

A Christian manifesto

30 March 2025

Matthew 5:1-12

Honestly, the beatitudes were a mystery to me. Blessed are the poor?! What on earth does that mean – it is plainly wrong, if you ask me! Blessed are those who mourn?! Have you ever experienced loss?! It's all nonsense!

Thank God for clever people who know more than me! When I read a commentary on Matthew by a scholar, it all made so much more sense. So come with me as we explore the beatitudes – they are really profound!

Firstly, let us note that Jesus goes up the mountain.

Who else went up a mountain in the Old Testament? Yes, Moses went up the mountain of God (Sinai) and, what happened? He was given the 10 commandments!

Scholars see this as presenting **Jesus as the new Moses**, the better Moses, the new lawgiver! Moses went up, received the instructions, and came down: Jesus went up, and authoritatively declared the new instructions...**Jesus was God speaking out.**

We should also understand that “Blessed” means something like “fortunate” or “happy”. And it has a sense in the Greek of **now and yet to come** – not fully here now; some of it is yet to come.

Already that makes sense when we think of “blessed are those who mourn”. Obviously you are not happy when you mourn, but longer-term, there could be something good...

Additionally, how many are there?! Some count 8, some 9 and some 10, but the Greek structure suggests around 8 with an elaboration at the end. The first and eighth have “for theirs is the kingdom of heaven...”, whereas numbers 2-7 are within that, suggesting the whole lot are about life in God's kingdom, a kingdom that is yet to fully come, but overlaps with now.

So let us get into them: blessed are the **poor in spirit**, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven!

Remember, heaven is Matthew's polite way of saying God. And he means that if you are **spiritually poor, then you are in a good place.**

Are you spiritually poor?! Do you think “Lord, I am useless! I need so much help!”. Or, like the pharisees and religious leaders, do you think “I'm amazing, God is so happy with me, in fact, God is lucky to have me!”.

Jesus is **commending those who are honest** that they have a problem. He's connecting with Old Testament writings like Psalm 51:17, that says “The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit”. He's joining with the understanding that humble people being the really great ones.

Then he says “Blessed are those who **mourn**, for they shall be **comforted**”. Why in the Old Testament would you mourn? You would mourn because Israel, God’s kingdom, had done sin and been defeated. The first attempt at a kingdom of God had been defeated. And so people would mourn and look for a Messiah to come and comfort them.

So Jesus is saying Blessed are those who **mourn** because the people who are supposed to represent God are doing a terrible job. For they will find comfort in the future...

Then the **Meek Inherit the Earth**. Meek is an English translation of a Greek translation of a Hebrew word, meaning Oppressed by Evil. In other words, the meek are the powerless. Those who are not violent, who have had their **land taken from them**, who long for justice. And Jesus says “**you will inherit the land**”. This was political dynamite against those who did the stealing!

The next two beatitudes are the centre: Blessed are those who long for righteousness, and those who are merciful, for they will be filled and receive mercy.

Jesus is saying those who long for, and do, justice and truth and God’s ways, will find satisfaction. Those who seek to live in right relationships with other people, who love their neighbours, protect weak people, who are generous and kind, will find a great blessing from God when his Kingdom properly comes.

Likewise with the mercy: those who show mercy will get buckets of mercy on the great day of judgement. Matthew is consistent in his gospel: you will be treated just as you have treated other people. **That is an ominous warning!**

Then we have the **pure in heart seeing God** – those with pure, focused desire to work for good and God’s kingdom on earth. And **blessed are the peacemakers**, they are children of God: those who make peace are like divine offspring. The pure in heart desire to do God’s work on earth; and then we have God’s children, and what are they doing? **They are peacemakers!** If you want to be pure, start making peace and reconciling broken relationships.

The summary comes: Blessed are those persecuted for righteousness. For there is the Kingdom of God! It is a summary – and an encouragement. If you are being persecuted, you could be doing the things of God’s kingdom already.

So if you know you are in need of help, you are blessed! You are **poor in spirit**.

If you feel **sad and mourn** because the church does such a bad job, know your feelings align with God.

If you’ve been abused by the powerful, and lost out, then know God is going to bring a reckoning in your favour. The **meek will inherit the land!**

And if you seek to **live right and show mercy**, you are demonstrating attributes of God.

And if you seek God with a **pure heart**, and try to bring **peace** to the world, you are children of God.

This is manifesto for a new kind of world. It is the manifesto for God's kingdom. And it should be the manifesto for each and every one of us in the church.

Let's commit ourselves to these beatitudes, and make them our attitudes, and our way of life, to extend the Kingdom of God.