

January 2, 2005
A.M. Service
Patchogue Church of the Nazarene

“How To Live Under God’s Blessing in 2005” (part 2)
Matt 5:1-16 (NLT)

One day as the crowds were gathering, Jesus went up the mountainside with his disciples and sat down to teach them.

2 This is what he taught them:

3 "God blesses those who realize their need for him,
for the Kingdom of Heaven is given to them.

4 God blesses those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

5 God blesses those who are gentle and lowly,
for the whole earth will belong to them.

6 God blesses those who are hungry and thirsty for justice,
for they will receive it in full.

7 God blesses those who are merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.

8 God blesses those whose hearts are pure,
for they will see God.

9 God blesses those who work for peace,
for they will be called the children of God.

10 God blesses those who are persecuted because they live for God,
for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

11 "God blesses you when you are mocked and persecuted and lied about because you are my followers. 12 Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted, too.

13 "You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it useful again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless. 14 You are the light of the world--like a city on a mountain, glowing in the night for all to see.

15 Don't hide your light under a basket! Instead, put it on a stand and let it shine for all.

16 In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.

How can you live under God’s blessing and favor in 2005? Jesus answers that question in this Sermon. He begins the sermon with 8 Beatitudes (Billy Graham: 8 beautiful attitudes). The first 4 deals with our relationship to God (we looked at those last week) and the last 4 deals with our relationship to others. This follows how Jesus summed up all the commandments of God. He said the first command is to “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind” and that the second is to “love your neighbor as yourself”(Matt 22:37-39).

So, having looked last week at what our attitude should be toward God, today we look at what our attitude should be towards others. These are signs that we are headed in the right direction to receive God’s blessing and signs to others that Christianity works.

Most live by the philosophy, "If it feels good, do it!" In other words it is OK to do whatever you feel like doing. This way of life has not brought satisfaction to people; rather it has created a selfish, immoral people who remain empty -longing for more to life. There is a spiritual hunger for meaning and purpose, a search for an answer to the problem of guilt and shame, and a longing for belonging. We can live a lifestyle of satisfying our own selfish desires or we can live a lifestyle that brings blessing, a lifestyle of caring about others, a lifestyle taught to us by Jesus. People want to know if Christianity works and they are watching Christians in order to find the answer to that question. Jesus said you could be a sign that Christianity is real. And more than that, you can be a powerful influence on others, not because of what you own or achieve, not because of wealth or position, not because of what you have or what you do, but by who you are. This is why Jesus starts His Sermon (complete sermon is Matt 5 – 7) teaching what sort of people we ought to be.

Having looked at the Beatitudes of verses 3 –6

1. "God blesses those who realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is given to them.
2. God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
3. God blesses those who are gentle and lowly, for the whole earth will belong to them.
4. God blesses those who are hungry and thirsty for justice, for they will receive it in full.

(These are) about our relationship with God we continue by looking at the next four, which are about our relationship with others:

A policeman brought four boys before a judge.

"They were causing an awful lot of commotion at the zoo, your Honor," he said.

"Boys," said the judge sternly, "I never like to hear reports of juvenile delinquency. Now I want each of you to tell me your name and what you were doing wrong."

"My name is George," said the first boy, "and I threw peanuts into the elephant pen."

"My name is Pete," said the second boy, "and I threw peanuts into the elephant pen."

"My name is Mike," said the third boy, "and I threw peanuts into the elephant pen."

"My name is Peanuts," said the fourth boy.

That is not how to have good relationships instead:

5. Blessed are the merciful (God blesses those who are merciful)

Two things are meant by merciful. First we should be merciful to those in need (the hungry, sick, unpopular, lonely, and anyone in need). We are to have mercy, which naturally leads to practical help. Secondly, we are to be merciful to those who have wronged us. We are not to repay evil with evil, we are not to seek revenge, rather we are to forgive. Jesus says that those who show mercy will be blessed because "they will be shown mercy." This doesn't guarantee that others will show us mercy, but that God will show us mercy now and always. We can't earn God's mercy, it is not that we are making

a deal with God (I'll show mercy so God will show mercy to me), rather when we forgive others it is evidence that we have been forgiven by God. When we see how much God has forgiven us we cannot fail to be merciful to others. Having received God's mercy, we extend mercy to others. Those who have applied the first four Beatitudes realize how much they need God's mercy. As we experience God's mercy we will be humbled to give mercy and when we give mercy to others we become increasingly aware of the mercy of God. This leads to the next step; those who receive God's mercy seek to be pure in heart.

6. Blessed are the pure in heart

People look at the outward appearance but God looks at the heart. God is concerned with our inward motivation. The word "pure" means "unmixed."

People characterized as pure in heart are morally pure, honest, and sincere. They are people of integrity and single-minded commitment to God. Moral purity, honesty, and integrity come only through such a commitment. In turn, people committed totally to God will seek to be morally clean. (They are people who do not pretend to be someone they are not - actors who have different roles depending on whom they are with. Instead they seek to live totally open because they have nothing to hide. The pure in heart allow others to see them as they are. Jesus promises that God will reveal Himself to people like that.) Because of their sincere devotion to Christ, they will see God, here and now through the eyes of faith (Heb 11:27), and finally face-to-face (1 John 3:2).

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Pure also means, "cleansed." By God's mercy our hearts are purified empowering us to have pure motives in our love for others. This leads to the next step.

7. Blessed are the peacemakers (God blesses those who work for peace)

So many lack inner peace. Many ways are tried and books teach how to find peace, but true peace must begin with peace with God. Any peace that is sought, that does not begin with peace with God, will be temporary at best. This call for peace that Jesus talks about is peace at three levels: Peace with God, peace between people, and inner peace. If we work to bring the blessing of peace to others we, according to Jesus, will be called the children of God because that is what God does (brings the blessing of peace to all who believe in Jesus). To bring peace does not come easy. It did not come easy for Jesus. It was through the cross that Jesus made peace with God possible, it was through the cross that Jesus broke down dividing walls between people and through the cross He brought us inner peace. Being a peacemaker, working for peace between individuals will cause us to face difficult situations. We may need to confront others (with a pure heart, right motives and with mercy) in order to make peace. We may face persecution to bring the message of Jesus Who brings peace with God and inner peace but this is what a child of God does, they are peacemakers. Which brings us to the final step.

8. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness. God blesses those who are persecuted because they live for God.

You would think that people who live to do what is right would be popular. But Jesus warns that it will be the opposite, they will be persecuted. People who exemplify the characteristics already mentioned, who put others before themselves and who attempt to make peace, seldom receive applause and honors. Often, they will be persecuted instead. Having oriented their lives around God and his will, they stand out from the world and become marks for enemy attacks. Persecution in this world should not surprise Christians, for we are in the world but not of this world we belong to the Kingdom of God. Just be sure that any persecution is truly for righteousness' sake and not for wrongdoing on your part (1 Peter 4:12-19).

Are you willing to pay the price of being a follower of Jesus? What if it means being honest in your dealings with others, or your business dealings for example? What if you are faced with a decision between a business deal and your loyalty to Christ? A man once came to the theologian Tertullian (who died around 220 A.D.) with just such a problem. He told him of his business difficulties and ended by saying, "What can I do? I must live!" Must You?" asked Tertullian. (*Challenging Lifestyle* by Nicky Gumbel).

Jesus doesn't tell us to seek persecution but to regard it as a blessing when it does come. He says in v11 "God blesses you when you are mocked and persecuted and lied about because you are my followers. Be happy about it! Be very glad!" Then He tells us why. He give three reason: **1.** (v10) for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs and (v12) a great reward awaits you in heaven. **2.** (11) "God blesses you when you are mocked and persecuted and lied about *because you are my followers*. Be glad that you are being identified with Jesus And **3.** (v12) remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted, too. So, it is a sign that your faith is genuine since others of faith have been persecuted in the same way.

Notice that the first and last Beatitude both have the same promise: The Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. Jesus wants us to take these Beatitudes as a whole. All eight are needed. All eight make up the attitudes of those who belong to the Kingdom of Heaven. And surely you are blessed if you are a citizen of God's Kingdom. So let's summarize:

1. Realize and admit your need for God because you fall short of His standard
2. Mourn, be broken over the fact that you fail God & His standard
3. Humbly cry out for God's mercy
4. Hungry and thirsty (i.e. be desperate) for righteous, accept Christ and live for Christ
5. By being merciful to others,
6. By being motivate with a heart that's pure,
7. By working for peace
8. Expecting nothing in return, except persecution.

If you live this way God will bless you and you will be a sign to and an influence on the world around you – "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world." "Let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.