



The Reverend Dr. David V. Silvernail, Jr.
Matthew 5:1-12

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English Standard Version

“The Blessings of the King”

The 9th Sermon in a series on the Gospel of Matthew entitled
“The King and His Kingdom!”

Matthew 5:1-12

“Seeing the crowds, He went up on the mountain, and when He sat down, His disciples came to Him. ² And He opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

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 satisfied.*

⁷ *“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive 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.*

¹¹ *“Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on My account. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”*

Heavenly Father, thank You for giving us the Scriptures and making us Your people. You have brought us to this amazing Gospel to learn more about your Son, Jesus. This is another one of those texts that sounds simple, but is actually profound. It sounds easy, but it’s unbelievably difficult. It sounds like something we can do in our own strength, but is impossible

apart from Jesus. So by Your Spirit open this Gospel to us and help us to see Jesus, and help us to need Jesus, as always, for this we need Your grace. Give us the desire to learn from You this morning, in the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

INTRODUCTION: *Top Twelve Things Jesus Would Do at the Super Bowl*¹

You know, if Jesus were here, I think he'd do things a lot differently. You know the saying, "What would Jesus do?" It makes us stop and think about how Jesus would behave in our situation. Well, I've been thinking a lot about that this week, with the Super Bowl coming up and all. And I think that if Jesus was in charge of the Super Bowl, I think he'd do things a lot differently.

So, I've come up with a list of the **Top Twelve Things Jesus Would Do at the Super Bowl** (one for each of the twelve apostles):

- Number 12. Throw moneychangers out of the concession stands
- Number 11. Miraculously provide front row parking for everyone
- Number 10. New ticket policy: "whosoever will may come"
- Number 9. Grace-oriented pep talk in the locker room
- Number 8. Encourage each team not to give offense to the other
- Number 7. Command the waves
- Number 6. Cancel all penalties for players who believe in Him
- Number 5. Feed the crowd with only 5 hotdogs and 2 bags of peanuts
- Number 4. Discourage any "Hail Mary" passes
- Number 3. Clothe the cheerleaders
- Number 2. Promote third-down conversions

... and the **Number 1 thing Jesus would do at the Super Bowl** ... never before seen in the NFL ... neither team would score any points ... after all, God humbles the proud.

Ok, I'll admit it's a little goofy to think about what Jesus would do at the Super Bowl. But it **IS** true that Jesus had a way of thinking about life that was very different than the way **we usually** think about life.

The New Testament tells us about the things that Jesus taught His followers as He tried to change their way of thinking to get them to think from God's perspective instead of from their more limited human perspective.

We're exploring His life and teachings in this series on the Gospel of Matthew, which I've entitled "***The King and His Kingdom.***" And our passage today begins the first section of the five major talks that Jesus gave to His followers. Today we begin our study of the "**Sermon on the Mount**" found here in **Matthew 5-7**. The Sermon on the Mount is important because it tells us **how things work** in God's Kingdom. It's an instruction manual for those who want to follow Jesus and pattern their lives after His life, and after His teaching, and His thinking. And in order to understand what has often been called the greatest sermon in history, first, you have to know something about the bigger picture. In other words, you must know that ...

BACKGROUND: *Jesus' Words and Deeds Are Inseparable*

First of all, I want you to notice **Matthew 4:23**. It's a **summary statement** of Jesus' earthly ministry, "*And He went throughout all Galilee, **teaching** in their synagogues and **proclaiming** the gospel of the kingdom and **healing** every disease and every affliction among the*

1 The Introduction is adapted from the sermon "Peace Without Honor" by Rev. Chip Bell, Fellowship Bible Church, Dallas, TX, 2/1/04, www.bible.org

people.” One way to restate that verse would be to say that Jesus made it his ministry to **preach** the coming of the kingdom, **teach** the way of the kingdom, and demonstrate the purpose and power of the kingdom by **healing** the sick. **Preaching, teaching, and healing.** Now turn to **Matthew 9:35**. **Almost verbatim** we find the same summary, “*And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, **teaching** in their synagogues and **proclaiming** the gospel of the kingdom and **healing** every disease and every affliction.*”

Then when we look to see what is sandwiched between these two summary descriptions of Jesus' ministry, what we see are two major sections: **Matthew 5–7** are a collection of Jesus' **teaching** called the Sermon on the Mount; and **Matthew 8–9** are a collection of stories mainly about His **healing** ministry.

So what it appears we have is a five chapter unit designed by Matthew to present us **first with some typical teaching** of the Lord concerning the way of the kingdom, and **second with some typical healings** and miracles to demonstrate the power of the kingdom. The value of seeing this is that it warns us against treating any little piece of this section in isolation. For example, one thing we can say right off the bat is that **you can't have** the Jesus of the Sermon of the Mount **without** the Jesus who cleansed the leper, and healed the centurion's servant, and stilled the storm, and cast out demons. The writer, who gives us the one, gives us the other, and it's both arbitrary and unwise to do what some modern folk try to do: namely, say that they admire the ethical teacher of the Sermon on the Mount but they don't want to get involved with the spooky supernatural Person who stills storms and casts out demons.

Or for some the opposite temptation may overcome them. They may have a charismatic fascination with the miracles of Jesus, but when it comes to reckoning with the One who said, “Don't call your brother a fool, don't lust, don't get divorced, don't swear, don't return evil for evil, love your enemy” — well, they like the miracle worker who heals their diseases, but this radical intruder into their personal life, they're not so interested in Him.

Matthew's point is that the Lord who teaches like this in the Sermon on the Mount is the same Lord who calls us to follow Him through life and depend upon His power. His personal work and power are inseparable from His teaching. In fact we will see right away that this is clear even in the Beatitudes.

So let's go to Matthew 5, and the first thing we see is that ...

v. 1-2: **JESUS IS TEACHING HIS DISCIPLES?**²

The last verse of Matthew 4 tells us that due to Jesus' miraculous healings, **Matthew 4:25**, “*And **great crowds followed Him** from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.*” When you visit the traditional site where the Sermon on the Mount is thought to have taken place — on the shores of the Sea of Galilee — guides always take pains to tell you that the area forms a sort of natural amphitheater, where hundreds, if not thousands of people could hear Jesus preach without voice amplification. However, Matthew makes it clear that the targeted audience was not the masses fascinated by His healings, but

2 The Background and Exposition of the text is adapted from the books, “Christian Counter-Culture: The Message of the Sermon on the Mount” by Dr. John R.W. Stott, pages 15-56 (Probably the best single volume you can get on the Sermon on the Mount); “The Reformed Expository Commentary: Matthew, Volume 1” by Dr. Dan Doriani, pages 105-135, “The Gospel of Matthew: God With Us” by Rev. Matt Woodley, Resonate Commentary Series, pages 56-62; And the Sermons, “The Beatitudes and the Gospel of the Kingdom” by Dr. John Piper, Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis, MN, 1/26/86, www.desiringGod.org; “A Sermon for the Ages: Character Qualities of a Counter Cultural Christian” by Rev. Michael Andrus, First Evangelical Free Church, Wichita, KS, 2/11/07, www.firstfreewichita.org.

rather His disciples. Look with me at verse 1, *“Seeing the crowds, He went up on the mountain, and when He sat down, His disciples came to Him.”*² *And He opened his mouth and taught them, saying...*”

This may have been His first opportunity to give serious, concentrated instruction to the disciples. And the thrust of the Sermon on the Mount must be determined by the audience addressed, and that **primary audience is His disciples**. And because of this particular audience, His followers, I’m suggesting that Jesus isn’t telling people **in general** how to behave; He’s not offering a universal ethic applicable to all religions; He’s telling **His committed followers** how to live lives that are blessed by God. The audience is probably two concentric circles: the inner circle of the disciples, and the outer circle of the “crowds.” It says in verses 1 and 2 that He taught His disciples. But look at the end of the sermon, all the way in **Matthew 7:28-29**, *“And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at His teaching, for He was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.”* So it’s clear that the crowds were listening and that Jesus wanted them to listen even though the sermon is **primarily addressed to professing disciples**.

Let me mention here that this is the way our Sunday services at Potomac Hills are designed. The preaching of the Word is primarily prepared to feed and strengthen and inspire the worship and life of God's people. But more and more we pray that there will be the curious, the onlookers, the skeptical, the searchers, the doubters who come to Potomac Hills the way the crowds gathered in behind the disciples on the mount. We believe that the Spirit-led, authoritative preaching of the Word of God has a peculiar power to awaken unbelievers to the truth and beauty of Christ — even when it’s addressed primarily to disciples. So I would urge you to feel free to invite anyone and everyone to our Sunday worship service at Potomac Hills. It’s precisely the things our Lord **has to say to US** that can awaken desire in others to come to Christ.

So the sermon begins with the disciples gathered at the feet of Jesus and with the crowds listening in. How will the Lord begin? He begins by pronouncing a certain kind of person **fortunate**. We call these pronouncements *“Beatitudes”* from the Latin word for **blessedness**. Each Beatitude begins with a character quality and ends with a promised blessing. This morning, I’m going to divide them into those two groups. And so we’ll start with the ...

v. 3-11: PRESENT CHARACTERISTICS OF DISCIPLES³

“Blessed are the poor in spirit ...

⁴ *“Blessed are those who mourn ...*

⁵ *“Blessed are the meek ...*

⁶ *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness ...*

⁷ *“Blessed are the merciful ...*

⁸ *“Blessed are the pure in heart ...*

⁹ *“Blessed are the peacemakers ...*

¹⁰ *“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake ...*

¹¹ *“Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on My account.”*

Jesus’ message about the kingdom begins with **the characteristics** of the kingdom’s citizens. There are eight phrases that describe the kind of people who belong to God’s kingdom.

³ The description of the individual Beatitudes are taken from *“Counseling One Another”* a pastoral newsletter by Rev. Paul Tautges, 5/1-2/12, www.counselingoneanother.com.

They are eight phrases **that describe us**. The key point about the people Jesus is describing is that these are not **eight separate and distinct** categories of disciples, some of whom are poor in spirit, some who mourn, some who are meek, etc. Even less is He describing some sort of spiritual elite who are heads and shoulders above the common run-of-the-mill Christian. The Beatitudes are Christ's description of what every Christian ought to BE like. Each of these qualities is to characterize **each** of His followers.

There are eight Beatitudes worded in the same way. Verse 11 could be viewed as a ninth one, but it is really an expansion of verse 10 and is worded differently from the others. It says, *"Blessed are you when others revile you."* None of the others say, *"Blessed are you."* It's probably an expansion of verse 10, which says, *"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake."* The reviling in verse 11 is a specific instance of the persecution in verse 10.

However, once you look at them, you discover the characteristics Jesus describes are a little surprising. You'd think that the citizens of **God's** kingdom would be the best and the brightest, the most noble, the most worthy, the most beautiful, the strongest and the bravest. But that's not what Jesus says, is it?

What does He say? We're going to go through these quickly, but enough so you get the gist of His message ...

"Blessed are the poor in spirit ... Blessing comes to those who recognize their spiritual poverty can only be cured by God's riches in Jesus Christ. To be *"poor in spirit,"* as Jesus described, is to sense in oneself the utterly destitute condition that we as sinners are born into, and remain in without Jesus. When this realization sinks in and we turn away from our sin and turn to God for salvation and forgiveness, we inherit the kingdom of heaven, that is, we become children of God by personal faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior (John 1:12).

When this occurs, we are adopted into God's family and made to be co-heirs with Christ (Ephesians 3:6). This is made possible only by the riches of God's grace (Ephesians 1:7; 2:7), which result in being made partakers of the riches of Christ's inheritance (Ephesians 1:18). The personal embrace of these truths produces true blessing.

"Blessed are those who mourn ... Blessing comes to those who seek comfort from God in times of sorrow. Jesus said, *"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."* The Apostle Paul reminds us, **2 Corinthians 1:3-4**, *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,⁴ who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God."* In other words, pain and suffering and sorrow in our lives should drive us to God ... and then the comfort we receive from Him will then equip us to become better comforters of others in their times of trouble. This kind of selfless ministry, along with the newfound joy gained from our own experience of comfort, will produce true blessing.

"Blessed are the meek ... Blessing comes to those who serve others and endure cruel treatment with gentleness. What did Jesus mean by that? Meekness has best been referred to as *power under control*. In other words, a meek person is not a weak person, but a meek person is one who is able to maintain self-control while serving others, even those who unjustly criticize or harshly attack him. Jesus described Himself in **Matthew 11** as *"gentle and humble in heart"* and the ultimate display of self-control was His endurance of the Cross where He sacrificed His life **in place of ours** for the purpose of rescuing us from the just penalty of our sin and bringing

us back to God (1 Peter 3:18). This focus — returning lost sheep to the Father — was the joy that was set before Him, which fueled His endurance (Hebrews 12:2). So, Jesus found His joy in fulfilling the will of God by serving others with meekness.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness ... Blessing comes to those who pursue satisfaction IN God. True blessing can only be found in God Himself. The words *hunger* and *thirst* describe the realization of need. When someone says, “I’m hungry,” he means he senses some pain in his stomach, i.e. he recognizes he needs food. When someone says, “I’m thirsty,” she means that her throat and mouth need refreshment, that is, she recognizes her need for water. When a sinner hungers and thirsts for God it reflects a work of the Holy Spirit awakening him to the realization of his own sinfulness and need for a Savior, without which he will perish eternally. This creates the awareness of God’s demand for righteousness, which can only be satisfied in Christ, as Paul tells us in **2 Corinthians 5:21**, “*For our sake He [God the Father] made Him [God the Son] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.*” Christ now offers His perfect righteousness to those who acknowledge their need of it, hunger and thirst for it, and receive it by faith. In God, the saved sinner is satisfied.

“Blessed are the merciful ... Blessing comes to those who have mercy because they recognize their OWN need for mercy. Mercy is the attribute of God where He withholds from us the horrendous punishment our sin deserves. The Apostle Paul described God as being **“rich in mercy”** (Ephesians 2:4). In other words, the most magnificent display of mercy in all of history is the Cross of Christ. It was there God took the sins of His rebellious creatures and imputed them (credited them) to His Son **and then judged Him for our sin**. Another way of applying the truth of this verse is to remember that all actions have consequences. Therefore, those who make it a habit of life to spread the mercy of God to others because they themselves have received mercy from God will reap the benefit of having others show mercy to them in return.

“Blessed are the pure in heart ... Blessing comes to those who have integrity of heart. Jesus said, **“Blessed are the pure in heart,”** however; the prophet Jeremiah described the human heart as anything but pure when he wrote, **Jeremiah 17:9**, “*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?*” Which is the truth? The answer is **both**. Jeremiah was describing the human heart as it is naturally, without God, bound in sin. Jesus was describing the heart that has been reborn by the Holy Spirit and has experienced forgiveness and cleansing because of faith in Christ. **Hebrews 10:22** compels believers in Jesus to draw near to God in worship “*with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience.*”

“Blessed are the peacemakers ... Blessing comes to those who seek peace in their conflicts. Why does Jesus call true believers **“peacemakers”**? I think the Apostle Paul answers part of that question in **Romans 5:1**, “*Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*” In other words, peace with God is a prerequisite to other evidences of peace, like peace with others. Now, this is not always true in our everyday experience with people. Sometimes, Christians will experience conflict as the direct result of their faith even if they themselves seek peace.

Therefore, Jesus encourages us, **John 16:33**, “*I have said these things to you, **that in Me you may have peace.** In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.*” The true Christian understands that real peace is found only in Jesus, not the ever-

changing circumstances of life. However, this inner peace will also produce an outward peace that impacts our relationships with others, especially other Christians.

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake ... Blessing comes to those who love Christ more than being loved by others. To be persecuted means to be constantly harassed, or treated poorly. In relation to being a Christian, it means to endure this kind of treatment from the world because of your Christian faith. In other words, Jesus warned His followers that because the world did not accept or love Him, but turned away from Him instead, His followers should not expect better treatment than their Master received (John 15:18-19). The Apostle Paul warned the young pastor Timothy in **2 Timothy 3:12**, *“Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”* For this reason, Christians who are serious about living out their faith should not expect fair treatment from an ungodly world. It’s not talking about followers of Christ suffering because of their own sin, but if they are attacked for the sake of living a righteous life.

And Matthew gives us a more specific example, verse 11, ***“Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on My account.”*** ...**Blessing comes to those who are ridiculed because of their faith in Christ.** How could Jesus expect anyone to be happy while being insulted by those who hate them? The reason is that Jesus draws extra close to those who are verbally assaulted for being a Christian. This is what the Apostle Peter meant when he wrote, **1 Peter 4:14**, *“If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.”*

But please note ... Jesus isn’t describing anyone’s economic, social, or psychological status, but rather **their spiritual status**. There is no question that He had great compassion on the poor. He spent the vast majority of His time with the disadvantaged, and He often encouraged His followers to feed the hungry and clothe the naked. But that’s clearly **not** the point in His teaching here. The poor and hungry are not primarily those living in poverty. Nor are the mourners primarily those suffering from grief or loss or misfortune. Nor are the persecuted to be identified with minorities, whether ethnic groups, or homosexuals, or women who have hit a glass ceiling. Rather the poor are the **poor in spirit**, the hungry are those who hunger **for righteousness**, the sorrowful are those who are **sorry for sin**, and the persecuted are those rejected **because of their faith in Jesus**.

But Jesus isn’t just talking about life in the present, because most of the Beatitudes end with a description of ...

v. 3-10, 12: FUTURE REWARDS FOR DISCIPLES

³ *“... for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

⁴ *“... for they shall be comforted.*

⁵ *“... for they shall inherit the earth.*

⁶ *“... for they shall be satisfied.*

⁷ *“... for they shall receive mercy.*

⁸ *“... for they shall see God.*

⁹ *“... for they shall be called sons of God.*

¹⁰ *“... for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”*

¹² *“Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”*

You can see that the eight beatitudes of verses 3–10 are a unit when you look at the first and the eighth. Notice the promise of the first beatitude in verse 3, ***“... for theirs IS the***

kingdom of heaven.” And notice the promise of the eighth beatitude in verse 10, “... *for theirs IS the kingdom of heaven.*” Both of them have the identical promise, “... *for theirs IS the kingdom of heaven.*”

But the other six beatitudes sandwiched between these two are all different.

Verse 4: "For they shall be comforted."

Verse 5: "For they shall inherit the earth."

Verse 6: "For they shall be satisfied."

Verse 7: "For they shall obtain mercy."

Verse 8: "For they shall see God."

Verse 9: "For they shall be called the sons of God."

Notice that all of these are promises for **the future**. “*They shall be comforted ... They shall inherit the earth ... They shall be satisfied ...*” and so on. But the promise of the first and last beatitude in verses 3 and 10 seems to relate to **the present** — the disciples are assured that “*theirs IS the kingdom of heaven.*”

Now what is the meaning of this pattern? I think there are at least two implications. **First**, by sandwiching **six future promises** in between **two present assurances** that disciples already have the kingdom of heaven, I think Jesus means to tell us that these six promises are the blessings of the kingdom. In other words, these six things are what you can count on when you are a part of God's kingdom. This is what the kingdom brings: comfort, inheritance, satisfied righteousness, mercy, a vision of God, and the awesome title, son of God. You don't have to pick and choose among these promises. They all belong to the kingdom. That is the first implication I see in the fact that Jesus begins with the assurance, “*theirs IS the kingdom of heaven,*” and ends with the assurance, “*theirs IS the kingdom of heaven,*” with six promises sandwiched in between.

The second implication of this pattern comes from the fact that the first and last assurances are **present tense**, and the six in the middle are **future**. “*Theirs IS the kingdom of heaven*” in verses 3 and 10. But, “*They shall be comforted ... They shall inherit the earth ...*” and so on in verses 4–9. I think this is Jesus' way of saying that in some sense the kingdom of heaven is present with the disciples now (“*Theirs IS the kingdom of heaven*”) but that the full blessings of the kingdom will have to wait for the age to come (“*They SHALL inherit the earth*”).

Another way to put it is that Jesus has brought the kingdom of heaven to earth in His own power and fellowship, and we can enjoy it here and now; but the full experience of the life of the kingdom will have to wait for the age to come. So, instead of taking a lot of time to look at each blessing individually, I'm going to take one and go a little in-depth with that one, hopefully showing what this should look like and feel like in our lives. And the one we're going to look at more closely is verse 7, which promises, “*They shall obtain mercy.*”

In the parable of the unforgiving servant in **Matthew 18:23–35** the king says to the wicked servant, verse 33, “*And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?*” In other words, Jesus teaches that we do not merely wait for the age to come to receive mercy. It has come in Jesus. We taste it here and now in forgiveness of sins and blessings of this life. The point is that the kingdom of heaven is both present and future. We have foretastes of the reign of God now, but we will experience vastly more in the future. I think this is why verses 3 and 10 assure us that “*theirs IS the kingdom of heaven,*” but verses 4–9 promise that the kingdom blessings are still in the future. It's both.

And this is one of the most important things you can learn about the Christian faith. Without this insight **the Sermon on the Mount** simply cannot be understood. For example, what will you make of verse 7 without this insight that the kingdom blessings of God's mercy are both present and future? It says, ***"Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy."*** Does this mean that God withholds His mercy until the future day of reckoning and waits to see if we will be merciful enough to earn His mercy? That's what it looks like it says.

But if you know the gospel of the kingdom, **Matthew 4:23**, *"And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and **proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom** and healing every disease and every affliction among the people."* And again near the end of the book, **Matthew 24:14**, *"And **this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.**"* That is, if you know that the power of the kingdom **is already present as well as future**, then you'll know that our becoming merciful is (right now!) a work of God's kingly mercy. That's the point of **Matthew 18:33**, where the King said, *"And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?"* God's prior mercy enables us to be merciful. The powerful mercy of the kingdom has already come in Jesus Christ.

God's not just waiting like a Judge at the end of the age to see whether or not we'll be able to earn His mercy then by showing mercy now. God's not waiting, He's casting the net of mercy into the sea of the world and dragging people to life and hope and joy and mercy, **Matthew 13:47**, *"Again, **the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind.**"* Isn't that what we read in the Gospel of John? **John 6:44, 65**, *"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him. ... ⁶⁵ And He said, **"This is why I told you that no one can come to Me unless it is granted him by the Father."**"*

The mercy of the kingdom is in the world drawing people to Christ.

The mercy of the kingdom is in the world opening people's eyes to Christ. Do you remember what Jesus said to Peter when Peter confessed him to be the Messiah? **Matthew 16:17**, *"And Jesus answered him, **"Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven."*** God's not waiting to see if Peter will recognize Jesus as the Messiah. He opened his eyes. Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you Simon! God has! You did not choose Him first; He chose you (John 15:16). You did not come to Him first; He drew you (John 6:44). You did not recognize Christ first; God opened your eyes (Matthew 16:17). And all this is mercy, mercy, mercy! As the Apostle Paul writes in **Romans 9:16**, *"So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, **who has mercy.**"*

Try to grasp this and make it part of your very being. Many passages of Scripture teach that God will show mercy on us in the future if we live a certain way now. Many other passages of Scripture teach that God has already shown us mercy, enabling us to live in a certain way now. These are not inconsistent. This is the very fabric of biblical life. We are born again by the mercy of God. We are sanctified by the mercy of God. And when we get to the judgment seat of God, He will say, "You are still a sinner. But I see in your life the distinguishing fruit of My Son's mercy. Your mercy on others is the evidence of His mercy in you. And for His sake I now show you mercy again. Come, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

CONCLUSION: *Am I A Reject?* ⁴

Unless you see the Beatitudes as part of this biblical fabric, you will not be able to understand them for what they are. **They're an announcement** of how fortunate people are **who already possess** the power of the kingdom. You might say, "Blessed! Blessed! And fortunate are you who have the kingdom power at work within you, for you will inherit the kingdom with all its infinite pleasures forever and ever." **The Beatitudes are announcements** that people like this are very blessed, are very fortunate.

But that's not all. The Beatitudes also contain **an implicit invitation to become this kind of person**. The disciples sit at Jesus' feet and hear His words as congratulations, "O how fortunate you are, My dear brothers! O how fortunate you are to be chosen of God, My beloved sisters! How blessed to have your eyes opened, to be drawn to the Savior, to be poor and mourning and meek and hungry and merciful and pure and peaceable! Rejoice and give thanks that you are this kind of person, **for it is not your own doing!** It's the reign of God in your life!"

So the disciples hear the Beatitudes as words of celebration about the work of God in their lives. But it's nothing that we can take any pride in. **We didn't do this work** — Jesus did. And if we did take pride in it, **we'd ruin it!** Jesus ended these Beatitudes by telling us that **we're going to be rejected**. Rejected by the world ... and Jesus tells us that they will "*revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you.*" And for that you are **blessed**.

The world says,

Blessed are the **strong**, for they shall rule the earth.
 Blessed are the **mighty**, for they shall rise to power.
 Blessed are the **rich**, for they shall inherit the earth.
 Blessed are the **influential**, for they shall be favored.
 Blessed are the **popular**, for they shall be loved.
 Blessed are the **gifted**, for they shall be followed.
 Blessed are the **beautiful**, for they shall be admired.

But that's not what Jesus promises, is it? No ... it's nothing like that ... nothing at all. His promises go to **rejects** ...

"The poor in spirit." Beggars in God's soup kitchen. **"Those who mourn."** Sinners Anonymous bound together by the truth of their introduction, "Hi, my name's Dave. I'm a big sinner." **"The meek."** Imagine pawnshop pianos played by Van Cliburn. (He's so good no one notices the missing keys.) **"Those who hunger and thirst."** Famished orphans who know the difference between a TV dinner and a Thanksgiving feast. **"The merciful."** Winners of the million-dollar lottery who share the prize with their enemies. **"The pure in heart."** Physicians who love lepers and escape infection. **"The peacemakers."** Architects who build bridges with wood from a Roman cross. **"The persecuted."** Those who manage to keep an eye on heaven while walking through hell on earth.

Why? Well, here's a startling truth ... **God wants rejects** for His family. **He wants rejects** who see their failure and run to Him for help. To the spiritually bankrupt, Jesus opens the door of the kingdom and says, "Come right in. This place was **made** for you." In giving this simple truth, Jesus has shown us the way of salvation. Blessed are the poor in the spirit, for they

4 Part of the conclusion is adapted from the books, "The Sermon on the Mount: Matthew 5-7" by Dr. James Montgomery Boice, page 11, and "The Applause of Heaven" by Max Lucado, page 3; and the sermon, "The Making of a Disciple" by Dr. Ray Pritchard, 1/7/96, www.keepbelieving.com.

shall be saved. But cursed are the proud, for they shall be condemned. Jesus says, ***“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”*** This is the first and fundamental quality of the spiritual life. This is where discipleship begins. This is the key that unlocks the door of heaven. Do you want to be a disciple in 2013? Then learn what it means to be poor in spirit.

Augustus Toplady expressed the truth of the Beatitudes when he wrote this verse in the hymn ***Rock of Ages*** ...

*Nothing in my hand I bring
Simply to Thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress,
Helpless, fly to Thee for grace.
Foul, I to the fountain fly.
Wash me, Savior, or I die.*

Can you say that? Can you sing that? Can you sing it with joy?
I hope so. Because then you are blessed.
Think about that ... You need to pray.
Take a moment to do that, and then I'll close.

Our Lord and our God, thank You that You have given us a King. In this passage, we see Your Son. Open our eyes that we might see our sin and then see our Savior. We want to be strong and rich and popular and beautiful, and You tell us what we already know — that that's the way of destruction. And then You offer us the way of blessing — to be poor and mourning and meek and hungry and merciful and suffering. And we don't want it ... even though we know it's the way of life. And so give us faith, Lord. Give us the faith to believe You, to trust You, to follow You ... and to be blessed.

We can only be there by faith. And so, O Lord, if there is anyone among us this day, who comes here not trusting in Christ, we would ask that by Your Spirit that You would draw that person to Yourself — by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone — that they might embrace Your beloved Son. Help us to know and believe that the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever. Amen.

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Romans 5:1-5

“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”