the Lord.

- i. Keep yourself busy in studying God's word.
 - ii. Keep yourself occupied in coming up with people you know who need the gospel.
 - iii. Keep yourself occupied in sending them cards or calling them and inviting them to study the Bible with us.
 - c. When you fill your life with the work of the Lord, you will find your doubt disappear and your confidence in God's power will skyrocket!
- B. To be pure in heart, one must have God's help.
 - 1. David said, "create in me a clean heart, O God" (Psalm 51:10).
 - 2. In order to have a pure heart, we must go to God for His forgiveness.
 - a. This involves accessing God's forgiveness on HIS terms.
 - b. Repentance is required to have a pure heart.
 - 3. Look at your life today, what is it that is keeping you from having that pure heart before God?
- C. Those who are pure in heart will do God's will because they long to do God's will.
 - 1. There are those in the Lord's church that believe that salvation comes from doing the right things, regardless of whether you are right on the inside.
 - a. If you come on Sundays, take the Lord's Supper each week, don't use instruments, have been baptized, and give on the first day of each week then you are saved.
 - b. They don't seem to think that it matters if they are actually worshipping from the heart!
 - c. All of those things are absolutely essential, but will do you and me no good if our heart isn't right.
 - 2. The pure in heart desire to do God's will.
 - a. The pure in heart live for God, and as an outgrowth of that, they do God's will.

- b. Living right is a symptom of their pure heart.

III. They shall see God.

- A. How can we see God if we are pure in heart?
 - 1. We can see him through eyes of faith, knowing He is there and that He cares.
 - 2. We don't have to feel like God is an impersonal force just waiting to zap us if we do something wrong.
 - 3. The people who are right on the inside can pray with confidence that they will be heard.
- B. If we are pure in heart, then we can know that we have a home reserved for us in heaven in God's presence, and there we shall see Him.

Conclusion:

- 1. Our religion, our worship, our lives must be lived from the heart.
 - a. This is the meaning of worshiping in spirit (John 4:24).
 - b. When your heart is right with God, then your actions will follow.
- 2. If there is something keeping your heart from being pure, then go to God for cleansing.
 - a. If you are not a Christian...

Lesson 7

"Blessed are the Peacemakers"

Introduction:

1. Sometimes it takes outside help for people to stop being at odds with each other.
 - a. This is why married couples sometimes go to marriage counselors.
 - b. This is why negotiators are needed between unions and management.
 - c. This is why Jesus Christ came to this earth and died!
2. Once a man and his brother had an argument, and then for 25 years, they did not speak with one another.
 - a. It took the concerted efforts of their children to get them to sit down and discuss what had happened and try to mend the fences.
 - b. As it turned out, both were sorry and wanted to make things right, but they were afraid the other one wouldn't hear of it, so neither one ever made the first move.
 - c. They never would have been reconciled, had it not been for the children who tried to be peacemakers.
3. Another instance once occurred where a couple was having marital difficulties.
 - a. The husband was a self-centered man who couldn't figure out why his wife was always so upset with him.
 - b. They were always fighting because he was self-centered, and she felt unloved and ignored.
 - c. It took a professional marriage counselor to bring about peace between them by showing where he was in the wrong and needed to change.
4. Today, we look at the seventh beatitude: Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.

I. What is the “peace” that is spoken of here?

- A. There are different kinds of peace.
 - i. Some view peace as the absence of open conflict (we are at peace with France).
 - ii. Some view peace as inner tranquility (I am finally at peace, no worries).
 - iii. Some view peace as reconciliation (We have found peace with each other).
- B. In a sense, Jesus is speaking of all three.
 - i. When you reconcile two people together, there is no longer open conflict, and it brings about peace of mind.
- C. But is Jesus saying that only negotiators and counselors will be called children of God?
 - i. Of course not.
 - ii. So what kind of peace is Jesus describing?
 - iii. The following areas are likely under consideration, though one specifically is at the forefront of Jesus’ mind as He gives this beatitude.
- D. Bringing about peace between other people who are at odds with one another.
 - i. It make me feel sick to my stomach when I hear about couples getting a divorce.
 - ii. Jesus says that we are to be peacemakers.
 - iii. What can we do to help bring about peace between people who are at odds?
 - 1. Force family members to sit down and discuss their problems.
 - 2. Make opportunities to bring people together.
 - 3. Jesus said that after going to someone and trying to make peace, if they wouldn’t hear you, you were to take two or three others—those two or three others are serving as peacemakers.

- iv. Obviously every situation is different, but have you ever seen a marriage dissolve, and wonder what could have been different if you had done something to help?
 - 1. Perhaps a couple is going through hard times, and you could have invited them over, made friends with them, and gave them something else to focus their minds on.
 - 2. You never know what singular acts of kindness can do to help strengthen a marriage.
 - v. There are congregations that split, but have since been reconciled because someone took the initiative to get them to talk with each other again and work out their differences.
- E. Bringing about peace between yourself and others.
- i. Jesus said that if someone has sinned against you, you are to go to that person and tell them (Matthew 18:15).
 - 1. The point is so that you can bring about peace, reconciliation, and “gain your brother.”
 - ii. Jesus also said that if you have sinned against someone else, you are to go to them and make things right before attempting to worship God (Matthew 5:23-24).
 - 1. If you know that you have sinned against someone, and you’ve not gone to them and sought forgiveness/peace/reconciliation, then you need to do so as soon as possible.
 - 2. Jesus said it was more important to reconcile with your brother first than it was to bring a gift to God.
 - iii. How important, then, is it that we seek to be reconciled to those whom we have been at odds with?
 - 1. “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men” (Romans 12:18).
 - 2. ESPECIALLY with our own brethren, we are to endeavor “to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3).
 - iv. Have you been at odds with some brethren, whom Jesus Christ died for?

1. Then it is up to you to make the first step and seek for peace between you and them.
 2. This is not speaking of being at odds in doctrinal matters, though we should also go to them and instruct them in love if they are wrong in those areas.
 3. We cannot hold on to hard feelings towards others—**ESPECIALLY** our own brethren in Christ.
- F. But the peacemaking that Jesus is speaking of more than anything else is this: Blessed are those who go out and teach others how to have peace with God.
- i. Remember that the beatitudes all build on each other?
 1. Realize you are lost, do something about it, turn your life over to God, spend lots of time in His word, forgive others, continually purify your heart from wicked things, and now spread the gospel!
 - ii. Jesus is the prince of peace (Isaiah 9:6), and we as His followers should seek to bring peace to the lost of this world as well.
 - iii. “How beautiful are the feet of them that preach **the gospel of peace**, and bring glad tidings of good things!” (Romans 10:15).
 - iv. True children of God will do what Jesus commanded and spread the gospel (Acts 8:1-4, Mathew 28:18-20).
 - v. In the parable of the sower, Jesus spoke about the seed (the word of God) that fell on good soil (hearts), and it produced fruit, some thirty, some a hundred-fold (Matthew 13:1-23).
 1. Fruit has the seed in it (Genesis 1:12).
 2. This means that when the word of God falls on good hearts, that person will then go spread the gospel to other people who then have the word of God inside them.
 3. Bearing fruit means spreading the gospel to others!
 4. If you plant a tomato seed, and you only get two tomatoes out of it, is that not a disappointment?

- 5. So, when a Christian has the seed (the word of God), and produces ZERO fruit, how do you think God views them? With joy, or with disappointment?
- G. Jesus is our mediator, our peacemaker.
 - i. We too can be peacemakers if we bring other people to Christ where they can find true peace.

II. The peacemakers are called children of God.

- A. Aren't we already children of God when we first become a Christian?
 - i. Yes we are (Galatians 3:26-27).
 - ii. But Jesus says that alone is not enough.
- B. Being a child of God is something you must be **active** in!
 - i. You cannot be a passive peacemaker.
 - ii. You will not find peace with others if you don't do anything about it.
 - iii. You will not find peace with God if you don't do something about it.
 - iv. You will not help others find peace with God if you don't do something about it.
- C. When Jesus gives these beatitudes, he gives the blessings that come with the attitudes.
 - i. The promise of being called children of God is only for those who are active Christians.
- D. It very much seems like Jesus is saying only active Christians will make it to heaven.
 - i. My friends and brethren, do not leave undone those things that you are supposed to be doing!

Conclusion:

- 1. We need to be spreading the word of God to other people!
- 2. We need to be making peace with those around us...ESPECIALLY our brethren.
- 3. Do you have people in your own household who are not Christians? Then start with them.

4. Blessed are those who bring others to being at peace with God—
blessed are those who spread the gospel to others!
5. Does that describe you?

Lesson 8

"Blessed are the Persecuted"

Introduction:

1. The old saying goes, “sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.”
 - a. For most people, that saying is a bunch of hogwash.
 - b. If someone calls you fat, ignorant, ugly, worthless, or any of a thousand other negative things, does it affect you?
 - i. Of course, I am speaking of people who are saying it in a mean-spirited way.
2. Why is it that people might make fun of you, or worse yet persecute you and revile you?
 - a. Are they making fun of you because you are trying to live right?
 - b. Today there are people who get laughed at because they won’t let their kids watch certain television shows and movies.
 - c. Those kids sometimes get made fun of as well.
 - d. They call them “backwards” “stupid” “overly sensitive” and other such nonsense.
3. The Scriptures tell us that if we are living our lives right, we will suffer persecution.
 - a. And if you go through the New Testament, you will find out that our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Messiah stated that we should be happy about it.
 - b. The apostles rejoiced when they suffered persecution (Acts 5:41).
 - c. Paul gloried (bragged) about the church in Thessalonica who endured persecution (II Thessalonians 1:4-5).
 - d. Paul told Timothy to expect persecution if he was living right (II Timothy 3:12).

4. Let us look at the Beatitudes once more (as this is our last sermon in the series).
 - a. The first three discuss those things necessary to become a child of God.
 - i. Realize your need for God.
 - ii. Take it to heart that you are the one who caused the separation between you and God and be prepared to do something about it.
 - iii. Turn your life over to God on His terms.
 - b. The rest of the beatitudes comprise the way a child of God is to live his life.
 - i. Strongly desire God's word and doing His will.
 - ii. Having an attitude of forgiveness towards all.
 - iii. Purifying our hearts continually (striving to leave sin behind, focusing on only good things).
 - iv. Spreading the gospel to others.
 - v. And today, patiently enduring persecution.
5. Some people break verse 10-12 into two separate beatitudes, but it seems to me that it is really two parts of the same beatitude.
 - a. The second part of the beatitude shows more intensity
 - b. The first part speaks of people will be persecuted for doing the right things, and the second part is specific persecution for being identified with Christ.
 - c. We will deal with both of those this morning.

I. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake.

- A. To quote Burton Coffman, "Persecuted persons whose troubles arise from other causes, such as their own misconduct, are not included in this beatitude."
 - i. Peter says it this way, "For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing" (I Peter 3:17)
 - ii. Peter also goes on to say, "But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters" (I Peter 4:15).

- B. The blessing is promised to those who endure persecution because they are doing God's will.
 - i. When you put this together with one of the previous beatitudes (blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness), you see that Jesus promises salvation to those who strongly desire to do right, and will do it no matter what comes against them.
 - ii. There is never a wrong time to do the right thing.
- C. The theme of this beatitude is mentioned throughout the New Testament.
 - i. Paul told Timothy, "Those who live godly shall suffer persecution" (I Timothy 3:12).
 - 1. When people live their lives in a godly way, others notice.
 - 2. It may cause other people to feel guilty about the way they are living, and usually one of these is the typical reaction:
 - a. Make fun of the person who is living right, that way they aren't focusing on their own guilt for not living right.
 - b. Ignore the one who is living right (shunning them) so they don't have to feel guilty by seeing their god example.
 - c. Attempt to corrupt the one who is living right (this happens more often than you think).
 - 3. Why is it then that people who live their lives properly suffer persecution?
 - a. Satan doesn't want that good example out there.
 - b. Other people don't like feeling guilty about the way they are living their lives.
 - ii. Peter told the scattered church "But and if ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled" (I Peter 3:14).
- D. One of Satan's most powerful tools is peer pressure.
 - i. Kids, teens, and even adults fall prey to peer pressure.

- ii. People try to make others feel like outcasts because they don't live like the rest of the world (I Peter 4:4).
- iii. One of the things that almost every person desires is acceptance.
- iv. But Jesus wants you to know that you can find acceptance with Him and by doing His will; you don't have to seek for the acceptance of Satan's followers.
- v. Don't ever be afraid to do the right thing.

II. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

- A. In this section of the beatitude, Jesus gets more specific and changes from general blessings to specific blessings.
 - i. Up until this point, Jesus has been saying "blessed are people who do these things."
 - ii. With this verse, Jesus now says, "Blessed are YOU when these things happen to YOU."
 - iii. Remember the mindset of the people at this time, expecting a military leader to come deliver them from Roman occupation.
 - 1. Surely they were thinking that, "sure, these things are nice, and well and good for other people...other people need to be like that."
 - 2. But now Jesus puts it directly on them: YOU are to be the ones who endure persecution and affliction for My sake.
 - 3. He is letting them know that all the things He's been talking about applied to THEM.
 - 4. And guess what, it applies to all of YOU here today as well.
- B. Jesus also goes from the more general "being persecuted for doing the right thing" to "being persecuted because you are a follower of Jesus."
 - i. This is something that is repeated throughout the New Testament.

1. The apostles rejoiced to be counted worthy to suffer for the name of Christ (Acts 5:41).
 2. “If someone insults you because of Christ’s name, you should be happy” (I Peter 4:14 – HNC).
 3. “And you will be hated by everyone for being loyal to me. But the person who endures this persecuting...to the end...is the one who will be saved” (Matthew 10:22 – AUV).
 4. “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Revelation 2:10).
 5. “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ...” (Romans 1:16).
- ii. It is admirable to be a moral person, it is even more admirable to be known as a follower of Jesus Christ!
1. Don’t hide your Christianity!
 2. Like we studied last week, we are to be out spreading the gospel and helping others gain the peace that comes by obeying God!
- C. Be aware ahead of time that living openly for Christ will bring about hardships.
- i. Reviling (insults)
 - ii. Persecution (physical persecutions perhaps, abandonment, financial even)
 - iii. Lying about you (In an effort to kill your influence, people will lie about you, try to make you out as a hypocrite).

III. The reason for counting these as blessings.

- A. Jesus says that the kingdom of heaven is possessed by (or made up of) those who do the right thing, even in the face of persecution (Matthew 5:10).
- i. This is the same thing said of those who are “poor in spirit” (5:3).
 - ii. It makes a fitting conclusion to the beatitudes: Jesus starts and ends with the same blessing, showing that all of these beatitudes work together and must be present.

- iii. The person who stops doing the right things because of persecution no longer has this promise.
- B. Those who suffer for Christ's name have the following promises:
 - i. They shall be saved (Matthew 10:22).
 - ii. They can be happy (I Peter 4:4).
 - iii. They are counted worthy by God (II Thessalonians 1:4-5).
 - 1. When you endure the persecutions which come from obeying Christ, you can rejoice knowing that it means God is counting you as worthy!
 - iv. They shall reign with Christ (Revelation 20:4).
 - 1. Those who were beheaded—suffered persecution--for the witness of Jesus are said to live and reign with Christ.
 - v. They shall receive a crown of life (Revelation 2:10).
 - vi. A "Great reward" in heaven (Matthew 5:12).
 - 1. Is this speaking of a degree of reward in heaven? Possibly.
 - 2. But it guarantees that those who live righteously for Christ (encompassing all the previous beatitudes) will absolutely, 100%, no doubt about it by in heaven.
 - 3. I John 5:13 – you can know you have eternal life.

Conclusion:

- 1. It is never pleasant to think of being persecuted (emotionally, verbally, physically, financially, etc...).
 - a. But if there is no persecution in your life, you are not living your life in a godly way.
 - b. If you are suffering persecution because you are living for Jesus, that is wonderful news because you have a first-class ticket to heaven!
 - c. Why is it that the apostles rejoiced when they were persecuted for Jesus' name?
 - i. Would you rejoice and be extremely happy if someone persecuted you for being friends with me?

- ii. They knew that they were counted worthy by God—they knew heaven awaited them and a great reward in heaven as well!
- 2. The whole point of this series is to bring us to this: Everything that you need to do, becoming a Christian, leaving things behind, forgiving others, studying God’s word, enduring hard times, spreading the gospel—IT IS ALL WORTH IT!
 - a. Live your life for Christ because it is the right thing to do.
 - b. Live your life for Christ because it will make a better world around you.
 - c. Live your life for Christ because you care about other people.
 - d. Live your life for Christ because you have a great reward in heaven waiting for you!