

Christian Character Building Messages

Lessons from the Beatitudes

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I. Introductory Remarks - Matthew 5:3-12

In this lesson we will be focusing on the beatitudes of Christ as an upward Journey towards fulfilling our destiny. We will see these characteristics of Christ's nature as progressive steps in our growth as Christians who are starting from the base of the mountain and journeying towards the summit.

2 Corinthians 3:17-18 *Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

For those who are choosing to come under the rule of the kingdom of God, Jesus is setting up a whole new package of values proclaiming that in these you and I will find fulfillment not in pleasure, but in longing, not in satisfaction, but in hunger, not in popularity, but in commitment to an unpopular cause, not in competition and "winning", but in helping others win their way to peace.

- It seems only fitting that Jesus is doing this great teaching on the beatitudes up on a mountain, which helps us to see that if these characteristics are going to be a part of our lives as we journey upwards towards the summit of the mountain.

Matthew 5:1-2 *And seeing the multitudes, **He went up on a mountain**, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:*

II. The Upwards Destiny Steps to the Summit.

1. The Base Of The Mountain Or The Initial Step Is Humility.

Before we can begin this spiritual journey to the summit, we must be conscious of our need for God and His strength to sustain us. We have to realize that in ourselves we can't do it.

Matthew 5:3 *"Blessed are the **poor in spirit**, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

- The poor in spirit are those who recognize in their heart that they are 'poor' in

the sense that they can do no good thing without divine assistance, and they have no power in themselves to help them do what God requires them to do. They do not approach life with confidence in themselves or reliance on their gifts and talents with an assurance that they are competent to meet life's challenges. Blessed instead are those who approach life without such self-based confidence "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven".

2 Corinthians 3:5 *Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God.*

Let's keep in mind that this is God's mountain that we are climbing, which means the only way we can reach the summit is to do it through His strength and His way. **He must establish** our steps right from the beginning, otherwise we'll just journey around the mountain being lost in confusion and turmoil.

Psalms 40:1-3 *I waited patiently for the LORD; And He inclined to me, And heard my cry. He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, Out of the miry clay, **and set my feet upon a rock, and established my steps.** He has put a new song in my mouth; Praise to our God; Many will see it and fear, and will trust in the LORD.*

- When we approach life humbly with full reliance in the King, we open up ourselves to His direction and enabling grace for the remainder of the journey.

2. The Second Step Is Repentance And Mourning For Our Sin.

Matthew 5:4 *Blessed are **those who mourn**, for they shall be comforted.*

To mourn implies a sadness and humble realization and regret for one's sins. Mourning has to do with the ability to repent and being forgiven, which enables you to enjoy the freedom that it brings.

2 Corinthians 7:10-11 *For godly sorrow produces repentance to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter.*

- We'll never make it to the summit with the weight of sin bearing down on us. We must shed it through godly sorrow. The further up the mountain we go the more we will have to deal with and get rid of.

Hebrews 12:1-2 *Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of*

witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

We must continually come to the place in our lives where we really do have a godly sorrow for the sins in our lives. This does not just mean the sin in our lives when we entered into the kingdom, but also the sin that is continually being exposed in our lives. A lack of mourning and sorrowing over our present sinful condition will prevent us from travelling further up the mountain.

3. The Third Step Is Meekness, The Mark of a New Spirit.

Matthew 5:5 *Blessed are **the meek**, for they **shall inherit** the earth.*

The meek are those who humble themselves before God, because they acknowledge their utter dependence upon Him. In consequence, they are gentle in the dealings with others. Being of a meek and quiet spirit means you have come to the place where you don't have to appear "macho" all the time. You can be tender and gentle with people because you have given control of your life to God and don't have to "win" all the time.

2 Timothy 2:24 *And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient.*

When meekness begins to appear this is a sure sign that you have humbled yourself and repented with Godly sorrow, for now God's true characteristics are now beginning to take root in your life.

- As a result you are now coming into your inheritance. God will begin to equip you more thoroughly for the rough journey ahead.

2 Peter 1:3-4 *...as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*

As we endeavor to make our way up the mountain God continually provides for our needs and refreshes us for the upward journey. There are several plateaus on the way up that are full of God's nourishment and provision. But when we camp too long

at any one place we eat up all of God's provision. When the provision is gone it's time to move on.

4. The Fourth Step Is A Spiritual Appetite.

Because we have come to the place where we are dependent upon God's sufficiency, we need more than natural food to keep us going. We begin to develop a real hunger for God's word and His righteousness. This is a sign of significant growth and maturity.

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

Remember, this is God's mountain that we are climbing, which means the only way we can reach the summit is to partake of His righteousness. Righteousness is the character or quality of being right or just in God's sight.

■ **Dikaisume**, the Greek word for righteousness, means whatever conforms to the revealed will of God.

eg. Baptism of Jesus. What Jesus is saying here is that we must hunger and thirst for God's revealed will in our lives, otherwise we will stray off course and get lost on the mountain doing our own thing.

This is why we find in Matthew 6:33 seeking God's kingdom and seeking righteousness linked together. Because in order to receive the benefits and the fullness of the kingdom into our lives we must be seeking God's revealed will for our lives as well.

Hungering and thirsting involves hungering and thirsting for a deeper walk in faith, as righteousness is revealed from faith to faith. It takes going from one level of faith to another to move up the mountain.

Romans 1:17 *For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."*

5. The Fifth Step Is Mercifulness Indicating Further Advance.

Matthew 5:7 *Blessed are the **merciful**, for they shall obtain mercy.*

■ **Mercifulness is an attribute that indicates further advancement.**

We are no longer consumed with our own journey, but now we have been given more of a deposit of God's divine nature and we are concerned about helping those who are journeying with us. As a result you continue to receive God's mercy, which gives you further enablement for your own continued journey.

This means that we come to the place where we can enter into the feelings of someone who is hurting, lonely or distressed and feel alongside them in their pain. Being merciful also involves a commitment to help alleviate the problem or hurt in someone's life.

eg. Good Samaritan. We can't be in such a hurry to get to the summit that we ignore those who are stranded and in trouble.

Luke 6:36 *"Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful."*

6. The Sixth Step Is Heart Purity, The Attainment Of Higher Altitudes.

Matthew 5:8 *Blessed are the **pure in heart**, for they shall see God.*

- Heart purity marks the attainment of higher altitudes. We are able to perceive the vision of God. We are able to see more clearly where we are going and where we have been.

Hebrews 12:14 Pursue peace with all men, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord:

This does not necessarily have to do with a heart without sin, though there will be a turning from all known sin. The deeper meaning is one "without guile".

Guile is **deceit** and **pretence**. *Thayer's Greek Lexicon* defines pure as free from every admixture of what is false. Sincere.

Being pure and without guile means coming to the place where you can be completely open and honest with God and others. It means that you are able to be transparent, you don't have to put on an "air" or pretend to be what you are not or trying to hide your faults.

7. The Seventh Step Is Peacemaking - Calming The Storms Of Life.

Matthew 5:9 *Blessed are the **peacemakers**, for they shall be called sons of God.*

More of the Divine nature of Christ has been imparted into your spirit and you now have a Christ-like influence that is able to calm the storms of life. Peace makers are people who are at peace with God 'the author of peace'; and who show that they are truly children of God by striving to use every opportunity open to them to effect reconciliation between others who are at variance. You have learned how to reconcile others to Christ and are learning what it really means to be an ambassador for Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:18,20 *Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.... Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.*

8. The Eighth Step Is The Summit.

The Summit represents suffering for Christ. You are now standing beside the prophets and martyrs. You had to endure a lot to get here.

Matthew 5:10-12 *Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

Those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake suffer because they uphold God's standards of truth, justice and purity, and refuse to compromise with the world or bow to the idols that men tend to erect as substitutes for God. As Paul reminded Timothy, 'all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution'; but to such Jesus gives the assurance that they are citizens of the only kingdom that abides, the kingdom of heaven.

2 Timothy 3:12 *Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.*

III. Concluding Remarks.

Now that you have reached the summit, what's next? "Is the journey over?" Not really, you have just reached that point to where you can be released to mount up on the wings of an eagle and to go and minister all over God's mountain with the authority of a son of God. (*Isaiah 40:31*). You are a mature son of God who is able to be led by the Spirit to do God's work. (*Romans 8:14*).