



Growth Group Questions September 10, 2023 “Gathering Around Jesus”

Context

This week we begin our fall sermon series on the Sermon on the Mount, which is found in Matthew 5-7. There is a similar - but much shorter sermon - in Luke 6:20-49, which has been called the Sermon on the Plain and includes some of the beatitudes that Matthew includes. The Sermon on the Mount describes what life and community should look like when they come under the gracious rule of God.

Jesus withdraws from the crowds that he had been attracting as he began his earthly ministry and speaks directly to the apostles, though the crowd appears to still be present (see Matthew 7:28). This sermon is not about how to become a follower of Jesus, as much as it is about the work and fruit that comes with giving your life to Jesus.

As Jesus climbs the mountaintop one can certainly envision a Moses type of experience. Moses had gone up to meet with God and then he brought God’s law back to the people who had gathered at Mt. Sinai. Jesus teaches about the life that God would have his disciples live. There is both law and grace contained in the Sermon on the Mount.

The first four beatitudes really pertain to our attitude before God. They are more about being than doing. The final four beatitudes will focus more on doing. All eight beatitudes build on the first one, which calls us to acknowledge our spiritual poverty before God. The “poor in spirit” is only found here in all of the New Testament. Jesus is “blessing” the truly inadequate. The paradox is that when you recognize you are truly empty is exactly when God will fill you and bless your life.

The promises of the beatitudes are all in the future, but the joy offered in them is possible today. For those who mourn, for those who are meek and for those who are hungering and thirsting for righteousness there is hope for today. Life on earth may not always be easy, but there is a promise of comfort and of inheriting the earth and of being filled.



Scriptures:

Deuteronomy 7:6

⁶For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.

Matthew 5:1-6

¹Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, ² and he began to teach them.

He said:

³“Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

⁵Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.

⁶Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.

Isaiah 57:15

¹⁵For this is what the high and exalted One says—
he who lives forever, whose name is holy:

“I live in a high and holy place,
but also with the one who is contrite and lowly in spirit,
to revive the spirit of the lowly
and to revive the heart of the contrite.

Revelation 21:4

⁴‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’^[a] or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

John 4:13-14

¹³Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”



Questions:

1. What are the Beatitudes and why are they so important for us as Christ followers?
2. Deuteronomy 7:6 says, “For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be His people, His treasured possession.” Why do you think Pastor Paul said it was vital that we internalize this message?
3. What does it mean to be “poor in spirit” and why is this an indispensable condition for receiving the kingdom of heaven? (Matthew 5:3)
4. Pastor Paul quoted Tim Keller as saying that we are often “middle class in spirit.” What does that mean and how does that contrast with what Jesus was saying when He said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit”?
5. People can mourn for many reasons. What are some things that cause us to mourn? What kind of mourning do you think Jesus was referring to when He said, “Blessed are those who mourn”?
6. What does Scripture tell us about how God comforts those who mourn?
7. Matthew 5:5 says, “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.” Who are the meek?
8. Consider a time when you were extremely thirsty or hungry. What emotions or desires did that stir in you? What could that experience tell you about what it means to “hunger and thirst after righteousness”? (Matthew 5:6)
9. What people in the Bible exhibited the characteristics found in the first four Beatitudes? What can we learn from them?
10. How are the first four Beatitudes connected together, and why is it important to understand this connection?

BONUS: Rewrite the first four Beatitudes in your own words, getting as close to the intended meaning as possible.

