

The Beatitudes - Matthew 5:1-12

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

- ³ “Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
⁴ Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.
⁵ Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.
⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.
⁷ Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.
⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.
⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called sons of God.
¹⁰ Blessed 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.
¹² Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. ¹

The Sermon on the Mount - Notes from The Bible Guide

Jesus doesn't only teach in synagogues. Sometimes he likes to get away from the crowds and teach only his disciples.

Matthew describes Jesus taking his disciples into the hills. Like all rabbis, Jesus sits down to teach and his disciples gather round him to listen. Many people have wondered if the mountain is important. Is Matthew telling us that Jesus is a new Moses, delivering a new law—like Moses on Mount Sinai?

The Sermon on the Mount is Matthew's great account of Jesus' teaching to his disciples. Here Jesus describes the attitudes and behaviour he wants of his followers.

The Sermon on the Plain in Luke's Gospel is shorter, and contains about half of Matthew's material.

THE BEATITUDES

Jesus starts by telling his disciples how to be happy. His list of eight happy attitudes turns popular values upside down (5:3–12). Most people assume happiness is:

- ◆ achieving our goals of wealth and success; leaving others behind.
- ◆ always being fun to have around—the life and soul of every party.
- ◆ being strong, or beautiful, or rich, or clever; being independent, secure and in control.
- ◆ getting our terms agreed, our rights established and ensuring that justice is done.

To our shame, we also find happiness in:

- ◆ taking revenge on our enemies.
- ◆ indulging our greed and lust.
- ◆ picking fights and winning arguments.
- ◆ and (better still) avoiding all trouble or misfortune!

Jesus' conditions for a happy life are exactly the opposite.

He says the poor in spirit are happy, because they depend completely on God—which is heaven on earth.

He says those who mourn are happy, because God shares their heartbreak and will surely comfort them.

¹ *The Holy Bible: New International Version*. (1984). (Mt 5:1–12). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

The meek have a special happiness because they are free of pride and ambition; God will give them the world.

Those who hunger and thirst for goodness are happy, because God himself will satisfy their longings.

Those who show mercy are happy, because they in turn will be treated kindly.

The pure in heart are happy, because they will meet God face to face.

Those who make peace are happy, because they take after God and do his work.

Those who are persecuted for doing good are happy, because they share the real cost of God's kingdom.

Jesus describes a happiness which doesn't depend on possessions, circumstances or good luck. It's a happiness God gives us *now* which nothing can take away. It's a happiness which looks forward to wonderful rewards when God's kingdom finally comes.

Jesus adds a blessing for those who suffer for their faith in him. He promises that God will make it up to them, with a reward which is far greater than anything they can imagine. And persecution is a compliment of sorts. It means we're being treated like the old prophets.²

² Knowles, A. (2001). *The Bible guide* (1st Augsburg books ed., pp. 413–414). Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg.