

October 31, 2021

“Seeking True Happiness”  
Lesson 1 of Unit

Matthew 5:1-12

### **Intro**

How do we define success? Some define it on possessions, like a nice car or expensive clothes. Some define it by status—an important position at work, an exclusive club or group they belong to. Some might even define it by how many friends one has on social media!

There is a big difference is looking successful and being successful. Only God, who created life, can rightly define what a successful human live looks like. He defines our purpose, and so he also declares what it means to achieve that purpose.

Jesus’ words in Matthew 5:1-12, the Beatitudes and our lesson text for today, describe the heart of success from God’s point of view. When he said in Matt. 4:17 “The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand”, he was telling people that God was about to establish His reign over all the world. For people willing to submit to his reign, this passage describes how life is to be lived. It is a description of a successful life on God’s terms, living in God’s kingdom.

### **Read Matthew 5:1-12**

#### 1. vs. 1: Setting the scene

Jesus sees the crowds

They follow Him to hear more about the coming of God’s kingdom

They are interested, as they follow Him wherever He goes

The mountain location for this teaching has value

First, it has good acoustics—it’s a good place to be heard

Second, it may have been chosen as a parallel

God gave the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai (Ex. 19)

Jesus is presenting something like this, only greater

#### 2. vs. 2: Jesus begins to teach them...

Up to now in Matthew, Jesus has only spoken a sentence or two at a time

He is now going to speak continuously for three chapters

This shows the significance of what He is saying

#### 3. vs. 3: Each of the statements in vs. 3-11 begin with the word “blessed”

Being blessed means having the approval and favor of God in what one does

Jesus begins his sermon with this idea of being blessed

The first group he mentions is the poor in spirit

We understand poorness in economic terms

They are lacking the money needed to provide the necessities of life

The “poor in spirit” are lacking in spiritual terms  
People in this category know their need spiritually and call out to God for help  
God has promised to deliver those who are humble enough to recognize their need  
The verse speaks to an utter reliance on God, even if one has enough materially

God’s promise to them is “theirs is the kingdom of heaven”

They will walk in close fellowship because they have put their trust in Him alone

4. vs. 4: The second group is those who mourn

What are they mourning?

In Jesus’ day, the people mourn because they are being ruled by Rome, a pagan nation  
This condition is similar to the Babylonian exiles

They mourned being in Babylon, then that pagan nations ruled over them upon  
their return to Israel

Both groups are mourning the loss of Israel’s nationhood, which means loss of God’s favor

The truth is they are still in bondage to sin, which caused the exile in the first place  
Sin is at the heart of all that is wrong in the human condition

Jesus says the mourners “will be comforted”

God is about to change the conditions from “exile” to “restoration”

The difference is that it isn’t going to happen politically

It will happen internally, in the hearts and lives of people who walk with God

5. vs. 5: This verse has always been misapplied by those who don’t follow God

They say, “How can the meek inherit the earth? They’re too meek to take it!”

That’s true

The meek by definition are without the power needed

So they will be given the earth by God (“inherit it”)

What Jesus is saying here isn’t something new

He’s quoting Ps. 37:11!

This also isn’t about a personality type

The meek are those who voluntarily surrender position and power to Christ

Since Christ also surrendered His life though He was a king, He will share God’s rule with  
those who have willingly surrendered their rights and/or power

6. vs. 6: Jesus refers to those who “hunger and thirst for righteousness”

Many of his followers would understand what it means to hunger and thirst

Jesus is obviously dealing with a spiritual message

In Matt. 4:4, He told Satan, “Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word  
that comes from the mouth of God.”

He is stressing that the thing to be most hungry and most thirsty for is God’s way,  
the way of righteousness, even more than food or drink

Anyone who puts God’s way forth putting it in their own life first, God will bless

7. vs. 7: There is an “if...then” aspect to this verse

“If” a person shows mercy, “then” they will also be shown mercy in return  
It seems like a simple thing to do, but this is hard for some people  
There is an enormous caution being suggested here

God will show mercy

He has already done so by having Christ die for our sins on the cross  
We have received mercy for our sins

We are now expected to grow in Christlikeness, to become more like Him

He showed us mercy; we are to show others mercy

How can we justify unmercifulness to another when we have received mercy?

James 2:13 warns of the consequences of not being merciful to others

“For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy.”

8. vs. 8: Purity is the issue here, but what kind?

The Law of Moses stressed purity in washings of hands and bowls

All the purity in the Law was external

God rules over everything, what all can see and what only He can see

I Sam. 16:7 says, “For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the  
outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”

Jesus is showing that the kingdom comes from the heart, a pure heart

This connects to the previous verses

People who know their own neediness realize they don’t measure up to God’s  
standards of purity

Jesus is reminding people they continue to need God’s mercy

What a promise!

“They will see God”

The reward for being pure in heart is to be able to be in the physical presence of  
the God of the Universe

9. vs. 9: God is the ultimate peacemaker

Eph. 2:15 says He did this “by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of  
commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into ,  
one new man, thus establishing peace.”

We are told in Hebrews 12:14 to “Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification  
without which no one will see the Lord.”

Jesus is called the Prince of Peace in Is.9:6

He came to establish peace between God and man

He also calls His followers to have peace with all others

For us, that means our continued growth into Christlikeness includes being peacemakers

James 3:18 reminds us: “And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in  
peace by those who make peace.”

The blessing here is that we will be called a child of God—his children doing His will

10. vs. 10: These next three verses deal with being persecuted for faith in Christ

In this verse, Christians are persecuted because of their righteousness

Jesus says two things about persecution of followers in John's gospel

15:20: "If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you."

16:33: "In the world you have tribulation..."

Christians are forewarned that following Christ does not prevent hardships

Our text has this to say on vs. 10:

"The arrival of God's kingdom does not mean that the world is changed suddenly and dramatically. God establishes His rule in the human heart, calling people into His kingdom with the good news of Jesus. Yet evil remains active in the presence of such a kingdom. Thus, those who pursue righteousness may find themselves abused."

The blessing here is "theirs is the kingdom of God"

The kingdom came into our lives when we became Christians

The kingdom will always be ours as we follow Christ

No amount of persecution on earth can remove the Kingdom from us

Also, it can't take away the eternal kingdom that we are going to

11. vs. 11: The persecution here shifts to being persecuted "because of me (Jesus)"

Jesus makes it clear that He is the authority

This whole passage is Jesus defining what the kingdom is

One must have the authority in order to do that

The blessing isn't defined here, but Jesus says His followers will be blessed if...

People insult, persecute, or say false things about us because we follow Him

We know His word is true and He is faithful to keep His promises

So we don't need to know what the blessing is; we will receive what He chooses

12. vs. 12: Jesus adds something typical of New Testament practice

"Rejoice and be glad"

This is what He calls us to do when we face persecution

Jesus gives us two reasons to "rejoice and be glad"

First, "great is your reward in heaven"

Whatever we suffer now, our rewards for suffering will be "great"

We aren't suffering for nothing

We definitely shouldn't suffer in the hopes of getting something

God merely reminds us that He will reward those who have been persecuted for standing up for righteousness

Second, we are being compared to the OT prophets who were persecuted

That by itself is an amazing thing—we are like the heroes of the OT!

Great people of faith have always suffered for their faith

Read Hebrews 11:36-38

God worked with and through these people, blessing them for their faithfulness in the midst of their suffering

God will do the same with us, working in us and through us if we suffer

There are already millions of Christians worldwide suffering for their faith  
It's good to remember we are never the only ones suffering  
We have something in common with these as well as OT saints

Application: The Sermon on the Mount describes three categories of people who receive blessings from God: 1) The Needy (vs. 5:3-6), 2) The Godly (5:7-9), and the Persecuted (5:10-12). These three categories are not common signs for success, but they are the things which God calls His people to in His kingdom. We belong to Him because we recognize our need, not because we are strong ourselves. As we belong to Him, we want to be like Him, to act like Him. And we know that suffering for serving Him marks us as people who truly belong to Him. This is not an easy life, and none of us would likely take it up if it weren't for Jesus leading us and upholding us.

Prayer: Father God, thank You that You have called us to be Your people, by and through Your grace in Jesus' death on the cross. Thank You for Your power that makes us able to live as Your people. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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