

The Greatest Life Ever Lived

A Study in the Incarnate Life of Jesus Christ and An Exposition of the Four Gospels

LESSON XXX : THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT — PART 3: THE BEATITUDES

Matthew	Mark	Luke	John	related passages
5:3-9		6:20b,21		

{This lesson is presented differently due to the richness of Martin Lloyd-Jones' book Studies in the Sermon on the Mount. I will quote profusely from Lloyd-Jones, then add additional comments at the end of each verse.}

“Nothing shows me the absolute need of the new birth, and of the Holy Spirit and His work within me, so much as the Sermon on the Mount. **These Beatitudes crush me to the ground. They show me my utter helplessness. Were it not for the new birth, I am undone.** Read it and study it, face yourself in the light of it. It will drive you to see your ultimate need of the rebirth and the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit. There is nothing that so leads to the gospel and its grace as the Sermon on the Mount....

“The more we live and try to practice this Sermon on the Mount, the more shall we experience blessing. Look at the blessings that are promised to those who do practice it. The trouble with much holiness teaching is that it leaves out the Sermon on the Mount, and asks us to experience sanctification. That is not the biblical method. If you want to have power in your life and to be blessed, go straight to the Sermon on the Mount. **Live and practice it and give yourself to it, and as you do so the promised blessings will come.** ‘Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.’ If you want to be filled, don’t seek some mystic blessing; don’t rush to meetings hoping you will get it. Face the Sermon on the Mount and its implications and demands, see the utter need, and then you will get it. It is the direct road to blessing....

“I suggest to you it is the best means of evangelism. Surely we all ought to be urgently concerned about this at the present time. The world today is looking for, and desperately needs, true Christians. I am never tired of saying that **what the Church needs to do is not to organize evangelistic campaigns to attract outside people, but to begin herself to live the Christian life.** If she did that, men and women would be crowding into our buildings. They would say, ‘What is the secret of this?’ “ [Lloyd-Jones, *Sermon on Mount*]

Blessed are the poor in spirit ...

Matt 5:3 *Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

Lk 6:20b *Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God.*

“All these Beatitudes when taken together ... present a composite picture, so that each one of them show a part of the Christian character. **The Christian is a difficult man to describe, and undoubtedly the best way of doing so is to depict the various qualities that he manifests....** [This Beatitude] is properly first since this is the key of all that follows. No one is in the kingdom of heaven who is not poor in spirit. This denotes an emptying while what follows denotes a filling or fulness, which is only logical. God cannot fill something until it is first emptied; and God cannot use nor bless a believer until he is first emptied of his old self.... [The Beatitudes] remind us of certain primary, central truths about the whole Christian position.... **The Christian gospel places all its primary emphasis upon being, rather than doing. The gospel puts a greater weight upon our attitude than upon our actions....** Its main stress is on what you and I essentially are rather than on what we do. Throughout the Sermon our Lord is concerned about disposition. Later, He is going to talk about actions; but before He does that He describes character and disposition.... **A Christian is something before he does anything; and we have to be Christian before we can act as Christians.... We are not meant to control our Christianity; our Christianity is rather meant to control us....** He is in control, not I; so that I must not think of myself as a natural man who is controlling his attitude and trying to be Christian in various ways. No, **His Spirit controls me at the very center of my life, controls the very spring of my being, the source of my every activity.** You cannot read these Beatitudes without coming to that conclusion. The Christian faith is not something on the surface of a man’s life, it is not merely a kind of coating or veneer. No, it is something that has been happening in the very center of his personality....

“What our Lord is concerned about here is the spirit; **it is a poverty of spirit.** In other words, **it is ultimately a man’s attitude towards himself....** This is something which is not only not admired by the world; it is despised by it. You will never find a greater antithesis to the worldly spirit and outlook than that which you find in this verse. What emphasis the world places on its belief in self-reliance, self-confidence and self-expression! Look at its literature. If you want to get on in this world, it says, believe in yourself.... That is the whole principle on which life is run at the present time — express yourself, believe in yourself, realize the powers that are innate in yourself and let the whole world see and know them.... But neither is this Beatitude popular in the Church today.... There is nothing so unchristian in the church today as this foolish talk about ‘personality’ [cp our worship of radio pastors and speakers, etc.] ... You read the old records of the activities of God’s greatest workers and you observe how self-effacing they were. But today we are experiencing something that is almost a complete reversal of this. Advertisements and photographs are being put into the foreground....

“To be ‘poor in spirit’ does not mean to be diffident or nervous, nor does it mean that we should be retiring, weak or lacking in courage.... [Neither does this imply a false humility, a hypocritical self-abasement. When arriving once at a certain town to hold services I was met at the station by a man that talked to me like this:] ‘I am a deacon in the church where you are preaching tomorrow. You know, I am a mere nobody, a very unimportant man, really. I do not count; I am not a great man in the Church; I am just one of those men who carry the bag for the minister.’ He was anxious that I should know what a humble man he was, how ‘poor in spirit’. **Yet by his anxiety to make it known he was denying the very thing he was trying to establish.... To be ‘poor in spirit’ is not a matter of the suppression of personality....** It does not mean that you have to change your name and falsely crucify yourself or assume another character and personality in life.... You will find that there is always this subtle temptation to think that the only man who is truly ‘poor in spirit’ is the man who makes a great sacrifice, or, after the manner of monks, retires out of life and its difficulties and responsibilities. But that is not the biblical way....

“[This,] then, is what is meant by being ‘poor in spirit’. **It means a complete absence of pride, a complete absence of self-assurance and of self-reliance. It means a consciousness that we are nothing in the presence of God. It is nothing, then, that we can produce; it is nothing that we can do in ourselves. It is just this tremendous awareness of our utter nothingness as we come face to face with God....** It is to feel that we are nothing, and that we have nothing, and that we look to God in utter submission to Him and in utter dependence upon Him and His grace and mercy. It is to experience to some extent what Isaiah experienced when, having seen the vision, he said, ‘Woe is me! I am a man of unclean lips’ — that is ‘poverty of spirit’....

“How does one therefore become ‘poor in spirit’? The answer is that you do not look at yourself or begin by trying to do things to yourself.... The way to become poor in spirit is to look at God. Read His Word, look at what He expects from us, contemplate standing before Him. **It is also to look at the Lord Jesus Christ and to view Him as we see Him in the Gospels....** Look at Him; and the more we look at Him, the more hopeless shall we feel by ourselves, and in and of ourselves, and the more shall we become ‘poor in spirit’. “ [Lloyd-Jones, *Sermon*]

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Some confuse the teaching of this Beatitude since Luke speaks of the blessedness of the poor. The best solution to this is to **allow Matthew’s account interpret Luke’s account** because there are obvious problems if we make Luke’s account refer strictly to those destitute of this world’s goods. While the poor and those of the “lower strata” (as our culture may view it) are often chosen to be rich in faith (cp 1 Cor 1:26-29), **it would be incorrect to say the poor are God’s people while the rich are not.** Consider Judas Iscariot: as a disciple he had forsaken the world in the same sense as the other disciples yet obviously never was part of the “blessed” of the beatitudes. I can think of many “poor” who are the epitome of wickedness. Consider the rich: money may definitely prove to be an obstacle to faith and is shown as such in and out of scripture. Yet Abraham, Job, David were all rich. While Solomon ended badly, most consider him to be saved and as such a partaker of at least a degree of the blessedness of God while the richest man on earth. “Physical poverty is not necessarily a blessing (Prov 30:9b; Isa 8:21). But Jesus was able to say, ‘Blessed are you poor,’ because, considered as a group, these men, poor with respect to earthly goods, had been made aware of their spiritual poverty and of their riches in God. ‘Though I am poor and needy, The Lord thinks of me; My Help and my Deliverer art thou, O my God, delay not. (Ps 40:17)” [Hendriksen, *Luke*] “The Bible nowhere teaches that poverty as such is a good thing. The poor man is no nearer to the kingdom of heaven than the rich man, speaking of them as natural men. There is no merit or advantage in being poor. Poverty does not guarantee spirituality.... If you take the whole paragraph in Luke 6, I think it becomes perfectly clear that our Lord was even there speaking of ‘poor’ as meaning ‘not being possessed by the worldly spirit’, poor in the sense that you do not rely upon riches. That is the thing that is condemned, this reliance on riches and such. And obviously there are many poor people who rely upon riches exactly as many rich people do.” [Lloyd-Jones, *Sermon*] We find this teaching among Catholicism and is part of the basis for becoming monks, rejecting material goods, taking a vow of poverty, etc.

Blessed are they that mourn ...

Matt 5:4 *Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.* Lk 6:21b *Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh.*

“The philosophy of the world is, Forget your troubles, turn your back upon them, do everything you can not to face them. Things are bad enough as they are without your going to look for troubles, says the world; therefore be as happy as you can.... But the gospel says, ‘Happy are they that mourn’.... Once more **it is clear that we have here something which is entirely spiritual in its meaning.** Our Lord did not say that those who mourn in the natural sense are happy, meaning by ‘mourning’, the sorrow experienced because of the death of someone. No, this is a spiritual mourning....

“This is not as evident in the Church today as it once was. The explanation of this is fairly obvious. **It is partly a reaction against the kind of false puritanism** (I say *false* puritanism, not puritanism) which, let us be frank, was too much in evidence towards the end of the last century and the beginning of the present one. It often manifested itself in an assumed piety. **It was not natural; it did not come from within, but people assumed a pious appearance. It almost gave the impression that to be religious was to be miserable; it turned its back upon many things that are perfectly natural and legitimate.** In that way a picture was given of the Christian man that was not attractive, and, I think, there has been a violent reaction against it, a reaction so violent that it has gone to the other extreme. But I also think that another explanation of this is the idea which has gained

currency that if we as Christians are to attract those who are not Christian we must deliberately affect an appearance of brightness and joviality. Thus many try to assume a kind of joy and happiness which is not something that rises from within, but is something which is put on.... I cannot help feeling that **the final explanation of the state of the Church today is a defective sense of sin and a defective doctrine of sin. Coupled with that is a failure to understand the true nature of Christian joy.** That is the double failure. There is not the real, deep conviction of sin as was once the case; and on the other hand there is this superficial conception of joy and happiness which is very different indeed from that which we find in the New Testament. Thus the defective doctrine of sin and the shallow idea of joy, working together, of necessity produce a superficial kind of person and a very inadequate kind of Christian life.... So many people spend all their lives in trying to find this Christian joy. They say they would give the whole world if they could only find it, or could be like some other person who has it. Well, I suggest that in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred this is the explanation. **They have failed to see that they must be convicted of sin before they can ever experience joy. They do not like the doctrine of sin. They dislike it intensely and they object to its being preached. They want joy apart from the conviction of sin. But that is impossible; it can never be obtained. Those who are going to be converted and who wish to be truly happy and blessed are those who first of all mourn. Conviction is an essential preliminary to true conversion....**

“To ‘mourn’ is something that follows of necessity from being ‘poor in spirit’. It is quite inevitable. **As I confront God and His holiness, and contemplate the life that I am meant to live, I see myself, my utter helplessness and hopelessness. I discover my quality of spirit and immediately that makes me mourn. I must mourn about the fact that I am like that. But obviously it does not stop there. A man who truly faces himself, and examines himself and his life, is a man who must of necessity mourn for his sins also, for the things he does....** He must become aware of these evil principles that are within him. He must ask himself, ‘What is it in me that makes me behave like that? Why should I be irritable? Why should I be bad tempered? Why am I not able to control myself? Why do I harbour that unkind, jealous and envious thought? What is it in me?’ And he discovers this war in his members, and he hates it and mourns because of it. It is quite inevitable.... **The man who is truly Christian is a man who mourns also because of the sins of others.** He does not stop at himself. He sees the same thing in others. He is concerned about the state of society, and the state of the world, and as he reads his newspaper he does not stop at what he sees or simply express disgust at it. He mourns because of it, because men can so spend their life in this world....

“‘Blessed are they that mourn’, He says, ‘for they shall be comforted.’ **The man who mourns is really happy, says Christ; that is the paradox.** In what respect is he happy? Well, he becomes happy in a personal sense. **The man who truly mourns because of his sinful state and condition is a man who is going to repent; he is, indeed, actually repenting already. And the man who truly repents as the result of the work of the Holy Spirit upon him is a man who is certain to be led to the Lord Jesus Christ.** Having seen his utter sinfulness and hopelessness, he looks for a Saviour and he finds Him in Christ.... This is not only true at conversion; **it is something that continues to be true about the Christian. He finds himself guilty of sin, and at first it casts him down and makes him mourn. But that in turn drives him back to Christ; and the moment he goes back to Christ, his peace and happiness return and he is comforted....** But there is not only this immediate comfort offered to the Christian. There is another comfort, that which we may call ‘the blessed hope’ ... As the Christian looks at the world, and even as he looks at himself, he is unhappy. He groans in spirit; he knows something of the burden of sin as seen in the world which was felt by the apostles and the Lord Himself. But he is immediately comforted. He knows there is a glory coming; he knows that a day will dawn when Christ will return and sin will be banished from the earth. There will be ‘new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness’. O blessed hope! ‘Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted’ **If we are Christian, we do know the joy of sins forgiven and the knowledge of it; the joy of reconciliation; the joy of knowing that God takes us back when we have fallen away from Him; the joy and contemplation of the glory that is set before us; the joy that comes from anticipation of the eternal state.**

Blessed are the meek ...

Matt 5:5 *Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.* — “The world thinks in terms of strength and power, of ability, self-assurance and aggressiveness. That is the world’s idea of conquest and possession. The more you assert yourself and express yourself, the more you organize and manifest your powers and ability, the more likely you are to succeed and get on. But here comes this astounding statement, ‘Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth’ — and they alone. Once more we are reminded at the very beginning that the Christian is altogether different than the world....

“This statement must have come as **a great shock to the Jews of our Lord’s day ...** They had ideas of the kingdom which were not only materialistic but military also, and to them the Messiah was One who was going to lead them to victory. So they were thinking in terms of conquest and fighting in the material sense... But further, this Beatitude comes in the form of **a very striking contrast to much thinking within the Christian Church at the present time.** For is there not a rather pathetic tendency to think in terms of fighting the world, of sin, and the things that are opposed to Christ, by means of great organizations? Am I wrong when I suggest that the controlling and prevailing thought of the Christian Church throughout the world seems to be the very opposite of what is indicated in this text? ... [They say,] ‘We must all get together, we must have one huge organization to face that organized enemy. Then we shall make an impact, and then we shall conquer.’ ...

“The first Beatitude asks us to realize our own weakness and our own inability.... That in turn leads to that second state in which, realizing our own sinfulness and our own true nature, realizing that we are so helpless because of the indwelling of sin within us, and seeing the sin even in our best actions, thoughts and desires, we mourn and we cry out with the great apostle, ‘O wretched man

that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?’ But here is something which is still more searching — ‘Blessed are the meek’. Now why is this? Because here we are reaching a point at which we begin to be concerned about other people. Let me put it like this. **I can see my own utter nothingness and helplessness face to face with the demands of the gospel and the law of God. I am aware, when I am honest with myself, of the sin and the evil that are within me, and that drag me down. And I am ready to face both these things. But how much more difficult it is to allow other people to say things like that about me! I instinctively resent it. We all of us prefer to condemn ourselves than to allow somebody else to condemn us.** I say of myself that I am a sinner, but instinctively I do not like anybody else to say I am a sinner. That is the principle that is introduced at this point. So far, I myself have been looking at myself. Now other people are looking at me, and I am in a relationship to them, and they are doing certain things to me. How do I react to that? That is the matter which is dealt with at this point. I think you will agree that this is more humbling and more humiliating than everything that has gone before....

“What is meekness? ... First let us notice again that it is not a natural quality. It is not a matter of a natural disposition because all Christians are meant to be like this.... It is something produced by the Spirit of God.... **Meekness does not mean indolence** [i.e., a disposition to avoid exertion].... **Nor does it mean flabbiness** — I use the term advisedly. There are people who are easy-going, and you tend to say how meek they are. But it is not meekness; it is flabbiness. **Nor does it mean niceness.** There are people who seem to be born naturally nice.... **Still less does it mean a spirit of compromise or ‘peace at any price’.** How often are these things mistaken. How often is the man regarded as meek who says, ‘Anything rather than have a disagreement’ No, no, it is not that. **Meekness is compatible with great strength. Meekness is compatible with great authority and power.... [Abraham, Moses, David, Daniel, Christ Himself] have been great defenders of the truth. The meek man is one who may so believe in standing for the truth that he will die for it if necessary. The martyrs were meek, but they were never weak; strong men, yet meek men.**

“What then is meekness? ... **Meekness is essentially a true view of oneself, expressing itself in attitude and conduct with respect to others. It is therefore two things. It is my attitude towards myself; and it is an expression of that in my relationship to others....** A man can never be meek unless he is poor in spirit. A man can never be meek unless he has seen himself as a vile sinner. These other things must come first. But when I have that true view of myself in terms of poverty of spirit, and mourning because of my sinfulness, I am led on to see that there must be an absence of pride.... **It is a negation of the popular psychology of the day which says ‘assert yourself’, ‘express your personality’.** The man who is meek does not want to do so; he is so ashamed of it. **The meek man likewise does not demand anything for himself. He does not take all his rights as claims.... The man who is meek is not even sensitive about himself.** He is not always watching himself and his own interests. He is not always on the defensive.... **The man who is truly meek is the one who is amazed that God and man can think of him as well as they do and treat him as well as they do....**

“It must then go on to express itself in our whole demeanor and in our behavior with respect to others.... A person who is of the type that I have been describing must of necessity be mild a complete absence of the spirit of retaliation patient and long-suffering ready to listen and to learn a teachable spirit We are to leave everything — ourselves, our rights, our cause, our whole future — in the hands of God, and especially so if we feel we are suffering unjustly.

“Now notice what happens to the man who is like this. ‘Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth.’ ... The meek already inherit the earth in this life, in this way. **A man who is truly meek is a man who is always satisfied, he is a man who is content....** But obviously it has a **future reference also.** ‘Do ye not know that the saint shall judge the world?’ You are going to judge the world, you are going to judge angels. You will then have inherited the earth.” [Lloyd-Jones, *Sermon*]

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Meek: “those who are of a quiet, gentle spirit, in opposition to the proud and supercilious Scribes and Pharisees and their disciples. We have a compound word in English, which once fully expressed the meaning of the original, viz. gentleman; but it has now almost wholly lost its original signification.” [Clarke, *Commentary*] “Its primary meaning is *mild, gentle*. It was applied to inanimate things, as light, wind, sound, sickness. It was used of a horse; *gentle*.... Pre-Christian meanings of the word exhibit two general characteristics: (1) they express *outward conduct* merely, (2) they contemplate relations to *men only*. **The Christian word, on the contrary, describes an inward quality, and that as related primarily to God....** The meekness of the Christian springs from a sense of the inferiority of the creature to the Creator, and especially of the *sinful* creature to the *holy* God.... As toward God, therefore, meekness accepts his dealings without murmur or resistance as absolutely good and wise. As toward man, it accepts opposition, insult, and provocation, as God’s permitted ministers of a chastening demanded by the infirmity and corruption of sin; while, under this sense of his own sinfulness, the meek bears patiently ‘the contradiction of sinners against himself,’ forgiving and restoring the erring in a spirit of meekness, considering himself, lest he also be tempted (Gal 6:1-5).” [Vincent, *Word Studies*]

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness ...

Matt 5:6 ***Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.***

Lk 6:21a ***Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled.***

“In this verse we have one of the most notable statements of the Christian gospel and everything that it has to give us.... **It is very doctrinal; it emphasizes one of the most fundamental doctrines of the gospel, namely, that our salvation is entirely of grace**

or by grace, that it is entirely the free gift of God....

“What does it mean? Let me put it negatively like this. **We are not to hunger and thirst after blessedness; we are not to hunger and thirst after happiness.** But that is what most people are doing. We put happiness and blessedness as the one thing that we desire, and thus we always miss it; it always eludes us. **According to the Scriptures happiness is never something that should be sought directly; it is always something that results from seeking something else.... It does not mean what is talked about so much at the present time, a sort of general righteousness or morality between nations....**

“The very context in which we find it (and especially its relation to the three Beatitudes that have gone before) insists that righteousness here includes not only justification but sanctification also. In other words, **the desire for righteousness, the act of hungering and thirsting for it, means ultimately the desire to be free from sin in all its forms and in its every manifestation....** It means a desire to be free from sin because sin separates us from God. Therefore, positively, **it means a desire to be right with God;** and that, after all, is the fundamental thing.... **It also means of necessity a desire to be free from the power from sin....** But it goes further still. **It means a desire to be free from the very desires of sin,** because we find that the man who truly examines himself in the light of the Scriptures not only discovers that he is in the bondage of sin; still more horrible is the fact that he likes it, that he wants it. Even after he has seen it is wrong, he still wants it.... **To hunger and thirst after righteousness is nothing but the longing to be positively holy...** The man who hungers and thirsts after righteousness is the man who wants to exemplify the Beatitudes in his daily life. He is a man who wants to show the fruit of the Spirit in his every action and in the whole of his life and activity....

“What does it mean to ‘hunger and thirst’? Obviously it does not mean that we feel we can attain unto this righteousness by our own efforts and endeavor. That is the worldly view of righteousness which concentrates on man himself and leads to the individual pride of the Pharisee ... **It means a consciousness of our need, of our deep need.** I go further, means a consciousness of our desperate need; it means a deep consciousness of our great need even to the point of pain. **It means something that keeps on until it is satisfied....** To hunger and thirst is to be like a man who wants a position. **He is restless, he cannot keep still; he is working and plodding; he thinks about it, and dreams about it; his ambition is the controlling passion of his life....**

“Let us look briefly at what is promised to the people who are like that... ‘they shall be filled’, they shall be given what they desire. The whole gospel is there. That is where the gospel of grace comes in; **it is entirely the gift of God. You will never fill yourself with righteousness, you will never find blessedness apart from Him. To obtain this, ‘all the fitness He requireth, is to see your need of Him’, nothing more....**

“How does it happen? ... **It happens immediately,** thank God. ‘They shall be filled’ at once, in this way — that immediately we desire this truly, we are justified by Christ and His righteousness and the barrier of sin and guilt between us and God is removed.... But **it is also a continuing process.** By this I mean that the Holy Spirit ... begins within us His great work of delivering us from the power of sin and from the pollution of sin. We have to hunger and thirst for this deliverance ... **Finally, this promise is fulfilled perfectly and absolutely in eternity.** There is a day coming when all who are in Christ and belong to Him shall stand in the presence of God, faultless, blameless, without spot or wrinkle.” [Lloyd-Jones, *Sermon*]

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Again, as Luke stated “blessed are you poor” without adding “in spirit” to explain himself, here he states “blessed are you hungry” without adding the hunger was for righteousness. As in the previous beatitude, the spiritual application is the only one that makes complete sense.

Shall be filled: “A very strong and graphic word, originally applied to the feeding and fattening of animals in a stall. In Rev 19:21, it is used of the filling of the birds with the flesh of God’s enemies. Also of the multitudes fed with the loaves and fishes (Matt 14:20; Mk 8:8; Lk 9:17). It is manifestly appropriate here as expressing the *complete satisfaction* of spiritual hunger and thirst.” [Vincent, *Word Studies*]

“They are not full of their own righteousness, but long for more and more of that which comes from above. They pine to be right themselves both with God and man, and they long to see righteousness have the upper hand all the world over. Such is their longing for goodness, that it would seem as if both the appetites of ‘hunger and thirst’ were concentrated in their one passion for righteousness. Where God works such an insatiable desire, we may be quite sure that he will satisfy it; yea, fill it to the brim. In contemplating the righteousness of God, the righteousness of Christ, and the victory of righteousness in the latter days, we are more than filled. In the world to come the satisfaction of the ‘man of desires’ will be complete Nothing here below can fill an immortal soul; and since it is written, ‘*They shall be filled,*’ we look forward with joyful confidence to a heaven of holiness with which we shall be satisfied eternally.” [Spurgeon, *Matthew*]

Blessed are the merciful ...

Matt 5:7 Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. — “Here is the blessed man, here is the man to be congratulated; one who is merciful. What does our Lord mean by this? First let me just mention one negative ... **it does not mean that we should be ‘easy-going’,** as we put it. There are so many people today who think that being merciful means to be easy-going, not to see things, or if we do see them, to pretend we have not. That is a particular danger in an age like this which does not believe in law and discipline, and in a sense does not believe in justice or righteousness. The idea today is that man should be

absolutely free minded, that he has the right to do just what he likes. The merciful person, many people think, is one who smiles at transgression and law breaking.... That, obviously, is not what is meant by our Lord's description of the Christian at this point...

When we interpret this term we must remember that it is an adjective that is applied specially and specifically to God Himself. So that whatever I may decide as to the meaning of 'merciful' is true also of God, and the moment you look at it like that you see that this easy-going attitude that doesn't care about breaking the law is unthinkable when we are talking about God. God is merciful; but God is righteous, God is holy, God is just: and whatever our interpretation of merciful may be it must include all that....

"What is mercy? I think perhaps the best way of approaching it is to compare it with grace.... The best definition of the two that I have ever encountered is this: **'Grace is especially associated with men in their sins; mercy is especially associated with men in their misery.'** In other words, while grace looks down upon sin as a whole, mercy looks especially upon the miserable consequences of sin. So that **mercy really means a sense of pity plus a desire to relieve the suffering.** His concern about the misery of men and women leads to an anxiety to relieve it.... The perfect and central example of mercy and being merciful is the sending by God of His only begotten Son into this world, and the coming of the Son. Why? Because there is mercy with Him. He saw our pitiable estate, He saw the suffering, and, in spite of the law breaking, this was the thing that moved Him to action. So the Son came and dealt with our condition....

"The real problem, however, in this Beatitude is raised by the promise, 'for they shall obtain mercy'; and perhaps there is no other Beatitude that has been misunderstood quite so frequently as this one. For there are people who would interpret it like this. They say, 'If I am merciful towards others, God will be merciful towards me; if I forgive, I shall be forgiven. The condition of my being forgiven is that I forgive'.... If that is the interpretation of this Beatitude and the parallel passages, then we must cancel the whole doctrine of grace from the New Testament.... **Our Lord is really saying that I am only truly forgiven when I am truly repentant. To be truly repentant means that I realize I deserve nothing but punishment, and that if I am forgiven it is to be attributed entirely to the love of God and to His mercy and grace, and to nothing else at all. But I go further; it means this. If I am truly repentant and realize my position before God, and realize that I am only forgiven in that way, then of necessity I shall forgive those who trespass against me....** The one condition of forgiveness is repentance. Repentance means, among other things, that I realize that I have no claim upon God at all, and that it is only His grace and mercy that forgive. And it follows as the night the day that the man who truly realizes his position face to face with God, and his relationship to God, is the man who must of necessity be merciful with respect to others." [Lloyd-Jones, *Sermon*]

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"The word mercy, among the Jews, signified two things: the pardon of injuries, and almsgiving. Our Lord undoubtedly takes it in its fullest latitude here. To know the nature of mercy, we have only to consult the grammatical meaning of the Latin word *misericordia*, from which ours is derived. It is composed of two words: *miserans* = pitying and *cor* = the heart; or *miseria cordis*, pain of heart. Mercy supposes two things: (1) a distressed object, and (2) a disposition of the heart, through which it is affected at the sight of such an object.... A merciful man enters into the miseries of his neighbor, feels for and mourns with him." [Clarke, *Commentary*]

Blessed are the pure in heart ...

Matt 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. — "The first three Beatitudes were concerned with our consciousness of need — poor in spirit, mourning because of our sinfulness, meek as the result of a true understanding of the nature of self and its great ego-centricity, that terrible thing that has ruined the whole of life. These three emphasize the vital importance of a deep awareness of need. Then comes the great statement of satisfaction of the need, God's provision for it, ... Having realized the need, we hunger and thirst, and then God comes with His wondrous answer that we shall be filled, fully satisfied. From there on we are looking at the result of that satisfaction, the result of being filled. We become merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers. After that there is the outcome of all this, 'persecuted for righteousness' sake'....

" 'Blessed are the pure in heart.' That is what Christianity is about, that is its message. Perhaps the best way of considering it is to take the various terms and to examine them one by one. We begin of course with 'heart'.... **The gospel of Jesus Christ is concerned about the heart: all its emphasis is upon the heart....** Looked at externally, [the Pharisees] were without spot. But their inward parts were full of ravening and wickedness. They were most concerned about the external injunctions of religion; but they forgot the weightier matters of the law, namely, love to God and the love of one's neighbor.... **He puts His emphasis upon the heart and not upon the head....** We have to remind ourselves again that the Christian faith is ultimately not only a matter of doctrine or understanding or of intellect, it is a condition of the heart. Let me hasten to add that the doctrine is absolutely essential; the intellectual apprehension is absolutely essential; understanding is vital. But it is not only that....

"According to the general scriptural usage of the term, **the heart means the center of the personality....** This Beatitude is not a statement to the effect that the Christian faith is something primarily emotional, not intellectual or pertaining to the will. Not at all. The heart in Scripture includes all three.... **'Blessed are the pure in heart'; blessed are those who are pure, not merely on the surface but in the center of their being and at the source of their every activity.** It is as deep as that.... It emphasizes that **the heart is always the seat of all our troubles....** The terrible tragic fallacy of the last hundred years has been to think that all man's troubles are due to his environment, and that to change the man you have nothing to do but to change his environment....

“What does our Lord mean by ‘pure in heart’? ... One meaning is that it is without hypocrisy; it means, if you like, ‘single’... ‘without folds’, it is open, nothing hidden. You can describe it as sincerity; it means single-minded, or single-eyed devotion. One of the best definitions of purity is given in Ps 86:11, ‘Unite my heart to fear Thy name’. The trouble with us is our divided heart. Is not that my whole problem face to face with God? One part of me wants to know God and worship God and please God; but another part wants something else.... It also obviously carries the further meaning of ‘cleansed’, ‘without defilement’.... Analyzing it a little we can say that it means we have an undivided love which regards God as our highest good, and which is concerned only about loving God.... It means that we should live to the glory of God in every respect, and that should be the supreme desire of our life. It means that we desire God, that we desire to know Him, that we desire to love Him and to serve Him. And our Lord states here that only those who are like that shall see God.

“What is meant by saying we shall ‘see’ God? ... Is it objective and visible, or is it spiritual? Now it seems to me that, ultimately, that is a question that cannot be answered.... I suggest therefore that, as with the other Beatitudes, the promise is partly fulfilled here and now. In a sense there is a vision of God even while we are in this world. Christian people can see God in a sense that nobody else can.... But of course that is a mere nothing as compared with what is yet to be. ‘Now we see through a glass, darkly.’ We see in a way we had not seen before, but it is all still much of an enigma. But then we shall see ‘face to face’. ‘Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.’ “ [Lloyd-Jones, *Sermon*]

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“A principal part of the Jewish religion consisted in outward washings and cleansings: on this ground they expected to see God, to enjoy eternal glory: but Christ here shows that a purification of the heart, from all vile affections and desires, is essentially requisite in order to enter into the kingdom of God. He whose soul is not delivered from all sin, through the blood of the covenant, can have no Scriptural hope of ever being with God.... *Shall see God* — This is a Hebraism, which signifies, possess God, enjoy His felicity: as seeing a thing, was used among the Hebrews for possessing it. See Ps 16:10. Thou wilt not suffer thy Holy One to see corruption, i.e. He shall not be corrupted. So Jn 3:3: Except a man be born again, he cannot SEE the kingdom of God, i.e. he cannot enjoy it. So Jn 3:16. He that believeth not the Son, shall not SEE life, i. e shall not be put in possession of eternal glory.... Probably our Lord alludes to the advantages those had, who were legally pure, of entering into the sanctuary, into the presence of God, while those who had contracted any legal defilement were excluded from it. This also was obviously typical.” [Clarke, *Commentary*]

Blessed are the peacemakers ...

***Matt 5:9 Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.* — “This statement must have come as a very great shock to the Jews. They had the idea that the coming kingdom of the Messiah was to be a military one, a national, materialistic one.... But here our blessed Lord says to them, in effect, ‘No, no, you do not understand. Blessed are the peacemakers. My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, then My citizens would be fighting this sort of thing. But it is not that; you are entirely wrong in your whole outlook upon it’..... Look at it in this way. **Why is there so much trouble and difficulty in maintaining peace in the world? ... Why did the League of Nations fail? Why does the United Nations Organization seem to be failing? What is the matter? ... The trouble, according to the Scripture, is in the heart of man, and until the heart of man is changed, you will never solve his problem** by trying to make manipulations on the surface....**

“What then is the peacemaker? Obviously again, it is not a matter of natural disposition. It does not mean an easy-going person, it does not mean your ‘peace at any price’ person.... What is it, then, to be a peacemaker? He is one about whom we can say two main things. **Passively, we can say that he is peaceable, for a quarrelsome person cannot be a peacemaker. Then actively, this person must be pacific, he must be one who makes peace actively. He is not content to ‘let sleeping dogs lie’, he is not concerned about maintaining the *status quo*. **He desires peace, and he does all he can to produce peace and to maintain it.** He is a man who actively sees that there should be peace between man and man, and group and group, and nation and nation. Obviously, therefore, I think we can argue that **he is a man who is finally and ultimately concerned about the fact that all men should be at peace with God. There, essentially, is the peacemaker ... one who not only does not make trouble, but who goes out of his way to produce peace.****

“What does this involve and imply? ... It implies the necessity of an entirely new outlook. It must involve a new nature.... It is only the man of a pure heart who can be a peacemaker because, you remember, we saw that the person who did not have a pure heart, who had a heart which was filled with envy, jealousy and all such horrible things, could never be a peacemaker.... **Before one can be a peacemaker one really must be entirely delivered from self, from self-interest, from self-concern. Before you can be a peacemaker you really must be entirely forgetful of self because as long as you are thinking about yourself, and shielding yourself, you cannot be doing the work properly.... You must not be sensitive, you must not be touchy, you must not be on the defensive.... The peacemaker is one who is not always looking at everything in terms of the effect it has upon himself....**

“It also means an entirely new view of the world. The peacemaker has only one concern, and it is the glory of God amongst men.... He is a man who is ready to humble himself, and he is ready to do anything and everything in order that the glory of God may be promoted. He so desires this that he is prepared to suffer in order to bring it to pass. He is even prepared to suffer wrong and injustice in order that peace may be produced and God’s glory manifested. He is finished

with himself and with self-interest and self-concern....

“That is the theory. **But what about the practice?** ... First and foremost **it means that you learn not to speak.... Do not repeat things when you know they are going to do harm....** The natural man is so strong in us. You often hear Christian people say, ‘I must express my mind’. What if everybody were like that! No, you must not excuse yourself or talk in terms of what you are by nature.... **We should always view any and every situation in the light of the gospel.** When you face a situation that tends to lead to trouble, not only must you not speak, you must think.... **You must now become positive and go out of your way to look for means and methods of making peace.** You remember that mighty word, ‘If thine enemy hunger, feed him’.... It may mean sometimes that you have to humble yourself and approach the other person. You have to take the initiative in speaking to him, perhaps apologizing to him, trying to be friendly, doing everything you can to produce peace.... **We should be endeavoring to diffuse peace wherever we are. We do this by being selfless, by being lovable, by being approachable and by not standing on our dignity....**

“The benediction pronounced on such people is that they ‘shall be called the children of God’. Called means ‘owned’. ‘Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be ‘owned’ as the children of God’.... God is going to own them as His children. It means that **the peacemaker is a child of God and that he is like his Father.... What is the meaning of the advent? Why did the Son of God ever come into the world? Because God, though He is holy and just and righteous and absolute in all His qualities, is a God of peace.** That is why He sent His Son. Where did war come from? From man, from sin, from Satan. Discord was brought into the world in that way. But this blessed God of peace has not, I say it with reverence, ‘stood upon His dignity’; **He has come, He has done something. God has made peace. He has humbled Himself in His Son to produce it.** That is why peacemakers are ‘children of God’. What they do is to repeat what God has done.... **He did not clutch at His rights; He did not hold on to the prerogative of deity and of eternity. He humbled Himself;** He came in the likeness of a man. He humbled Himself even to the death of the cross. Why? He was not thinking of Himself at all. ‘Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.’ ‘Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.’ That is the New Testament teaching. **You finish with self, and then you begin to follow Jesus Christ.”** [Lloyd-Jones, *Sermon*]

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A word concerning a typical interpretation of this beatitude among many of our Baptist brethren: **soul winning is not the point of emphasis** of this verse. While the ultimate problem with man is his heart and “winning a soul” makes peace between man and God, that is not the context in which this is given. Christ is speaking of the believer’s general demeanor, his attitude, his lifestyle, his interaction with others as we live for Him. **The whole emphasis behind all the Beatitudes is what we are to be versus what we are to do!** Perhaps unconsciously, some lower the standards of this verse when they narrow the application to witnessing alone (a believer may attend the weekly visitation at their church and may daily “witness” yet still have a proud self-centered perspective towards how others treat him). Therefore while soul winning may play a part in the whole picture, the emphasis is much deeper than that alone. The believer is to react to this internally rather than comply by a mere external act.

The peacemakers : “Should be held to its literal meaning, peace-makers; not as Wycliffe, *peaceable men*. The *founders* and *promoters* or peace are meant; who not only *keep* the peace, but seek to bring men into harmony with each other. Tyndale renders, the *maintainers of peace.*” [Vincent, *Word Studies*]

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*When we are first confronted with the Beatitudes our immediate reaction is to “that is not me!” Of course we fall short of their standards — but how are we to react? We can lower these teachings to mean something other than what the Lord meant and thereby satisfy ourselves that we are meeting their demands naturally (the Pharisee). Or we can shuffle our feet in “humility” and say “that’s not me. I can’t live like that” which would be the Christian way to cover our rebellion to the demands of Christ. Or we can face the reality of what the Lord says and confess, “No, Lord, that is not me! I cannot live such a life. Help me, break me, use me, live Your life through me. Make my heart pliable to the way you want me to be. **Make me a Beatitude Christian!**”*