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Matthew 5:7-9, "The Person God Blesses" - Part 2

Intro. This morning we continue our study of the Beatitudes. Here we find out how to have a life that is blessed of God. I will show you some of the qualities that are required for you to be truly happy on the inside, regardless of the circumstances of your life. Most people try to obtain happiness through self-centered approaches, including sinful pleasures. But Jesus says that true happiness comes by following a different pathway. So much of what He says here is contrary to normal human expectation.

Now the first 4 beatitudes are foundational, giving the pathway to becoming a Christian. You must become poor in spirit, recognizing your own spiritual poverty. You have to realize that you cannot be good enough to earn your way to heaven. Then you need to mourn over your sin, and repent of your sin. Then you will be blessed if you become meek. That starts with meekness toward God, where you stop being rebellious, and instead submit your will to Him. Then you will be meek toward others. Finally, to be blessed, you need to hunger & thirst for the righteousness that comes from God. Sin brings a curse, but righteousness brings blessing. Seek after righteousness.

Today we will consider the rest of the beatitudes. You can experience the last 4 only if you have experienced the first 4. And as we go through the message today, I'd want you to ask yourself if these beatitudes describe your life. If you are a Christian, these beatitudes should describe you fairly well. But if you do not see yourself in these verses, then that probably means you have either not yet become a Christian, or you have not sufficiently grown in your Christian faith. If so, I encourage you to take the steps toward becoming a Christian, and experiencing the blessed life that God wants for you.

So what are the characteristics of a Christian whose life will be blessed by God?

I. THE MERCIFUL WILL BE BLESSED

Jesus said in v.7, "Blessed are the merciful..." The concept of mercy appears from one end of the Bible to the other. God is a God of mercy. Though He judges sin, he described Himself in Exodus 20:6 as "showing mercy to thousands..." In Exodus 34:6 He described Himself as "merciful and gracious." And if we are going to be blessed, we need to be like God in showing mercy.

Now there are two primary occasions where mercy is to be given. First:

A. Extend Mercy to Those Who Sin - This is the primary kind of mercy that God extends to us. When we have sinned against God, we deserve judgment. But in mercy God is willing to forgive, if only we will repent of our sin, & turn to Him for mercy.

Even so, when people sin against us, we should remember that the merciful will be blessed. So let us forgive those who have wronged us. It is proper to correct them. But when they see their wrong and ask forgiveness, we should not hesitate.

Christians of all people should be merciful. Look over to Matthew 18, beginning in v.23. There Jesus says, "Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle

accounts with his servants. And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made.” Here’s a guy that’s in real trouble. He has an unpayable debt and the king says, “We’ll just sell everything he has, including his wife and his children.” That was back in the days when slavery was common. In v.26 the story continues, “The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, ‘Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’ Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.” That’s a picture of how God has mercy on us. Your sin constitutes an unpayable debt. There’s not a way in the world you can pay the price for your sin except with your own eternal death. But the mercy of God comes in and the debt is paid and removed. So in our story, this old boy walks out of there debt-free. He doesn’t owe anybody.

Now, a man who has been forgiven that kind of debt, wouldn’t you say he ought to be forgiving? I would. Look what v.28 says, “But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, ‘Pay me what you owe!’ So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’ And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?’ And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.”

Therefore one of the indications that you’ve been forgiven of God is that you have a forgiving disposition toward others. Our own mercifulness in regard to men is an accurate measure of the amount of the divine mercy which we have received. If you have an unforgiving spirit, if you show a lack of mercy in your dealing toward other people, you demonstrate that you may not be saved. Instead, you are going to the place of torment!

There is a second occasion for showing mercy:

B. Extend Mercy to Those Who Suffer - When a person is in trouble or in need, he will often need mercy. Jesus is teaching that we should be merciful to such people. Mercy is *compassion in action* toward anyone who has a need. Being merciful involves meeting the needs of those in trouble. Over in Luke 6:35-36 our Lord said, “Love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.”

Sometimes, people find themselves in a terrible situation because of their own sin. How should we respond? There is a tendency in life to become hard and callused and judgmental. We may want to tell them they are just getting what they deserve. But Jesus is saying, “Blessed are the merciful.” We are to be ready to offer help to the sinner who hits bottom & mourns over their sin and repents. The merciful believer will share with such people, not only to help them out of their trouble, but also to hope for forgiveness and a changed life. There are a lot of people who would be saved if they just knew they could be.

One way you can be merciful is to give to our benevolent offering each month. Another way is to give to our World Hunger Offering. At times God will lead you to give directly to a widow or orphan in need.

Finally, there is another point I want to make from this beatitude:

C. Extend Mercy, & You Will Obtain Mercy [Argumentation]- In the last of v.7 Jesus says that the merciful will be blessed “For they shall obtain mercy.” It is true that people will tend to treat you the way you have treated them. If you have been merciful to others, they will likely be merciful to you in your time of need. But that is not always the case. Jesus was the most merciful man that ever lived; yet He did not receive mercy *from men*. They crucified Him on a cross. But the blessedness upon the merciful primarily comes from God. He is the source of mercy. He will certainly extend mercy to you as you show mercy to others.

The opposite is also true. As James has it: “For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy” (2:13). Jesus said, “But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” (Mt. 6:15; cf. Eph. 4:32).

So be merciful toward people who have sinned, and people who are suffering. Ask God to give you a soft, compassionate heart.

Next, if you want a life that is blessed, you need to know that:

II. THE PURE IN HEART WILL BE BLESSED

Jesus said in v.8, “Blessed are the pure in heart....” The Greek word for “pure” [*katharos*] originally simply meant was physically “clean,” free of dirt & other impurities. That is the meaning at times in the New Testament (Mt. 27:59; John 13:10; Rev. 15:6). It was regularly used for grain which has been winnowed or sifted, & the chaff has been removed. It was used of pure gold in Rev. 21:18, or pure water in Rev. 22:1, i.e. free from impurities. Since Jesus is talking about the heart here, He is using the term in the spiritual & moral sense, a heart that is free from sin. To be blessed, we need to be cleansed of the sins of the heart, like lust, hatred, jealousy, selfish ambition, unbelief, & so forth (cf. Gal. 5:19-21). When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, He said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!” (John 1:47). We need to be cleansed of impure motives. Are our motives pure? If we give generously and liberally to some good cause, do you do so because you are seeking praise and thanks from others? In this Sermon on the Mount Jesus rebuked the Pharisees, who did good works from impure motives. Is our church attendance an attempt to meet & worship God or a fulfilling of a habitual and conventional respectability? Here Jesus is demanding that we examine our motives and see if we serve God from a pure heart. God is not interested in any of your spiritual activity unless your heart is right (cf. Amos 5:21-24).

Notice also that Jesus emphasized the heart above all things. True Christianity lies in the heart. In fact, the principles given in the Beatitudes are not superficial; they are deep and internal. You see, our real problem is not our outward actions. Our real problem is the heart. Jesus taught that we need to become good on the inside, and then we will become good outwardly.

This is in sharp contrast to what the Pharisees were teaching. They put the emphasis on outward righteousness. They were majoring on external, bodily purification rather than on what was in the heart. Jesus responded to such outward purity by saying, “Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean [*katharos*] also.... For you

are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness" (Mt. 23:26-27).

So what does this tell us? Don't settle for just an outward purity. Major on the heart. Do you have a pure heart? Would others who know you say you have a good, pure heart?

If not, how can we obtain a pure heart? Medieval monks fled from the corruption of the world to monasteries. Is that the way to have a pure heart? No, because even if you avoid the corruption of the world, you still have the corruption of your own heart. Jer. 17:9 says the heart is "desperately wicked." Making a heart pure calls for a greater miracle than cleansing a leper or raising the dead. After David had committed adultery with that Bathsheba, he prayed, "Create in me a clean¹ heart, O God" (Psa. 51:10). So we need the cleansing blood of Jesus to wash all our sins away. When we are born again by repentance & faith in Christ, we experience "the washing of regeneration" (Titus 3:5). Then, once you have been born again, you need to maintain a clean heart. Confess your sins daily. 1 Jn. 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." I believe we also need to be careful to keep our heart pure by keeping our minds pure. Be careful what you see, hear, & read.

Why should you seek to have & maintain a pure heart? Jesus explains why in the last of v.8, "For they shall see God." This reminds me of Psa. 24:3, which says, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who shall stand in his holy place?" In other words, who can go to heaven and see God? V.4 of that Psalm answers, "He who has clean hands and a pure heart [καθαρος τη καρδια-LXX], who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully." Then v.5 says, "He shall receive blessing from the LORD..." The pure in heart will have the blessing and comfort of seeing God. I Cor. 13:12 says "we shall see Him face to face." Rev. 22:4 says that true believers "shall see His face." And Rev. 21:4 says that, when we enter into the presence of God, "God will wipe away all tears from our eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain."

But those whose hearts are not cleansed will see God momentarily only in judgment. Rev. 1:7 tells us that "every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him..." But let me ask you something? Is the thought of seeing God a blessing to you? The condition of your heart will determine the answer to that question. To the unclean of heart the vision of God will bring dread and shame (1 Jn. 2:28), but to the clean that vision will be a day of rejoicing and comfort. To the unclean, judgment will be followed by banishment into outer darkness, and you will never see God again.

Next, if you want a life that is blessed, you need to understand that:

III. THE PEACEMAKERS WILL BE BLESSED

This beatitude is so relevant, for we live in a world of conflict. There have been thousands of wars. Many have erupted even after peace treaties have been ratified.² There have been millions of murders. No doubt there have been hundreds of millions of fights and heated arguments, even within families. In a world of peace breaking, Jesus says in v.9, "Blessed are the peacemakers..." In a world of conflict, there is a great need for peacemakers. So our Lord pronounces a blessing upon those who are.

¹ This is a similar word in the LXX.

² Illus. #T-4301, 8,000 broken peace treaties.

Being a peacemaker involves bringing peace where there is conflict. And this peace should not only be an absence of obvious conflict, but a restoration of a right relationship. We should seek to bring peace in two types of relationships:

A. In Relationship with God – Before we can bring lasting peace between men, we must first bring peace with God to the hearts of men. The Bible declares that there is a serious conflict between the sinner and God. Rom. 8:7 says, “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God....” Col. 1:21 says, “And you, that were once alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works....” So reconciling men to God is the most important peace-making activity there is. We should follow the example of God, who is the greatest peacemaker of all. In the Garden of Eden Man hid from God, but God pursued. 2 Cor. 5:19 tells us, “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself....” Then that same verse tells us, “and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.” Colossians 1:20 says that Christ “made peace through the blood of His cross.” We who have received the blessing of peace with God should seek to bring others into a right relationship with God. We are to tell people that they can have “peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1).

This verse certainly includes more than that. We should also be peacemakers:

B. In Relationship with Men - First of all, in our own lives we should seek:

1. Peacemakers Live at Peace with Men. There are some people in the world who are trouble-makers. They don't seem to be content unless they keep things stirred up. They are involved in fights, arguments, and conflicts. They are always storm centers of trouble and bitterness and strife. Wherever they are, they are either involved in quarrels themselves or they are the cause of quarrels between others. Some folks make trouble at home, trouble at work, and even trouble at church. They are disturbers of the peace.

But God's people are to be men and women of peace. Romans 12:18 says, “If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.” Jesus taught us to love our enemies (5:44). We are to forgive those who have wronged us, rather than perpetuate conflict (1 Peter 4:8). The Bible teaches that we are not to pay back evil for evil. Instead, we are to “overcome evil with good” (Rom. 12:17-21). We are to speak kindly when we are tempted to speak harsh words. Proverbs 15:1 says, “A soft answer turns away wrath....” If you live like this people will find out that there is no use picking a fight with you. So may God help us to be peacemakers rather than peace breakers.

However, notice that in this context, Jesus passes from peacemaking to persecution, from the work of reconciliation to the experience of hostility. Yet however hard we may try to make peace with some people, they refuse to live at peace with us. Not all attempts at reconciliation succeed.³

2. Peacemakers Mediate Peace between Men. How can we mediate peace between those in conflict? Well, if we can get the parties to talk to one another, and we can clear up misunderstandings, that will certainly help. But if we are going to bring peace between enemies, the only lasting solution is to get both parties right with God. Because men are not right with God, they will not be right with their fellow man. Very soon after man fell into sin, we read of Cain killing Abel. And so the first step in getting people right with each other is to get them right with God! Then, when people get right with God, they will live by righteous principles, which will bring peace. True peace is based on righteous principles. Psalm 85:10 says,

³ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*.

“Righteousness and peace have kissed.” The two go together. Isaiah 32:17 says, “The work of righteousness will be peace....” Likewise, James 3:18 says, “Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.”

Why should you be a peacemaker? Jesus says in the last of v.9 that peacemakers will be blessed, “For they shall be called sons of God.” This is probably a typical Hebrew way of expression. Hebrew is not rich in adjectives, and often when a Hebrew wishes to describe something, he uses, not an adjective, but the phrase “son of” plus an abstract noun. Hence a man may be called a son of peace instead of a peaceful man. In contrast James & John were called “sons of thunder” (Mark 3:17). I suppose the expression, “son of a gun,” probably refers to an outlaw.⁴ So when Jesus says that the peacemakers shall be called “sons of God”, this could mean, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they are like God” (cf. Luke 6:35). God is the supreme peacemaker, and believers who are like God in that regard will be called sons of God.

Sources: William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible Series: Matthew* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975); H. Leo Eddleman, *The Teachings of Jesus in Matthew 5-7* (Dallas: Books of Life Publishers, 1975); Charles R. Erdman, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Westminster, 1966); Oliver B. Greene, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, Vol. 1, (Greenville, SC: The Gospel Hour, Inc., 1971); William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973); John MacArthur, Jr., *Kingdom Life: Jesus' Way to True Happiness* (Panorama City, CA: Word of Grace Communications, 1985), v.7 only; Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture, Vol 6* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House); John Phillips, *Exploring The Gospel of Matthew: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1999); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible [CD-ROM]* (Ontario: Timnathserah Inc., 1996); Jerry Vines (notes from his sermon on this text dated 2/5/89); Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Loyal: Matthew* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1980). Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).

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⁴ In Ephesians 5:6 Paul called unbelievers “sons of disobedience.”