

Series: From Israel to Everyone: Disciples who Demonstrate God’s Presence (a study of Matthew).

Sermon Text: Matthew 5:7-12
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(**App** to get lesson/slides, ask

We’ve been learning how these Beatitudes in *Matthew 5* **upgrade our perspective to activate our faith**. *Did you know faith is meant to be active, not passive?* James even warns that inactive faith could be dead or fake faith. Last time, we dissected the first 4 **Beatitudes** to discover ways they **upgrade our internal perspective**. Today, as we get down to the final four, we’ll see this...

BIG IDEA: The Beatitudes upgrade our external practices.

Last Sunday I said the Beatitudes are not a to-do list, yet we all realize Jesus expects us to do stuff. His main goal, though, isn’t to make us busy but to make us better by “*upgrading our operating system*” with renewed, heavenly perspective. One of many things that sets Christianity apart from other religions is that God’s Spirit always helps us do whatever He commands! That was the New Covenant (deal) He promised in **Ezekiel 36:27 NLT**: “*I will put my Spirit in you so that you will (want to) follow my decrees and carefully obey my regulations.*” His Spirit infuses divine attributes into our DNA which makes faith anything but reluctant compliance! According to Philippians 2:13, “*It is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*” Few texts illustrate this better than the Beatitudes which contain internal perspectives in *verses 3-6* that inspire external practices in *verses 7-12*. **As God helps us with...**

Internal Perspectives (5:3-6)	External Practices (5:7-12)
Seeing our impoverished spirit (3)	Inspires us to extend mercy (7)
Mourning Sin (4)	Inspires us to crave purity (8)
Becoming Meek (5)	Inspires us to be peacemakers (9)
Hungering for Righteousness (6)	Inspires us to stand for righteousness (10-12)

Let’s explore the 5th Beatitude in *verse 7*: **Blessed** (favored/happy) **are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy**. **Mercy** is a divine ability to extend grace while remaining clear about what’s wrong so relationships can be restored. The Holy God is surprisingly **merciful** to unholy people. **Professor J. Knox Chamblin** (p. 321)

noted that “*In the OT too it is God who cares for the poor and afflicted; consoles the grieving and despairing; defends victims of oppression and injustice; exalts the meek and lowly; and shows mercy to the merciful, the guilty and the contrite.*” Being **merciful**, then, proves God’s Spirit is at work in us! Moreover, creating rules can’t be our sole strategy for handling sin especially since God’s instinct is to help the hurting. Later in **chapter 23** Jesus even calls **mercy** a weightier matter of the law! This Beatitude alerts us to how **mercy blesses** by refusing to put up walls when we’re sinned against which made me wonder: “How does extending **mercy** square with setting proper boundaries?” While boundaries can certainly be healthy, excessive use can be isolating. For instance, if they’re only used to avoid all conflicts, our boundaries become a personal prison where we can’t experience beneficial things like vulnerability, intimacy, and growth. Again, biblical **mercy** doesn’t pretend no wrong has occurred, it simply extends grace so that people have ample time to repent and change.

Let’s read the 6th Beatitude in **verse 8**: **Blessed** (favored/happy) **are the pure in heart, for they shall see God**. The hope here is that salvation **purifies our heart** which makes it real change, not just judicial pardon. You see, Christ’s crucifixion doesn’t just clear our record; it reconnects us with God to empower change inside and out. Jesus called this is a path to **seeing God** which we sometimes think only happens in heaven, but an amazing moment is recorded in Exodus 24:9-10 when “*Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up (Mt Sinai) and saw the God of Israel.*” So, it’s not unbiblical nor unrealistic to think God can be seen on earth. The Spirit-given capacity to **mourn** brokenness (3:4) and have **our hearts purified** lets us see God more clearly. I pray for this a lot--God unclutter my head and heart so that I notice your presence more often! I wonder, “How has the Spirit been increasing your craving for **purity** and causing you to notice when God shows up?”

Let’s read the 7th Beatitude in **verse 9**: **Blessed** (favored/happy) **are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God**--this familial phrase was spoken over Israel in Exodus 4:22 and over Jesus at His baptism (cf. 3:17). As we embrace our identity as God’s children, He transforms us into people of **peace** or ministers of

reconciliation (cf. 2 Corinthians 5). Pastor Jay Adams, a pioneer of biblical counseling wrote (p. 38): “*What is this peace of which Jesus spoke? What was the Hebrew concept of shalom? Does it mean bringing conflicts to an end? Yes...But that is only one side of shalom. It is much larger. In addition, it refers to a positive state of harmonious personal and social well-being. In Deuteronomy 23:6 it is linked with prosperity.*” So, **peacemakers** will stand out in a polarized world as we strive for relational harmony. In Romans (12:18, 14:19) it even says, “*Let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding... If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.*” All God asks is that we do our part--the rest is up to Him! So, let me ask: “*Where has God put you in peacemaking positions lately, and what’s involved in making peace with God, ourselves, and others?*”

Let’s read the last Beatitude in verses 10-12: **Blessed** (favored/happy) **are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.** Some see this as 2 Beatitudes, but I think it all fits together to illustrate how **being like Jesus means sharing in His experiences.** 2 Timothy 3:12 says, “*Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.*” Jesus even said in John 15:20: “*Remember... 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours.*” These are encouragements to hang in there whenever “*doing what’s right*” is like having a cat scratch you for simply petting it! Ministering **mercy** is not easy, and some people don't want it! **Persecution** is bound to happen as we follow Jesus and bring God’s love into places where He has been actively resisted and rejected! As we sang in Spanish and Mandarin last week, I began thinking that “*Faith is like learning a different language or culture. It feels odd for a while but eventually grows on us if we stick with it!*” The Beatitude offer us a new language--the language of **Jesus and prophets before us** who learned to **rejoice and be glad** because **persecution for relating righteously** proves that heaven is taking over earth!

Suffering, in some sense, is the meaning we attribute (attach) to the pain we experience. For instance, we might think differently about being cut by someone if that person is a doctor we hired to fix us. My point is that the stories we tell ourselves matter! Having served Jesus for decades, I've learned that not everyone appreciates your help, at least not at first. We like simple answers and neat categories, but life and people are messy. You may have the best intentions, but people are complicated and have lots going on in them. It's far too easy to judge folks as good or bad, when in reality, they've made a series of good and bad decisions based on circumstances that we either don't know or fail to consider. There are stories they've told themselves which can create false stories they tell about you! Knowing this is all part of normal spiritual warfare helps, but it still hurts. Sin also makes us prone to something called "*negativity bias*" which is our tendency to give greater weight to negative experiences than positive. It's a survival mechanism that keeps us attuned to threats, but more often it leads to anxiety and relational strain by overemphasizing failures and criticisms. Anyway, the Beatitudes are a story Jesus provides that we can tell ourselves whenever following Him yields unexpected results. Each statement acknowledges earthly brokenness, then fills us with identity and purpose. They redirect us to the right-way-up in a world that's very upside-down from how God made it. **And remember**, wherever you are on your journey of trusting Christ, you need not work through anything alone. Reach out, and let's help each other!

This stuff is hard, so let me close by offering this great prayer over you that the Apostle Paul prayed for the Ephesians in 3:14-21, "*For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith--that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*"

Sunday to Monday Connection: Jesus' Beatitudes remind us that the Christian life is not just about what we do, but who we are becoming by God's grace. When following Jesus brings unexpected hardship or even opposition, recall that we are walking the same path as our Savior, with the assurance of His favor and the promise that the kingdom of heaven is ours.

- **Question:** How can you prepare your heart to remain steady and joyful when your faith is misunderstood or opposed?
- **Next Step:** Talk with others about times that following Jesus wasn't what you expected but they helped you grow and know Him better.
- **Note:** If you are not a Christ follower and would like to explore what all this might mean for you, please speak with someone you know here or one of our church leaders.

Takeaways to discuss with your people (in addition to the underlined questions above!):

1. Share a time you experienced the difference between merely complying and desiring to do something and how it felt? Discuss how the Beatitudes are something totally different because of the New Covenant promise in Ezekiel 26:26-27.
2. Being merciful proves God's Spirit is at work in us! So, discuss this: "When have you extended mercy towards those who hurt you, how hard was that, and what was the result?"
3. Where could peaceful self-restraint help me and others experience deeper relationships and more of heaven on earth?
4. Discuss a time you tried to honor God but were persecuted for it. How did you first respond and what happened next?

Considerations for discussion leaders:

1. Keep circling back to the big idea and main points of the passage to stay on track.
2. Keep the group small for deeper sharing. Single underlined sentences are for discussion, while key points are double underlined.
3. Keep the discussion around 30 mins. Once you hit the "sweet spot", spend your time there.
4. Keep these simple questions in your back pocket: What is God teaching you? What are you going to do about it? How will it help you love & serve others?

Other Articles/Songs/Videos: Please ask us for help obtaining other resources.

- Bible Project - Gospel of the Kingdom [Videos](#) and [Podcast episodes](#).
- Bible Project - Heaven and Earth [Videos](#) and [Podcast episodes](#).
- Bible Project - Temple [Videos](#).
- Bible Project – Day of the Lord [Podcast episodes](#).

Quotes related to this passage:

- **Big picture:** “People often say what wonderful teaching the Sermon on the Mount is, and that if only people would obey it the world would be a better place. But if we think of Jesus simply sitting there telling people how to behave properly, we will miss what was really going on. These ‘blessings’, the ‘wonderful news’ that he’s announcing, are not saying ‘try hard to live like this.’ They are saying that people who already are like that are in good shape. They should be happy and celebrate.” (Wright, 36)
- **Layout:** Recalling the passage’s design, we will be attentive to each description, and especially to the ways in which the eight are arranged and joined. In accord with literary features noted above, we may view these subjects as two sets of four. The people portrayed in verses 3–6 know their need of God, depend on him, weep before him, long for him to establish his rule, and patiently wait for him to do so. Verses 7–10 describe persons who have received the grace of God’s rule, experienced its powers and submitted to its commands. Yet all eight beatitudes remain connected to each other: the actions of 5:7 and 9 flow from the attitudes of 5:3–6; the activists stay focused on God (5:8); persecuted believers (5:10) will evidence the qualities of 5:3–6 to an exceptional degree. (Chamblin, 313)
- **Blessed:** “The phrase ‘How blessed’ would sound familiar to any educated Jew. The Hebrew word *ashrey* is common throughout the Psalms and the siddur/prayer book. The root word (*asher*) would more accurately mean ‘happy,’ not in some superficial sense in the temporal world, but in the most fulfilling reality of doing the will of God. Some of the specific beatitudes do not seem good in themselves; yet if a person fulfills God’s will in these ways, there is a blessing and even a sense of happiness that the world cannot offer.” (Kasdan, 45)
- **Connections:** “There is a reciprocal quality to these values that points back to the first four blessings. Mercy, for example, is shown to those most needing it—those who are destitute (5:3–6). Showing mercy is thematic in Matthew (e.g., 8:3; 9:36; 14:14; 15:32; 23:23; note 9:13; 12:7). The blessing on ‘the pure in heart’ also signals a Matthean motif, especially as it relates to integrity that aligns what is inside with what others see, in contrast to hypocrisy (e.g., 6:1–18; 23). Those who ‘practice peace’ are promised a blessing, along with those who are persecuted because of (righteousness). How we understand this term in 5:6 impacts its interpretation in 5:10. If ‘justice’ is its connotation in this context, then blessing is granted to those who are persecuted for their commitment to and solidarity with those experiencing injustice (5:6).” (Brown, 55)
- **Mercy:** The fifth blessing is pronounced over those who show mercy. The Hebrew word *racham* speaks of withholding something that is truly deserved. Someone may be guilty of a crime in a judicial sense and therefore deserving of the appropriate sentence, yet mercy spares the defendant of the rightly earned penalty. Yeshua teaches that those who will enter into the kingdom of Messiah must have this attribute that beautifully reflects the character of God himself. We will be shown mercy from God as we show that same kind of mercy to those around us. Certainly those who understand the mercy of

Yeshua, who removes the judgments against us, will be slow to judge others. (Kasdan, 47)

- **A new identity:** “Jesus’ followers find their identity and mission in covenantal relationship with God...Offering people the pictures that Jesus provides here (and others that help them to understand their new identity) can give them a deeply connected sense of who they are in Christ and why who they are matters for the world that God has created and loves...the beatitudes are blessings first and foremost. They confer blessing on people who are fortunate enough to live in the time of the Messiah. Preaching the beatitudes should follow their contours as blessings of the kingdom now arriving in Jesus. And as God has come in Jesus to make all wrong things right and all upside-down things right side up, reversals are happening. Those most destitute are beginning to receive and will receive blessing. And although these are announcements of eschatological blessing, an ethical invitation flows from them. As we who are followers of Jesus participate in this way of life and the kingdom values of justice, mercy, and faithfulness (23:23), we will also participate in the blessings of the kingdom that Jesus announces.” (Brown, 56)
- **A new perspective:** The gospel offers a radical reinterpretation of life on earth, and the Beatitudes dare us to take it for a test drive. Jesus wants us to taste and see that His heavenly perspective is a better way to live and specifically that “*The life you think is easy may be empty, and the life you view as miserable may be where God does His best work.*” Or as He put it later in Matthew 16:24-26 NLT “*If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul?*”
- **Peacemaking activities:** “If peacemaking is an activity the Christian is required to pursue (cf. Romans 12:18), he ought not to continue arguments and fights. He ought never to instigate them. He must be willing to step in and mediate between those who quarrel. He will wait to hear all sides of an issue and, without compromising truth, will back down on anything that would unnecessarily cause or lengthen trouble. Peacemakers are called God’s sons because, like Him Who sent His Son to make peace, they reflect the heavenly Father’s attitudes and actions. Counselees, however, often have the opposite attitude. They are most unhappy as the result of trouble making.” (Adams, 38)
- **Righteousness:** “The ultimate source of this kind of righteousness is God himself (cf. Ps. 42:1–2; 63:1). His enablement is the only satisfaction for those who long for his standard of righteousness written in his law (119:10–11, 20, etc.). Although the teachers of the law and the Pharisees focus on attaining righteousness through studying and interpreting the law, their efforts result in self-righteousness, which will not enable them to enter the kingdom of heaven (cf. 5:20). But for those who deeply long for God’s multifaceted righteousness, they will be filled. That divine satisfaction will come in a final sense in God’s future reign, but it will be experienced in the present by those

who respond to Jesus' invitation to kingdom life and enter into a relationship with him as he fills their deepest personal hunger and thirst for righteousness (cf. 12:1–8; 26:26–29; John 4:13–15; 6:35ff.).” (Wilkins, 208)

- **Renewing our minds:** “Much of what Jesus has to say is a matter of disabusing the disciples’ minds of the teaching that they had heard from the Pharisees and the Sadducees, in order to teach them properly. As you proceed, note how much of His teaching consists in retraining, not merely teaching de novo...(those) who like to set up lists of dos and don’ts might be well advised to replace those lists with God’s list (not of do’s and don’ts, but) of qualities that lead to genuine happiness. Happy because of the second half, not the first - it's the path that leads to the second. Happy at funerals? Happy when you grieve over the loss of a job? Of your health? The words seem almost contradictory—happy mourners? The prevalent view is that ‘if I can be free from sorrow and grief, my life can be beautiful.’ The front half is when we experience the brokenness...the back half is when we engage the brokenness.” (Adams, 27)

Bibliography (Note: Our use of these materials does not imply full agreement with them)

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