



Growth Group Questions
September 17, 2023
“The Blessings Continue”

Context

The Beatitudes help a person to see where the life of discipleship begins. A person starts in a posture of humility by understanding that the blessing of God comes to the person who is “poor in spirit” (Matthew 5:3). God wants people to see who they are in relationship to him. As they understand their place before God, God then moves them out into the world to make a difference

The final beatitudes (7-10) move believers from their knees and into the world. These are the “help” beatitudes. Jesus begins with the idea of showing mercy. We are to be aware of others and to show mercy to those who need it. In Matthew 18 Jesus is asked by Simon Peter how often they are to forgive someone. Jesus tells a parable that warns about an unmerciful servant. The servant who was forgiven by their master, but then refused to forgive someone who owed them money. A servant who did not show mercy.

We are to strive to be pure in heart, which seems almost impossible. However, the pure in heart actually get to see God and see what God is up to. For Jewish people the heart was not just the center of emotion as we often think about. The heart included both the will and the mind. It was the essence of a person.

We are to be peacemakers. We are to bring wholeness and completeness to our world. This peace encompasses a comprehensive welfare of humankind. It is not inner tranquility or a world at peace. It is about a community that is marked by well-being in all relationships. The word has to do with a circle that embraces the whole community. To be a peacemaker also implies one who brings reconciliation. It does not mean that you are risk adverse, because you often have to take risks to bring the peace that God calls for.

Finally, the last beatitude reminds us that a life spent pursuing righteousness will bring trouble and persecution. When there are two irreconcilable positions there will be conflict and the way of Jesus does put you in conflict with the ways of the world. In verse 11 Jesus replaces the idea of righteousness with himself. He is saying that if you follow me, you should expect resistance.



Scripture:

Matthew 5:7-12

⁷Blessed are the merciful,

for they will be shown mercy.

⁸Blessed are the pure in heart,

for they will see God.

⁹Blessed are the peacemakers,

for they will be called children of God.

¹⁰Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,

for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹²Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Hosea 6:6

⁶For I desire mercy, not sacrifice,

and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.

C.S. Lewis – *The Problem of Pain*

“The real trouble is that “kindness” is a quality fatally easy to attribute to ourselves on quite inadequate grounds. Everyone feels benevolent if nothing happens to be annoying him at the moment. Thus, a man easily comes to console himself for all his other vices by a conviction that ‘his heart’s in the right place’ and ‘he wouldn’t hurt a fly,’ though in fact he has never made the slightest sacrifice for a fellow creature.”

Jeremiah 17:9

⁹The heart is deceitful above all things

and beyond cure.

Who can understand it?

Psalms 24:3-4

³Who may ascend the mountain of the LORD?

Who may stand in his holy place?

⁴The one who has clean hands and a pure heart,

who does not trust in an idol

or swear by a false god.^[a]

Joshua 8:30-31

New International Version

³⁰Then Joshua built on Mount Ebal an altar to the LORD, the God of Israel, ³¹as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded the Israelites. He built it according to what is written in the Book of the Law of Moses—an altar of uncut stones, on which no iron tool had been used. On it they offered to the LORD burnt offerings and sacrificed fellowship offerings.

1 John 4:11-12

¹¹Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹²No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.



Questions:

1. Pastor Paul began his sermon by talking about the importance of anchoring ourselves to Jesus. What does that mean to you and how do we really anchor ourselves to Jesus?
2. How do you define “mercy”? (Matthew 5:7) What do you see as the relationship between “mercy” and “kindness”?
3. Why do you think we often have difficulty showing mercy? How can we adjust our perspectives so that showing mercy becomes easier?
4. What does it mean to be “pure in heart”? (Matthew 5:8) How do we become pure in heart?
5. What Biblical characters stand out to you as having pure hearts?
6. What are the characteristics of a peacemaker? (Matthew 5:9)
7. What Bible verses help us to understand what a peacemaker is and does?
8. Why would someone who lived their life according to the Beatitudes ever be persecuted? (Matthew 5:10)
9. How do the four Beatitudes in this week’s sermon build upon those from last week’s sermon?

BONUS: Rewrite the four Beatitudes in this week’s sermon in your own words, getting as close to the intended meaning as possible.

