

Matthew 5: 1-12 The Beatitudes 18th October 2026

Prayer:

We are blessed! The Kingdom of God *is* here!

As Jesus began to preach, he called people to repent announcing that the Kingdom of God had come near. He brought God's kingdom to earth as God's son. After his baptism, then being tested in the wilderness, Jesus began his ministry on earth. Calling people to follow him, healing the sick and teaching his followers how to live. Right at the beginning of his ministry Jesus teaches of a radical upside-down Kingdom and he begins with a series of be – attitudes!

So many in the secular world don't have a good view of Christians. Sadly, we are often seen as judgmental, bigoted, hypocritical, boring, etc. But that is not the picture of a Christian living as Christ has called and taught us. What should the life of a follower of Jesus look like? What should our attitudes be like?

The *Beatitudes* give us a clear vision of what we should be like so that we may live in a blessed state because the Kingdom of Heaven is near...it is here... now.

Jesus calls us into his Kingdom.

Just prior to today's reading, we hear how Jesus had begun to preach, to heal and to call his first disciples. Jesus called people to follow him and become members of the Kingdom of God. It was a revolutionary movement bringing divine liberation from all the oppressive earthly systems. Jesus came to teach a new way of being. And his liberation wasn't about freeing the Jews from the Roman authorities, which is what many wanted. Jesus came to offer something so much more...he came to defeat the Kingdom of Satan; he came to announce God's new order.

God's Kingdom would bring an end to domination, violence, injustice, and poverty – all signs of Satan's Kingdom. And those who would benefit most would be those who suffer most under the domination system; the poor and the marginalized, social outcasts, women, and children...for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Jesus brought the Kingdom near, and we are called to live in his Kingdom, but until he returns, we will continue to live in a corrupt and broken world, we will continue to feel pain and suffering...but we can still experience his blessings now as we follow him.

His sermon on the mount teaches us how to do that. Jesus went up a mountain to teach his disciples how to live as his followers. He taught a distinctive lifestyle with radically different views and ambitions from those of the dominating world.

He begins with the beatitudes – a word that comes from the Latin, meaning blessed...something much deeper than being “happy” a word some translations use, rather it is a deep joy and blessing from God despite what may be deemed as unfortunate circumstances. N.T. Wright translates blessed as ‘wonderful news’ for the poor in spirit, wonderful news for those who mourn, are hungry etc.

First one – *Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven*. Who are the poor in spirit? Those who recognize their own spiritual poverty and helplessness, needing to completely rely on God. They are humble, able to admit their fragile nature and understand that all blessings come from God. The ‘wealthy in spirit’ are too full of themselves, with no room for God. The ‘poor in spirit’ are empty and available to be filled with abundant life from God, his grace and mercy.

Secondly, Jesus says that those who mourn will be comforted. What good news to those who have seen the depths of the world’s suffering, who grieve for loved ones and who mourn their own sinfulness...those who have broken hearts will be comforted by God. Jesus wants our hearts to be broken as God’s heart is broken. When we are moved like Jesus as he sees those who suffer in this world, we show his compassion. Remember Jesus weeping over Jerusalem, and for his friend Lazarus. We experience a depth of compassion at times when we see those who suffer from environmental disasters, wars, disease and famine in the world and are moved to pray or give and care. As we mourned recently alongside those who lost so much in Nepal, we were able to bless them as we gave out of our abundance, and God blessed us with the joy of giving. But also, we can mourn our own brokenness. God will bless us and bring us comfort as we mourn.

Blessed are the meek...God will exalt the humble, those who acknowledge *his* greatness rather than their own. What a reverse that one is from our dominating culture where some leaders and people portray themselves as ‘gods’ rather than meekly bowing before the God who created them. A well-known verse from the prophet Micah 6:8 is to *act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with your God*. The closer we walk to God the humbler we will be. I love Paul’s words in Philippians chapter 2, where we see Jesus as the greatest example of humility. Listen to Paul’s words;

³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

⁶ Who, being in very nature^[a] God,

did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;

⁷ rather, he made himself nothing

by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
⁸ And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!
⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

Blessed are the meek, who walk humbly with God, for they will inherit the earth.

I wonder do you hunger and thirst for righteousness...if you do Jesus says you will be blessed and filled! Do you have a passionate desire to be right before God and more than that, desire justice in an unjust society? What does the prophet Micah say, *act justly*. We are to live rightly and fairly in our personal lives and to speak up and fight for justice in the wider world.

And are you merciful as your Father in heaven is merciful to us? You will be blessed if you are. Again, from Micah we also heard God's command to love mercy. We can be quick to judge those whom we think are undeserving. Jesus shows us exactly what mercy looks like as he dies for each one of us, deserving or not... As we show mercy, so will we receive mercy.

And Jesus says the pure in heart are blessed for they will see God. I long to be pure in heart, I long to see God. To have those clear lenses, not to be distracted by another vision that is not worthy and pure. Turn your eyes upon Jesus so that the things of this world will grow dim in the light of his glory and grace. In our reading from 1 John today we hear that we will be purified as we put our hope in Jesus, and when he appears we will be pure just like him, but let's pray that we become closer to that purity each day.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. He's not talking about particular people who work for the UN trying to keep peace between nations...but people like you and me, who seek to have peace in our own lives by being reconciled to God through forgiveness from Jesus, and who seek to bring peace into other people's lives, showing God's great love and mercy. Peace that the world cannot give.

Then finally a beatitude we may not like to hear...Blessed are you when people persecute you because of me. Jesus went on to tell his disciples that the world will hate them and seek to harm them because they don't want to hear the truth about Jesus. People may

persecute us as we speak about Jesus and seek to live humble and pure lives, seeking justice and peace, for we will not fit into the world's dominating culture. I wonder if you have ever been persecuted for being a Christian? Many Christians around the world are persecuted daily for their faith in Jesus, many are still killed or put in prison for their faith.

According to [Open Doors' World Watch List](#), the top 10 countries where Christians face the most extreme persecution and danger are:

1. **North Korea** (Rank 1) – Where owning a Bible can lead to death.
2. **Somalia** (Rank 2) – Where following Jesus treats individuals as targets.
3. **Yemen** (Rank 3) – Where Christians are placed on extremist "wanted" lists.
4. **Sudan** (Rank 4) – Where believers are caught in violent regional crossfires.
5. **Eritrea** (Rank 5) – Where imprisonment for Christian faith is common.
6. **Syria** (Rank 6) – Where post-conflict and fragmented political powers heighten risks.
7. **Nigeria** (Rank 7) – Where the highest number of faith-related killings occur (accounting for the vast majority of global Christian deaths).
8. **Pakistan** (Rank 8) – Where Christians frequently face systemic social and legal discrimination.
9. **Libya** (Rank 9) – Where evangelism is treated as a severe or capital offense.
10. **Iran** (Rank 10) – Where practicing Christianity is prosecuted as a "crime against national security".

It is becoming harder to share our faith in Australia, and there are places like public schools where we are told we can't share our faith, but generally we might just be ridiculed or derided, but if we are persecuted for Jesus' sake, then he says we will be blessed for the kingdom of heaven is ours, therefore we should rejoice and be glad. This can be hard to do when in the middle of persecution. I always remember Paul and Silas singing while in chains in prison. What a witness.

The Kingdom of heaven that Jesus proclaimed is so different to the Kingdom of this world where we are encouraged to pursue wealth, power, prestige.

Do we clearly hear Jesus' teaching, or do we mishear or misinterpret his meaning? Some of you may remember a Monty Python scene in the Life of Brian, where the crowd are listening to Jesus' sermon on the mount and the ones up the back couldn't hear so well. What did they hear - blessed are the cheesemakers, blessed are the Greek! We need to listen carefully to Jesus so we can live as he calls us to. As Christians we are called to live our lives counter culturally. We are to live out God's new order of equality, humility, servanthood, compassion, mercy, non-violence, purity, and peace.

That is what will make us more like Jesus. So is our desire to live a radically different life portraying the characteristics that Jesus says will be blessed? If so then we will be blessed with deep joy, comfort, mercy, fulfilment, being able to see God and be called his children, inheriting his Kingdom that will never end.

I believe if we truly live this radical lifestyle then we will be attractive to those who are seeking the truth, who acknowledge the emptiness they may feel in this life. Large crowds followed Jesus because they were hungry for something more than what their life offered and were attracted to the light and truth he taught and portrayed. He taught them, he fed them, he healed them, he died for them, he freed them.

I pray that we can keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. To live our lives as he has taught us, to shine his light that others will be drawn to follow him as we invite them to come and see Jesus too. My vision is that we will see God's Kingdom growing, that we would see this church and all churches full of people of all generations from our community coming to know Jesus that they too may be blessed.

Let's pray...Lord Jesus thank you for your teaching and for the example of your own life you have given us to imitate. Thank you for your love and blessings on those who the world may judge or consider poor. As you bless us, may we bring your blessings to this world. May we proclaim your Kingdom and glorify your name as we live for you in our communities. In Jesus name I pray. Amen.