

# Matthew 5:1-12

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Date: 11 February 2018

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[ 0 : 00 ] Matthew 5, 1-12. Sometimes, you know, there's things in life, aren't there, that just, they're really hard to get going, they're really hard to get into.

A little bit like exercise. You know, don't you, there's certain times you're supposed to do exercise. And you know the time when you're supposed to start doing it. It's just so hard to get in the gym or to get out for a run or to do those things.

It's a really difficult thing to start. And you just need to get on with it and do it and start it. And it's a bit like that when you come to a two-part sermon.

You just have to get on with it. And you just have to get into it again. And last week, you'll know if you were here, we dealt with the first half of the Beatitudes. Beatitudes. And we mentioned several things about the Beatitudes. We said you've got to take them as a whole. Don't divide them up. Don't carve them up individually and think, well, I'm not bad at being merciful, but I'm not so pure in heart. We're meant to take them together. They are a total description of the disciple of Jesus.

[ 1 : 09 ] And you need to remember, secondly, the audience to whom they were spoken to. They were spoken to the disciples of Jesus. In other words, they're not for every Tom, Dick and Harry out there. They are not spoken to the pagan world at large.

They're not a manifesto for a government. They are spoken to the followers of Jesus Christ. And they are descriptive of God's people. The Sermon on the Mount, Matthew chapter 5, 6 and 7, is not meant for all people.

It is particularly aimed at Jesus' disciples. And so we said that the first thing that Jesus does in these Beatitudes is he gives us a description, then, of kingdom people. A description of kingdom people. That was the major point.

He describes kingdom people. And he describes them as to their condition. So we looked at verse 3 and 4 and 5 and 6. And we said the one thing that runs as a theme through those verses, through those first four Beatitudes, is essentially common to them all. It's that theme of being destitute. That they describe God's people as having needs. They are not completely filled. God's people still mourn over their sin.

[ 2 : 28 ] And over the church's sin. That repentance is continual. They hunger and they thirst for righteousness. They thirst to be conformed to God's will for their lives and for this world.

And so it describes them according to their needs. And then you have this description of God's people. Not only the condition of God's people, but the character of God's people. That's the first thing this morning. A description of their character.

And you see that in verses 7 and 8 and 9. How blessed are the merciful and the pure in heart and the peacemakers.

So he's describing kingdom people. He looks at their character and look what it says. It says, How blessed are the merciful verse 7. This word is one that is used when they translated the Old Testament into Greek about 200 BC or so.

They use this word merciful in the Old Testament about 18 times. 13 of those 18 times it refers to the Lord. And it describes the Lord as merciful or gracious.

[ 3 : 45 ] Especially in the fact that he withholds judgment. And he forgives sin. And he withholds punishment.

He doesn't treat his people as they deserve. He is merciful in that sense. And that is the majority of the way that it's used when it's describing the Lord. And so it's interesting isn't it?

When Jesus should describe his people as ones who are merciful. That is they take on their father's characteristic in that they delight to be able to forgive others when wrong is committed against them.

They are a kind people. They are a pardoning people. They've received the mercy of God in their own lives. They know that they've not been treated by God as they deserve to be.

They know that they've been forgiven for Christ's sake. And that has left its mark upon them. And so they can't help but let that mercy flow out to others who wrong them.

[ 4 : 54 ] And so they reflect the father's characteristics. And then he says verse 8 How blessed are the pure in heart. Who are the pure in heart?

What does that mean? I think immediately in our culture for some of us that immediately goes to kind of sexual sin isn't it? The pure in heart are not like that.

They don't think rude thoughts. They're not infected by the world. But actually as we saw last week we need to remember don't we? Bible words have Bible meanings.

What does it mean? What is this idea of being pure in heart? It's not so much that of being undefiled but actually that of being undivided.

We see say pure in heart let me try to get it this way. When they translated the Old Testament into Greek the very word pure was used in reference to the tabernacle.

[ 5 : 58 ] So as you remember we went through Exodus a few years ago we came to the instructions about the tabernacle and in those latter chapters of Moses of Exodus when God is giving Moses those instructions on how are you going to build the tabernacle what furniture are you allowed to use?

He talked various times about different types of furniture that they would put in the tent of God and he said over and over again that they would be covered in pure gold. Again and again and again pure gold.

It means gold that's unmixed with other metals. It means gold or metal that doesn't have anything mixed with it. It is pure gold.

It is gold gold quite literally. The idea of being unmixed of being whole of being complete that is pure.

Abraham or to take another background in Genesis chapter 20 and verses 5 to 6 you've got this little story about Abraham passing off Sarah as his sister and because he pretended that Sarah was his sister Abimelech that Philistine thought well I'll take Sarah as my wife she's available because after all she's only Abraham's sister and so Abimelech adds Sarah to his harim he'd not had sexual relationships with her yet but he'd taken her into his household and into his harim and the Lord confronts Abimelech about that and he says well Abraham it's not my fault Abraham told me she was his sister he says why in the wholeness of my heart in the innocence of my hands I've done this that's the idea the innocence of my hands the wholeness of my heart he said I didn't have any underhanded scheme at work there was no devious design I acted in integrity towards Sarah and so when they used when they translated it into the Greek they used this with a pure heart

[ 8 : 02 ] I've done this that's what it is in our vision with a pure heart in the wholeness of my heart wholeness and undivided hearts not mixed with other motives and this may well be what Jesus means when he speaks about blessed are the pure in heart that is their whole heart is devoted in affection to their father they don't have a divided heart they don't have other allegiances and so on but it is all focused on their God and their kingdom how blessed are the pure in heart verse 9 how blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called sons of God and immediately we think well this is exactly what our world needs isn't it peacemakers and negotiators between nations on the international scene the united nations how blessed are the peacemakers that's why you should go into the army blessed are the peacemakers well forget all that

I'm not saying the world peace doesn't matter but the tendency is to always when we come to the bible I think we we get a big general picture and we think about the big problems which allows you and I just to wiggle out from under the word of God so let's stick with the disciples of Jesus being peacemakers what does that mean we know that it doesn't mean that you ignore wrong it doesn't mean that you cover over wrong and act like it's not there doesn't even necessarily mean that you avoid conflict in fact blessed are the peacemakers and that means that sometimes there must be there has to be conflict sometimes you have to confront and you have to confront wrong and sin and error before peace and any real peace can be restored sometimes church leaders have to fight they must fight

Jesus is not saying appease everybody it is not appeasement making it is peacemaking and we need to keep that in mind it's not peacetalkers it's not peacethinkers but it's peacemakers and the disciples of Jesus who act in this way they are blessed and I want to say to you you are in the

greatest laboratory that you could you will ever need to be in for practicing peacemaking church because after 15 years of working for the church and a lifetime of being in the church I want to say to you there is nowhere else on earth that I can think of where you can become more exasperated with people than the church I've just spent a week with different people moaning to me about problems in their church do you remember what you promised when you became a member of the church to commit yourself to building and maintaining healthy relationships within this church treating your fellow believers as your brothers and sisters in

Christ it's really a question about the peace of the church if it had been written a hundred years ago it would have read something like this do you promise to promote the purity and the peace of the church and that means to be reconciled with those you have wronged and who have wronged you to seek to be at peace that doesn't mean you cover over things that doesn't mean that you pretend it's okay when it's not okay doesn't mean when you say it doesn't matter when it does matter it means you get to the root and you make peace in relationships in a place where you know some people very well it's very easy to become aggravated with them and here it says God's people are peacemakers you see

Jesus says kingdom people people who belong to me have this character about them there are characteristics there are marks of being in my kingdom there is this mercifulness there is this pardoning mentality about it there is this undividedness in their affections and in their internal being towards their God and this way of peacemaking which they practice now that is the charter that is what marks them out Spurgeon tells the story of a man in the army and he was fighting or serving somewhere and finally after years he was discharged from the army and he studied for parish ministry to become a minister in the church of England studied theology and he was finally ordained and he was going back to Glasgow to his home to preach there he'd not seen his aged mother in years so he stopped to see her and as he walked up the road she was sweeping the path he recognised her straight away but she didn't recognise him because he'd changed he'd left as a boy but now he was a man when he was a little boy she had accidentally cut his wrist and left a scar and she comforted her son at that time and said never mind ye bonnie men your mother will ken you that's recognise you by that when you're a man he walked up the path he spoke to her and she didn't recognise him what did he do he pulled back his sleeve and said mother do you ken this and immediately they were in each other's arms there was a mark that identified him

[14:09] Jesus says there is a mark that identifies kingdom people because they have a certain character they have a certain mark and part of the way that you can identify them and describe them is that they show mercy and they have this undivided devotion and they make peace among each other it's a mark of kingdom people Jesus in this description of kingdom people he not only does he describe us in terms of our condition and our character but thirdly he describes us in our conflict thirdly including last week the points are all mixed up look at verses 10 to 12 blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake for theirs is the kingdom of heaven blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account rejoice and be glad for your reward is great in heaven for so they persecuted the prophets who will be for you he expands doesn't he on this persecuted for righteousness sake and when others revile you he expands on that much like he does in Matthew 6 with the

Lord's prayer you know where he talks about forgiveness forgive us our debts and then he goes to expand that doesn't he and so here he takes verse 10 where he talks about persecution for righteousness sake and then he expands on that in verses 11 and 12 and he says how blessed you are when men heap abuse on you and they persecute you and they speak all sorts of evil against you they speak evil on falsely on account of me and it's important to one notice why this persecution is look at verse 11 it's speech as well it's not just in actions they might abuse you verbally that's more the case for us today isn't it they may ridicule you they may make fun of you and that may be what persecution involves for us it involves verbal abuse of some sort but I think it's really important if it's going to be persecution for it to meet a couple of criteria number one it has to be false doesn't it look at that in verse 11 they utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account they'll say all sorts of evil against you falsely

I mean if it's true about you then they're just telling the truth they're not persecuting you are they and you need to be aware of that when Peter talks about that if for instance you just happen to be an abrasive person if you happen to be someone who really gets on people's nerves and somebody verbally abuses you you should just expect that if I'm persecuted or I'm reviled just because of my

sheer awkwardness that is not persecution it may be just that you're pretty obnoxious and if people abuse you because of that it's not persecution and it needs to be said and done falsely and it also needs to be done falsely on account of me Jesus says it is only persecution if it is on account of your relationship or some account of your relationship with Jesus that's what brings the abuse and so we need to keep that in mind

Jesus is implying here and he is assuming that if you are a kingdom person and you belong to him you are going to have trouble and you are going to have distress and you are going to have abuse that you are going to have to face there will be ridicule there simply will be conflict because you are his on account of me he said and when you belong to Jesus more or less severe whether you have it in your workplace or even in your home or perhaps in your relationships at some point when your relationship to Jesus becomes visible in some degree or other it will cause fire and so we need to teach that to our children don't we you children who are here that when you make a stand for Jesus and when you stand out for him people will not like it and there may well be verbal persecution and we mustn't be surprised at that we must prepare ourselves for that and it is infinitely worth it and as adults we mustn't keep our heads down martin jones before he came to london and was a minister in a really deprived part of south wales abber abben and while he was there it's a great story to read if you've not read it there's a number of people in the congregation who are wonderfully converted at that time and because of that one man had been converted he was a joyful christian he attended the monday night prayer meeting and as he came home from the prayer meeting his wife met him at the prayer meeting where did she get that kind of hostility from it's just when people when someone belongs to

Jesus people tend to hate that and so there's this conflict and so Jesus gives us a description of kingdom people he talks about a condition he says kingdom people have a certain destitution they are needy they're still mourning over their sin more of the sins of God's people generally and they hunger and they thirst for righteousness they're not yet filled and they still haven't seen complete conformity to God's will in their lives they know there's areas in their lives where God's will isn't perfectly practiced and they're still unsatisfied there's this destitution about kingdom people and then there's their character there's a certain likeness in kingdom people that you can see a resemblance of their father they remind you of God and then he describes the conflict and he says there's a certain suffering in kingdom people and there you have a description of kingdom people now let's leave that behind and go to the second major point of the past two weeks not a description of kingdom people but

[ 20 : 53 ] Jesus gives us a declaration a declaration about kingdom people can you see that look at these statements again look at the declaration Jesus makes what we've been doing is we've taken these phrases and we've asked what does it mean to be poor in spirit and try to define that that's important but you mustn't think that's really what's happening in the beatitudes because what's really happening in the beatitudes is Jesus is making a declaration that's very important he's saying something about kingdom people and basically it's this how blessed my people are this is what I'm giving them these are my assurances they are almost his covenant promises to his people how blessed are they he's saying here are the blessings here are the riches I'm giving them because theirs is the kingdom of heaven because they will be comforted and they will be filled and they will inherit the earth with the righteousness that they long for and they will receive mercy at the last judgment and they will see

God as Revelation 22 says and they will see his face and they will be called God's sons and so on so these are the blessings these are the treasures these are the gifts that God gives to his people and these attitudes they really are a declaration about Jesus people and the riches he's given them they're not rewards please don't think that they're not rewards they are assurances you see Jesus did not say did he in verse four because you mourn you will be comforted he did not say it that way he said how blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted so it's not as though mourning earns them or makes them deserving it is that Jesus delights to assure them of it you will be comforted these are declarations of Jesus gifts and assurances to his people of what he's giving and he will give them and you need to see that

Jesus is trying to assure his people he's trying to assure his people who assert as certainly as possible that these gifts belong to them and they will have them because the future tense in these beatitudes is not just what is in the future but it is also a future that has certainty they will be comforted they shall see God so what difference does that make for us this week it ought to make a

difference in this way in this sense it tells you that Jesus delights to assure his people of what he's going to give them Jesus delights to tell his people and to assure them what he's going to give them and the reason that's so important is this because it's so hard to believe it's so hard to believe that these beatitudes do actually carry your name and your address it's very hard isn't it for our feelings to be really to the point where we read Matthew 5 1 to 12 and we think yes that's talking about me as one of his kingdom people and if you've never struggled to think like that well let me say to you you are a freak and you should be very thankful that you are a freak because many of us do remind me of a story that a preacher told and so you know that it's not true but you have this guy this man who believed that he was dead and his wife and family were really concerned about him because he was convinced he was dead his friends were concerned about him because he was convinced he was dead sent him to the friendly neighbourhood psychiatrist and the psychiatrist decided he would treat him by convincing him of something convincing him of something that contradicted his other belief that he was dead that he would convince him of something so surely that if he believed that then he would no longer be able to say

I'm dead and so he decided the psychiatrist to go about it this way he was going to convince him of the simple truth that dead men do not bleed dead men do not bleed well he started to work and to study he had him reading medical records and autopsies and all sorts of things and after several weeks of quite concentrated effort the fella finally caved in and he said alright you have convinced me dead men do not bleed with a certain triumph and joy the psychiatrist took a needle out of his pocket and he pricked the man's arm and blood flowed the man looked down and with a contorted and ashen face said good grief dead men do bleed after all and some of us we know that don't we it's so hard for us to believe sometimes the comforting reassurances of Jesus but they really do carry your name and address it's very hard sometimes for our feelings to feel really assured and what Jesus promises us when he seeks to make us secure in what he's giving us and what can we do at a time like that well we have to be brought and come to the place where we have to say even though my feelings don't reinforce it and even though my feelings don't know if this is true I have to forget my feelings and believe the word that Jesus speaks and that is the challenge of faith let's pray