

THE CHRIST-CENTERED LIFE

The Marks of a Growing Christian

Matthew 5:3-10

INTRODUCTION: WELCOME - What great worship and fellowship last Sunday. Thank you, Bro. Jeremy and Christin, Bro. Rick, Buddy, Dennis and his team, Bruce and Randy and others on the zip line and all of you who came and stayed. It was just a wonderful day!

Today's worship

We continue to walk, not run, but walk through the gospels, and today we walk up hill to a place where Jesus is teaching. He is about to deliver His sermon that will later be called The Sermon on the Mount. It will become His most famous sermon.

The first eight verses, **Matthew 5:3-10**, of this passage are called **The Beatitudes**.

- That is a good title for them because **these eight statements describe what Jesus makes His followers to be**.
- **They describe the attitudes Jesus changes them to have.**
- Here, early in His ministry Jesus tells the multitude how He would transform each of their lives if they would truly trust and follow Him.
- And for those of us who are engaged in living more completely THE CHRIST-CENTERED LIFE, these words of our Lord give us the marks of a growing Christian.
- The statements from Jesus' own lips and heart are telling us the kind of person He is leading us to be.
- And by periodically re-reading these eight verses, and asking the Holy Spirit to let us view our character the way He Himself knows it to be, we can see both progress the Lord has made in changing us and the work that remains for us to be molded in the likeness of Christ.

The well from which Jesus draws these truths is exceedingly deep.

- That does not mean that Jesus had any trouble reaching it!
- He is truth and the author of truth.

- These words describe the very character of Jesus as He lived upon the earth as a man, so there was nothing foreign about the character here described or the attitudes of the heart here commended.
- These eight characteristics describe the person of Jesus as He walked on the earth and allow us to even see into His human soul as a real flesh and blood man.

But the character explained in these words and these attitudes of heart pictured here are so contrary to the flesh and to the fallen sinful nature, that even understanding fully what Jesus is saying is not an easy task.

That is why I say, "The well from which Jesus draws these truths is exceedingly deep."

In the course of my ministry, there are portions of the Scripture that have required much more intense study than all of the others.

- **Genesis 1-11**
- **Portions of Ezekiel and Daniel**
- **Hebrews**
- **Revelation**
- **Matthew 5:3-10**

In each church I have pastored, I have preached through these Beatitudes not just verse by verse but almost word by word. When I did that here 7 years ago, it took me over three months to preach these eight verses, and that was with services both Sunday morning and Sunday night.

I am not initiating that study again with you today. Today, my aim is to preach all eight verses. We should be through about 10 tonight as long as nobody gets hungry.

Just kidding!

Today I want us to get the big picture of these marks of a growing Christian, know where they are in our Bible so that we can return often and ask the Spirit of God to help us do a progress report, help us see if we are indeed developing a more Christ-Centered Life.

Let's read

Matthew 5:3-10 NKJV

3 Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted.

5 Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth.

6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.

7 Blessed *are* the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.
8 Blessed *are* the pure in heart, For they shall see God.
9 Blessed *are* the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.
10 Blessed *are* those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

So, drop your buckets with mine into this deep well of divine truth. The first few drops we bring up come from the first word in each of the eight verses, Blessed.

Blessed comes from the Greek word Marikoi – basic meaning is happiness.

But its usage in the Greek world was not of common, ordinary, temporary kind of happiness.

Some happiness is exceedingly temporary:

- As it was for the patient who awoke from anesthesia. He found his surgeon standing by his bedside. "I have good news and bad news. The good news is that we did not need to amputate your right arm after all. The trouble giving you the pain in your back was in your left arm."
- The patient groggily responded, "Well that is good news. Being right handed, I can certainly function better without my left arm than without my right one."

The surgeon responded, "The bad news is that we did not discover that the left arm was the source of the problem until we had already removed your right one."

Well, much happiness is like that:

- Happy at the office one day, not the next.
- Happy at home one hour, not the next.

But that is not the kind of happiness described by the word blessed here.

- This word was used by the heathen to describe the happiness of the gods.
- Later used to describe the happiness of people who had gone to heaven.
- **It describes a happiness that penetrates to the inside that is deeper, stronger, and more permanent**, than happiness generated by favorable circumstances.
- Jesus was describing what it is like when you are growing in the Lord and being transformed in the likeness of Christ.

Each time Jesus tells us about another mark of the growing Christian, He says, “This change in your life will bring with it a greater joy that transcends the circumstances of life.”

So, Jesus says, **Matthew 5:3 NKJV** *Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

The spirit is one of the 3 parts of man. Man is triune – Body, Soul, Spirit

Paul said,

1 Thessalonians 5:23 NKJV ... may your whole **spirit, soul, and body** be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- Body – physical
- Soul – mind, will, emotions
- Spirit – the deepest part of man. The part that is aware of God. The part that is sensitive to God.

What does it mean to be poor in spirit?

- Poor comes from **PTOKOS** – used extensively of the financially impoverished but root means – “**to bow down timidly.**” It describes a poverty “which forces one to seek the undeserved help of others” **One who is “poor” has “nothing of his own to offer.”**
- The poor in spirit is a person who realizes his own destitution and humbly bows before the Lord to receive His unmerited favor, God’s grace.
- **The key word describing this quality in the Bible is humility.**

Jesus is saying

LASTING HAPPINESS BELONGS TO THOSE WHO ARE HUMBLE TO THE CORE.

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

Fifteen different words in the Bible are translated “to mourn.”

- This one is **Penthos – deep, inward, sorrow of the heart.**
- Jesus is talking about spiritual mourning.
- Jesus is talking about mourning over what God mourns over.
- Jesus is talking about brokenness over personal sin.

Three times I have experienced deep, inward brokenness over personal sin after my salvation.

- When God led me to repent for not believing that God's Word was perfect, inerrant, and sufficient.
- When God brought me to tears of conviction for not having preached the truth about the sanctity of human life.
- When God again broke my heart for my not having been obedient to the Acts 1:8 mandate to be personally involved in missions even to the end of the earth.

In each case, this deep inward sorrow and repentance brought lasting change in my life.

- Ever since that time in my late 20's when God convicted me of doubting, denying, and questioning His Word, I began to believe and preach every portion of Scripture as God's perfect truth.
- Since God broke my heart over the slaughter of unborn children by Planned Parenthood, an American holocaust about which I had been silent in my first few years as a pastor, I have never shied away from declaring God's love for the child in the womb as equal to His love for the baby in the crib.
- And when the Lord convicted me of His love for the whole world, people of every race and culture, and of His command for me to be a witness not only in my Jerusalem but to the very end of the earth, I vowed to God to become an Acts 1:8 Christian and pastor. And while I have not kept count, by God's grace, I have probably led more Brazilians and Africans to Christ than I have Americans.

Out of my mourning and brokenness for personal sin, God brought not only forgiveness but change, and with change comfort.

In each case, I remain sorry that I did not repent sooner, that I did not obey sooner. I see joy I missed in my life because of disobedience. But my friend, there is such abiding joy in my life that Jesus transformed me in these ways and made me to be more what He created me to be.

ABIDING JOY BELONGS TO THOSE WHO ARE BROKEN OVER THEIR SIN.

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

The Biblical word meekness does NOT mean weakness, timidity, cowardice, or being conciliatory. The two men given in the Bible as the greatest examples of meekness are Moses and Jesus.

Meekness is power under control.

- **A person with meekness can have strong convictions but not lose his temper.**
- **The person who is meek always defends God, but never defends himself.** Think about Jesus in the temple chasing away the money changers, and then picture Him on the cross, shedding His blood to pay for their sins.

Do you see why meekness comes third in the beatitudes? It's hard enough to be poor in spirit yourself and mourn over your sin.

But when you are meek, you have to be able to hear others point your sins out and make no defense.

Like one preacher said, "I can cry out to the Lord and say 'I'm a terrible sinner,' but if one of my members comes up to me and says, 'You're a terrible sinner,' I want to punch him in the nose.

HAPPINESS THAT TRANSCENDS CIRCUMSTANCES COMES TO THOSE WHOSE STRENGTH IS CONTROLLED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT.

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

Most of us are not acquainted with real hunger and thirst. Hunger for us is a desire to eat at 11:45 and Lifechange group/church is still going.

Thirst for us is the sensation of desire for a big gulp of coke after a bag of salty popcorn.

But words Jesus used are much stronger than that.

- Peinao means to be in great need of food. To suffer deep hunger such as the folks I told you about in 2 Kings 7, who were so hungry they would pay big money for the head of a donkey to eat.
- Real hunger is when a guy would even eat broccoli and cheese!
- Real hunger is when you crave what you hate to eat most.
- Real hunger is an intensity of desire that yields a singleness of purpose.
- **A hungry man wants food.**
 - **not food and clothes**
 - **not food and shelter**
 - **not food and anything**
- **Just food!**

GENUINE AND LASTING HAPPINESS COMES TO THOSE WHO HAVE AN ALL-CONSUMING, PREOCCUPYING, OVERWHELMING, DRIVING, COMPULSION FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS. (Not only the righteousness that comes with salvation, but practical righteousness of living the new life we have in Christ.)

We only have four left. I know, you think we really are going to be here all day. No we're not. The next four flow from the first four. I'm not saying there is not more to growing in these second four, but there is a strong connection.

Matthew 5:7 NKJV Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.

WHEN WE ARE POOR IN SPIRIT, HUMBLE TO THE CORE, WE ARE FAR MORE MERCIFUL TO OTHERS.

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

WHEN WE ARE BROKEN OVER PERSONAL SIN, WE HAVE A GREATER DESIRE FOR INWARD PURITY.

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

WHEN OUR STRENGTH IS UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE SPIRIT, WE WANT WHAT GOD WANTS, AND THAT IS FOR ALL TO REPENT, BE SAVED, AND BE AT PEACE WITH GOD.

Matthew 5:10 NKJV Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

WHEN THE DRIVING FORCE OF OUR LIFE IS RIGHTEOUSNESS, WE CAN ENDURE PERSECUTION FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS' SAKE.

So for now, let's ask the Holy Spirit to help us see ourselves as He sees us concerning the first four of Jesus' statements of how He wants us to be and the attitudes He wants us to have.

- Lord, show me true self that I would bow before You, acknowledging that there is nothing good in my flesh, but asking that by Your grace You would make me fully what You want me to be.
- Jesus, convict me of those things most displeasing to You and grant for me to feel about those things the same way You feel.
- God, tame me as You tamed Moses to use my strength only for the defense of Your holiness reputation and never for my own.
- Lord, make the driving force of my life be the active pursuit of walking in Your righteousness, which You have given me through faith in Christ.