

## LESSON 9

**CHRIST PREACHES A NEW MESSAGE**

*Scripture Text: Matthew 5:1-12*

Today's lesson, commonly spoken of as the Sermon on the Mount, deals with the new law of Christian living that each disciple of Christ must attain in order to live a life acceptable to God. Christ brings forth this new teaching that constitutes the new standard of life in contrast with the Mosaic law. This lesson discusses the meaning of the Beatitudes in order to show how the teachings expressed in them can enrich our lives. The study of the Beatitudes, therefore, is the way to discover what the Christian life involves, and its obligations, its responsibilities, and its rewards.



**MEMORY VERSE:** *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.* *Matthew 5:16*

**Blessedness**

The Beatitudes are the first part of what is known as the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew's Gospel the sermon runs from the first verse of the fifth chapter to the end of the seventh chapter. The sermon is a series of teachings given by Jesus to His followers in order that they might know clearly what was required of them. He asked for perfection and required a righteousness that went beyond the Ten Commandments.

A person can be blessed and yet not happy, and a person can be happy and not blessed. Blessedness is what we call soul peace, inner contentment, spiritual rest, and the joy that comes from knowing that God is our Father and mighty to save. In these verses Jesus defines the sort of people that He would call blessed. The Ten Commandments are characteristic of the Old Testament; the Beatitudes of the New Testament. Moses received the Commandments on Mount Sinai; Jesus preached the new commandments on, it is assumed, the Mount of Olives. The Commandments are mainly negative—**Thou shalt not**; Jesus said, "**Blessed are . . .**" The Commandments are demands; the Beatitudes are invitations—a worship of love.

**The Beatitudes**

**Matthew 5:1-3 Seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain.** Jesus had taught, preached, and healed throughout Galilee; and as a result of the wide fame this gave Him, large crowds gathered. **Blessed are the poor in spirit.** These are people who do not depend upon their own riches and possessions, but fully depend upon God. They recognize the fact that they need something within which nothing on the outside can produce (2 Corinthians 6:10). This message went forth with force and convicted because the people knew that Jesus knew what He was talking about, and that He practiced what He preached. **Their's is the kingdom . . .** Only those who are conscious of their own insufficiency and inadequacy, as the poor usually are since they have few possessions, are fit to enter God's kingdom.

**Matthew 5:4 Blessed are they that mourn**—Not the sad-faced, gloomy killjoys. The true mourners are those who are sensitive to their own sin and unworthiness and to the sins and miseries of a lost society. They mourn because evil seems so strong and they so weak. The mourners are like the Psalmist in Psalm 137:4. They mourn that

they themselves need God and that their fellowmen are heading for eternity in a lost condition. **They shall be comforted**—by God through His forgiveness and mercy and the victory He gives over all sin and evil.

**Matthew 5:5 Blessed are the meek**—not the timid, subdued, browbeaten souls. The meek are the humble, those who do not push and shove to get ahead, but who are patient and content with what they have. They are gentle to others. The heart of the meek submits to whatever is God's will and faithfully obeys God's Word. Christ Himself gave the best definition of the word in Matthew 11:29. The rich in this world's goods are not blessed. The world seeks money, pleasure, and position. Jesus said that the meek are blessed. They will obtain the highest position and possession. **They shall inherit the earth**—they shall reign over earthly things; earthly things will not rule over them.

**Matthew 5:6 Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness**—a desire from the heart for the soul to be fed the bread of life and to drink of the water of life, to desire spiritual things as much or more than material things. Jesus wants no self-satisfied followers who are willing to let well enough alone. He pronounces blessing on those who are restless and who seek a better world and a better life for themselves and for others. Christ blesses those who desire spiritual advancement. Those who live this way will be satisfied by the deep joy of living a spirit-filled life.

**Matthew 5:7 Blessed are the merciful**—this is basic Christian living (James 2:13). If we are spiritually alive, we will be merciful. This is far from the teaching of "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." Jesus told a parable about an unmerciful servant in Matthew 18:23-35, and He told His disciples that they must forgive others if they would receive God's forgiveness (Mark 11:25). Only if we are merciful will we **obtain mercy**. Here the law of sowing and reaping comes into this lesson.

**Matthew 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart**—this refers to sincerity and honesty and a single, undivided loyalty to God. We have the assurance of God's presence in our lives and a true fellowship with Him in His kingdom in this present time. Without this kind of a present experience in a sinless heart no one **shall see God**. A heart cannot be pure with sin there. Heart purity results in an outward change also.

**Matthew 5:9 Blessed are the peacemakers**—makers of peace. How desperately the world needs them today! We all *want* peace—but how few there are who *work* for peace. The peacemakers are those who overcome evil with good, who go out of their way to reconcile enemies, and who go the extra mile. **They shall be called the children of God**. Without the Prince of Peace one cannot be a peacemaker.

**Matthew 5:10-12 Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake**. Followers of Christ must remain true even when they suffer hate and injustice. They must accept mistreatment for their loyalty to God. Those who take the Christian faith seriously soon find that they are at odds with many people and with many programs and policies of the world in which they live (2 Timothy 3:12). They will be shunned by their former friends, lied about, and taunted by all those who love the darkness and hate the light. The reward is great—**great is your reward in heaven**. Heaven will miss you, Jesus will miss you, and loved ones will miss you if you are lost.

## JUST A THOUGHT

**To be a Christian is to follow a Leader Whose steps led to rejection, humiliation, and death on a Cross.**