Right Attitudes
Matt 5:1-12
SS Lesson for 06/30/2019

Devotional Scripture: Phil 4:6-9

OUTLINE

LESSON BACKGROUND AND KEY VERSE

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary
Key Verse: Matt 5:12
Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

MAJOR THEME ANALYSIS

HAPPINESS IN DIVINE RELATIONSHIPS (MATT 5:1-6)

True Happiness (from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator)
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- Being poor in spirit means having a spiritual need that we cannot supply (From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)
- Poor in spirit means humility (from the UBS Handbook Series)
- Only those who do the will of God will be in the kingdom of heaven (Matt 7:21)
- Christians have been given the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven (Matt 13:11)
- Unless we change and become like little children, we will never enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt 18:3-4)

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- Calling on God relieves sorrow because God is compassionate (Ps 116:3-5)
- God promises joy in the place of tears (Ps 126:5-6)
- God is the father of Compassion (2 Cor 1:3-4)

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- The righteous will inherit the earth (Ps 37:29)
- Faith allows the inheritance of the earth (Rom 4:13)

Through being filled with righteousness (6)
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- A righteousness that comes through faith (Rom 3:22)
- A righteousness that comes from being under grace (Rom 6:12-14)
- A righteousness that comes from Christ being in us (Rom 8:10)
- A righteousness that comes from Jesus ending the penalty of sin (Rom 10:4)
- A righteousness that is part of the kingdom of God (Rom 14:17)
- A righteousness that is part of the armor of God (Eph 6:14)

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- Being merciful is having regard for the weak and troubled (Ps 41:1-3)
- For the merciful, there is hope in troubled times (Ps 112:4)
- Not being merciful is sin (Prov 14:21)
- The type of fasting God desires includes being merciful to others (Isa 58:6-8)
- Without being merciful to others, we will not receive mercy from God (Matt 6:14-15)
- Mercy is commanded for Christians (Eph 4:32)
- Mercy triumphs over judgment (James 2:13)

Through being pure in heart (8)
- Being pure in heart means that our motives are good (From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)
- Being pure in heart means motives and principals are aligned with God's word (from Barnes' Notes)
- Pure in heart means to have integrity (1 Chron 29:17)
- Pure in heart means to walk blamelessly (Ps 15:2)
- Pure in heart means to be purified of all that contaminates (2 Cor 7:1)
- Pure in heart means to be sprinkled clean by the Holy Spirit (Heb 10:22)
- Pure in heart means to be obedient to the truth of God's word (1 Peter 1:22)
- We should pray to God out of a pure heart (2 Tim 2:22)

Through being a peacemaker (9)
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Persecution cannot separate us from the love of Jesus (Rom 8:35)
We may be persecuted, but we will never be abandoned by God (2 Cor 4:8-9)
The momentary persecutions now are nothing compared to the glory that awaits (2 Cor 4:17)
We must count persecutions as joy because they aid in perseverance (James 1:2-3)
We must never be surprised by persecution (1 Peter 4:12-13)
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Lesson Background and Key Verse

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary
As someone who has traveled extensively, I am acutely aware every time I come home how convenient my life
is in big and little ways: clean water in my home for daily showers; refrigeration to keep food fresh and safe to
eat; fast Internet and dependable cell phone coverage. I come home feeling more satisfied about the
accessibility of education for myself and my loved ones and less frustrated with participatory government. For a
while, I do not take for granted being able to attend church without fear. In our age of dissatisfaction,
unhappiness, and continual complaining, even these comforts at home aren’t always enough to convince us that
we are blessed. We want something even bigger, even better, and we certainly don’t hope for hardships. How
can we become people who wake up counting our blessings in all circumstances?

The word beatitude does not occur in the Greek New Testament; it comes into English through Latin and means
“a blessing.” Beatitudes in the Bible begin with the word blessed. A rich source for such beatitudes is the book
of Psalms, which even begins with a blessing (Psalm 1:1). Jesus spoke many blessings that New Testament
writers preserved in Gospels and letters. The basis for God’s blessing is his love. The person whom God blesses
receives an expression of his love, whether the person knows it or not (Matthew 5:45). Some whom God blesses
are further singled out for finding favor with God (Luke 1:30, 42). Blessings often have both a present and a
future fulfillment. If one is blessed, the benefits are evident now or will come soon. Unlike a curse, a blessing is
never earned but is granted by God according to his good pleasure (see Psalm 8). Furthermore, a righteous
action itself can be considered a blessing, because virtue is part of its own reward. When Jesus says “Blessed
are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (John 20:29), he is not advising us to believe so that we can
receive a blessing. He is saying that the state of being a believer is a blessing in and of itself. Both Matthew and
Luke include the Beatitudes of Jesus in their accounts of one of His sermons (compare Luke 6:20–23). It’s quite
possible that those two writers recorded different teaching occasions. But if that is the case, there is at least a
significant overlap in what Jesus said at both times. The general form of the Beatitudes is (1) to pronounce a
certain group of people “blessed” and then (2) give a reason for or result of that blessing. However, some key
differences exist between the two writers’ accounts regarding how the Beatitudes are worded (see commentary
below for examples). Beyond the differences in the Beatitudes themselves, Matthew does not include woes to various groups of people who seem to be enjoying good things in this life (compare and contrast Luke 6:24–26).

Key Verse: Matt 5:12

Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

5:1-12. As the multitudes continued to flock to Jesus (cf. 4:25), He went up on a mountainside and sat down. It was the custom of Rabbis to sit as they taught. His disciples came to Him and He began to teach them. Matthew 5-7 is commonly called “the Sermon on the Mount” because Jesus delivered it on a mountain. Though the mountain’s exact location is unknown, it was undoubtedly in Galilee (4:23) and was apparently near Capernaum on a place which was “level” (Luke 6:17). “Disciples” refers not to the Twelve, as some suggest, but to the crowds following Him (cf. Matt. 7:28, “the crowds were amazed at His teaching”).

Jesus instructed them in view of His announcement of the coming kingdom (4:17). Natural questions on the heart of every Jew would have been, “Am I eligible to enter Messiah’s kingdom? Am I righteous enough to qualify for entrance?” The only standard of righteousness the people knew was that laid down by the current religious leaders, the scribes and Pharisees. Would one who followed that standard be acceptable in Messiah’s kingdom? Jesus’ sermon therefore must be understood in the context of His offer of the kingdom to Israel and the need for repentance to enter that kingdom. The sermon did not give a “Constitution” for the kingdom nor did it present the way of salvation. The sermon showed how a person who is in right relationship with God should conduct his life. While the passage must be understood in the light of the offer of the messianic kingdom, the sermon applies to Jesus’ followers today for it demonstrates the standard of righteousness God demands of His people. Some of the standards are general (e.g., “You cannot serve both God and money” [6:24]); some are specific (e.g., “If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles” [5:41]); and some pertain to the future (e.g., “many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name?’” [7:22]).

Jesus began His sermon with “the Beatitudes,” statements beginning with Blessed are. “Blessed” means “happy” or “fortunate” (cf. Ps. 1:1). The qualities Jesus mentioned in this list, “the poor in spirit,” “those who mourn,” “the meek,” etc., obviously could not be products of Pharisaic righteousness. The Pharisees were concerned primarily with external qualities, but the qualities Jesus mentioned are internal. These come only when one is properly related to God through faith, when one places his complete trust in God.

The poor in spirit (Matt. 5:3) are those who consciously depend on God, not on themselves; they are “poor” inwardly, having no ability in themselves to please God (cf. Rom. 3:9-12). Those who mourn (Matt. 5:4) recognize their needs and present them to the One who is able to assist. Those who are meek (v. 5) are truly humble and gentle and have a proper appreciation of their position. (Praeis, the Gr. word rendered “meek,” is translated “gentle” in its three other usages in the NT: 11:29; 21:5; 1 Peter 3:4.) Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness (Matt. 5:6) have a spiritual appetite, a continuing desire for personal righteousness. The merciful (v. 7) extend mercy to others, thus demonstrating God’s mercy which has been extended to them. The pure in heart (v. 8) are those who are inwardly clean from sin through faith in God’s provision and a continual acknowledging of their sinful condition. The peacemakers (v. 9) show others how to have inward peace with God and how to be instruments of peace in the world. They desire and possess God’s righteousness even though it brings them persecution (v. 10).

These qualities contrast sharply with Pharisaic “righteousness.” The Pharisees were not “poor in spirit;” did not “mourn” in recognition of their needs; were proud and harsh, not humble and gentle; they felt they had attained righteousness and therefore did not have a continual appetite or desire for it; they were more concerned with “legalities” of God’s and their own laws than with showing mercy; were pure ceremonially but not inwardly; created a rift, not peace in Judaism; and certainly did not possess true righteousness. Jesus’ followers who possess these qualities become heirs of the kingdom (vv. 3, 10) on earth (v. 5), receive spiritual comfort (v. 4) and satisfaction (v. 6), receive mercy from God and others (v. 7), will see God (v. 8), that is, Jesus Christ, who is God “in a body” (1 Tim. 3:16; cf. John 1:18; 14:7-9). His followers were known as God’s sons (Matt. 5:9; cf. Gal 3:26) for they partook of His righteousness (Matt. 5:10).

People possessing these qualities would naturally stand out in the crowd and would not be understood by others. Thus they would be persecuted; others would speak evil of them (v. 11). However, Jesus’ words
encouraged His followers, for they would be walking in the train of the **prophets**, who also were misunderstood and **persecuted** (v. 12; cf. 1 Kings 19:1-4; 22:8; Jer. 26:8-11; 37:11-16; 38:1-6; Dan. 3; 6; Amos 7:10-13).

**Major Theme Analysis**
*(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)*

**Attitude of Happiness In Divine Relationships (Matt 5:1-6)**

1 And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him.
2 Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:
3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
4 Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted.
5 Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth.
6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.

**True Happiness (from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator)**

The word “happiness” presents a picture of pleasure, delight, gladness, contentment, or exhilaration. A child receives a toy, a wife sees her husband return from a business trip, a long-lost friend is able to visit your home, all are joyful experiences. Success in academic pursuits and advancement in one’s profession are also examples of what people call happiness and satisfaction. “Blessed” is the familiar New Testament term for happiness. The Beatitudes are the direct teaching of the Savior, and they demonstrate that happiness is not always related to a material entity or a happy occasion. In reality, Jesus’ words illustrate that real happiness depends on how a person has responded to God’s provisions for a happy life and how close he is to the Lord. There is no true and lasting happiness without having trusted in Christ as one’s Savior and Lord. That type of happiness has eternal qualities, not just temporal ones.

**Through being in the kingdom of Heaven (1-3)**

**Being poor in spirit means having a spiritual need that we cannot supply** *(From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)*

One who is poor in spirit feels deep within himself that he is spiritually poor and needy—with a need that he cannot supply for himself. The kingdom of heaven belongs to those poor in spirit, because they are willing to receive it. They are willing, even eager, to be ruled by Jesus the King. They exert themselves in doing His will, and they find joy in doing it.

**Poor in spirit means humility (from the UBS Handbook Series)**

Poor in spirit is understood by some few interpreters to mean "poor for the sake of their spirit." The reference would then be to persons who impoverish themselves for the sake of strengthening their spiritual condition. But it is more natural to take the Greek phrase following "poor" with the meaning "in the realm of," after the analogy of such expressions as "pure in heart" (Matt 5:8) or "humble in spirit" (Ps 34:18 RSV: "crushed in spirit"), rather than with the meaning of "for the sake of."

**Only those who do the will of God will be in the kingdom of heaven (Matt 7:21)**

21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

**Christians have been given the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven (Matt 13:11)**

11 He replied, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them."
Unless we change and become like little children, we will never enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt 18:3-4)

3 And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Through being comforted (4)

Sorrow over spiritual shortcomings (From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)

The tax collector in Jesus’ parable offers a perfect example of what this Beatitude means. He mourned over his sins; beating his breast (Luke 18:13) was the traditional expression of deep sorrow. He went home “justified,” or forgiven (Luke 18:14). What blessed comfort!

Calling on God relieves sorrow because God is compassionate (Ps 116:3-5)

3 The cords of death entangled me, the anguish of the grave came upon me; I was overcome by trouble and sorrow. 4 Then I called on the name of the LORD: "O LORD, save me!" 5 The LORD is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion.

God promises joy in the place of tears (Ps 126:5-6)

5 Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. 6 He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him.

God is the father of Compassion (2 Cor 1:3-4)

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

Through inheriting the earth (5)

Meekness is channeled strength (From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)

Who are the meek? Words similar in meaning are mild, gentle, and patient. Meek people prefer to avoid conflict, but that does not mean that they are weak or cowardly. Students of Greek tell us that the Greek word for meek was used of a horse that was trained to pull a plow or carry a rider. A meek horse does not waste his strength in conflict, as a wild horse does when he is captured. Instead, his strength is channeled toward the accomplishment of a useful purpose. Likewise, a meek person desires to use his or her energy in God-pleasing tasks rather than in combat. In what way will the meek inherit the earth? Perhaps we should think of inheriting the earth as much more than just the enjoyment of material goods and wealth. There is also the sense of fulfillment and contentment that comes when one uses the resources of earth as the Creator intended them to be used. This is a blessing that those who use the earth’s resources selfishly can never call their own. And when this old earth is replaced by a new one, the meek will enjoy that one even more (2 Peter 3:10–13).

Those that fear God will inherit the earth (Ps 25:12-13)

12 Who, then, is the man that fears the LORD? He will instruct him in the way chosen for him. 13 He will spend his days in prosperity, and his descendants will inherit the land.

Those whose hope is in God will inherit the earth (Ps 37:9)

9 For evil men will be cut off, but those who hope in the LORD will inherit the land.

It is a blessing from God to inherit the earth (Ps 37:22)

22 those the LORD blesses will inherit the land, but those he curses will be cut off.

The righteous will inherit the earth (Ps 37:29)

29 the righteous will inherit the land and dwell in it forever.
Faith allows the inheritance of the earth (Rom 4:13)
13 It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith.

Through being filled with righteousness (6)

Hunger is a compulsion to obtain (From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)
A greater blessing than hunger for food is hunger after righteousness, or for righteousness. Hunger for food compels us to get some food; hunger for righteousness compels us to get some righteousness. How do we obtain righteousness? There are two ways. One is by simply doing right. We can try to keep that up every day, but it is not enough. So God has provided a second way to obtain righteousness—a way by which our righteousness can be made complete. Speaking of this better way, Paul wrote that he desired to be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness, which would come from the law, but a righteousness that comes from God by virtue of faith in Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:9). So by God’s gracious forgiveness, we can be filled with the righteousness of Christ. But that will not take place unless we are hungry and thirsty—unless we really want to be righteous.

A righteousness that comes through faith (Rom 3:22)
22 This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference,

A righteousness that comes from being under grace (Rom 6:12-14)
13 Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. 14 For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

A righteousness that comes from Christ being in us (Rom 8:10)
10 But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness.

A righteousness that comes from Jesus ending the penalty of sin (Rom 10:4)
4 Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

A righteousness that is part of the kingdom of God (Rom 14:17)
17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit,

A righteousness that is part of the armor of God (Eph 6:14)
14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place,

Attitude of Happiness In Human Relationships (Matt 5:7-12)
7 Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.
8 Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God.
9 Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.
10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
11 ’Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.
12 Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.
Through being merciful (7)

**Being merciful is grieving over the pain of others (From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)**

Merciful people are grieved by the grief or pain of others, and they do what they can to end it. Often, when those who have been merciful are in trouble, they will obtain mercy from others who are aware of their kindness. Best of all, God will bless them and show mercy to them.

**Being merciful is having regard for the weak and troubled (Ps 41:1-3)**

1 Blessed is he who has regard for the weak; the LORD delivers him in times of trouble. 2 The LORD will protect him and preserve his life; he will bless him in the land and not surrender him to the desire of his foes. 3 The LORD will sustain him on his sickbed and restore him from his bed of illness.

**For the merciful, there is hope in troubled times (Ps 112:4)**

Even in darkness light dawns for the upright, for the gracious and compassionate and righteous man.

**Not being merciful is sin (Prov 14:21)**

He who despises his neighbor sins, but blessed is he who is kind to the needy.

**The type of fasting God desires includes being merciful to others (Isa 58:6-8)**

6 “Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? 7 Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter--when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? 8 Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard.

**Without being merciful to others, we will not receive mercy from God (Matt 6:14-15)**

14 For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

**Mercy is commanded for Christians (Eph 4:32)**

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

**Mercy triumphs over judgment (James 2:13)**

because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!

Through being pure in heart (8)

**Being pure in heart means that our motives are good (From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)**

Pure gold is solid gold all the way through; it is not mixed with anything cheaper. The pure in heart have hearts of solid good: their tastes, their thoughts, their desires, their motives are good. They do not value or desire anything evil.

**Being pure in heart means motives and principals are aligned with God's word (from Barnes' Notes)**

That is, whose minds, motives, and principles are pure; who seek not only to have the external actions correct, but who desire to be holy in heart, and who are so. Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart.

**Pure in heart means to have integrity (1 Chron 29:17)**

I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity. All these things have I given willingly and with honest intent. And now I have seen with joy how willingly your people who are here have given to you.

**Pure in heart means to walk blamelessly (Ps 15:2)**

He whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from his heart
Pure in heart means to be purified of all that contaminates (2 Cor 7:1)
Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.

Pure in heart means to be sprinkled clean by the Holy Spirit (Heb 10:22)
let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

Pure in heart means to be obedient to the truth of God's word (1 Peter 1:22)
Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.

We should pray to God out of a pure heart (2 Tim 2:22)
Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

Through being a peacemaker (9)

Obedient peace with others (From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)
God is the greatest peacemaker of all. Our sins made us His enemies (Colossians 1:21); but instead of destroying us, He loved us and sent His only begotten Son to die in our place (Romans 5:8). When we believe in Jesus and obey Him, our sins are forgiven and we have peace with God (Romans 5:1). We then find a blessing in making and keeping peace with our Christian brothers and sisters and, if possible, with everyone (Romans 12:18).

As much as it is possible, we should live in peace with others (Rom 12:18-19)
18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. 19 Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.

Being in unity promotes peace (2 Cor 13:11)
Finally, brothers, good-by. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.

Fellowship with the Holy Spirit provides ability to live in peace with others (Phil 2:1-4)
1 If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. 4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

We must make every effort to live in peace (Heb 12:14)
Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.

Through being rewarded for enduring persecution (10-12)

Persecution is mistreatment for serving God (From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)
Jesus’ life was faultless, yet evil doers were constantly plotting to kill Him (Matthew 26:3, 4; John 5:18; 7:1). He warned His disciples that they would be persecuted, too (John 15:20; 16:2). Here the general promise of verse 10 is applied to the disciples whom Jesus was teaching (vv. 1, 2). Is it not applicable to us as well? Notice, however, that there is no promise of blessing unless the persecution comes for Jesus’ sake. If we suffer because we have done wrong, or because we have not been poor in spirit (v. 3) or meek (v. 5) or merciful (v. 7), then we have no blessing (cf. 1 Peter 4:15). The evil spoken against us must be false, not accurate. The persecution of God’s people did not begin with Jesus and His disciples. God’s prophets had been mistreated long before this. Consider such examples as Elijah (1 Kings 19:2, 13, 14), Micaiah (1 Kings 22:26, 27), and Jeremiah (Jeremiah 37:15; 38:6).
Persecution for the sake of Jesus happens because those who do it do not know God (John 15:20-21)

20 Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. 21 They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me.

Persecution cannot separate us from the love of Jesus (Rom 8:35)

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

We may be persecuted, but we will never be abandoned by God (2 Cor 4:8-9)

8 We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.

The momentary persecutions now are nothing compared to the glory that awaits (2 Cor 4:17)

For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

We must count persecutions as joy because they aid in perseverance (James 1:2-3)

2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.

We must never be surprised by persecution (1 Peter 4:12-13)

12 Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. 13 But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.

In our persecution, we have not shed blood (Heb 12:4)

In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

The Relationship of the Believer to God and Man (5:1-9)

The Ten Commandments prescribed Israel’s relationship to their God and also their relationship to their fellow man. Our Lord could thus summarize the commandments: “Thou shalt love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind … and … you shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:37,39).

Likewise, in the beatitudes, our Lord gives us a description or characterization of the true believer in terms of his relationship to both God and man. Each beatitude is to characterize every true believer. Every beatitude is in striking contrast to the character and conduct of the scribes and Pharisees.

You will notice that each ascription is accompanied by the expression ‘blessed.’ Although this term can legitimately be translated (and J. B. Phillips does so) this is surely the wrong sense here. Happiness implies a rather fleeting feeling that usually is dependent upon favorable circumstances. The Greek word (markarios) was used to describe the celestial bliss of the gods, a life free from the work and worries of the world. Used of men, initially, it suggested the same kind of bliss, of being removed from the cares of life. Thus it was used of the dead who were thought to have passed to a better existence. More to the point, here ‘blessed’ refers to the blessing and joy of a man who is self-contained, independent of external circumstances. As Barclay reminds us, ‘happiness’ comes from the root ‘hap’ which means chance. Human happiness is by chance, when ‘everything’s going our way.’ Divine blessedness is the inner joy, serenity, and composure which comes from knowing that we are right with God, that our contentment and well being are not the product of chance but of infinite grace.
The Poor in Spirit (verse 3)

Of the two Greek words which are used to describe poverty, the one used here by our Lord (ptochos) is the most dire and destitute.\(^{236}\) Literally, the root means to crouch or cower. This man’s poverty has beaten him to his knees. In the Old Testament, the word poor evolved through a progression of usage.\(^{237}\) First, it simply meant poor. Then, it implied having no influence, prestige, or, as we would say, clout. Since the poor man had no clout, he was abused and oppressed by men. Finally, as he could rely on no one else, he came to trust in God. Over and over the expression ‘poor’ spoke of the man who recognized his own inadequacy and who trusted only in God: “This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles” (Psalm 34:6; cf. 9:18; 35:10; 68:10; 72:4; 107:41; 132:15).

Isaiah spoke often of this kind of poverty, and promised to these ‘poor’ the salvation of the Lord (Isaiah 41:17,18; 57:15; 61:1; 66:1,2).

Our Lord is not commending poverty, but that spirit of humility which it often engenders. Those who will inherit the Kingdom of heaven are those who are fully aware that they have nothing to commend them before God. They recognize that they are spiritually destitute and they wait upon God for His deliverance and salvation. How different are the rich in this world’s goods who ‘trust in the deceitfulness of riches’ (1 Timothy 6:17).

How proud and pompous were the scribes and Pharisees who could pray, “God, I thank Thee that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax-gatherer. I fast twice a week, I pay tithes of all that I get” (Luke 18:11-12).

Those Who Mourn (verse 4)

This strong word for mourning often expressed the grief of one over the loss of a loved one (cf. Genesis 37:34 LXX). In addition, it was used of those who grieved over sin, both theirs and others. This surely is the primary sense of this term as it is used here. Not only must there be an admission of sin, but a genuine sense of remorse over it. There is little talk today, even in Christian churches, about remorse and sorrow for sins. To some we are simply to ‘fess up’ with God. We speak glibly of 1 John 1:9 as ‘God’s bar of soap.’ God spare us from this casual attitude toward sin (cf. Ezra 10:1; Psalm 119:135; Ezekiel 9:4; Philippians 3:18).

There is comfort for those who mourn. For those who mourn over physical death and the separation it brings, we can be comforted that Jesus Christ has won the victory over sin, death and the grave. Those whom we have left behind (or rather have left us behind) in the Lord, we shall see again (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

There is likewise comfort for those who mourn due to sin. The atoning work of Jesus Christ on the cross has won for every Christian freedom from the penalty of sin (Romans 6:23; 8:1), from the power of sin (Romans 6:14), and ultimately from the presence of sin (Romans 8:18ff.).

Those Who Are Gentle (verse 5)

Meekness has never been a coveted quality. We usually think of meekness in terms of weakness. It is hardly the quality which a Burt Reynolds movie portrays (so they tell me). It is a Casper Milquetoast quality, or so we suppose.

We must remember that Moses was called ‘the meekest man on the face of the earth’ (Numbers 12:3). Our Lord Jesus also referred to Himself as meek (Matthew 11:29). Meekness often implied self-control; it was the gentleness of strength.

Dr. Lloyd-Jones stresses that the meekness of which our Lord spoke is prompted by an awareness of our own sinfulness.\(^{238}\) It is difficult to be harsh with others in an area where we ourselves fail. Once we have come to acknowledge our own sinfulness and waywardness, we will be less quick to criticize others. There is a proverb which says, “The poor man utters supplications, but the rich man answers roughly” (Proverbs 18:23).

Our own view of ourselves is reflected in our treatment of others. The rich can be rude, impolite, and insensitive. They can ride roughshod over others, because they can afford to. The poor man must deal gently with everyone. He is in no position to do otherwise.

I once worked for a man with an explosive and uncontrolled temper. His temper could erupt like a flaming volcano and all the hired help would brace up for his verbal attacks. But in front of a customer, he was soft and sweet.

I find Paul’s words in Galatians 6:1 very much to the point:
“Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; looking to yourselves, lest you too be tempted” (Galatians 6:1).

Do you see the point? One’s view of himself determines or modifies his relationship with others. A meek person is one who controls himself, fully aware that he is a sinner as well.

The other evening, I attended the Dallas Seminary Founders Banquet. It was a lovely event and Dr. Charles Swindoll gave an excellent message on servanthood. On the way home, I thought of an additional characteristic of a servant: the servant does not see it as his calling to criticize other servants. In Paul’s words, “Who are you to judge the servant of another?” (Romans 14:4).

Servants don’t pass judgments; lords do. If we see ourselves as servants, we concern ourselves with our service, not that of others. Meekness (shall I say servanthood?) stems from my attitude toward myself and my position before God and men.

**Those Who Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness (verse 6)**

Centuries before the coming of Christ to the earth in bodily form Isaiah the prophet had written, “Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost” (Isaiah 55:1).

The righteous remnant within Israel had always longed for the establishment of righteousness and justice upon the earth. They cried out to God in their distress; they agonized over the prosperity of the wicked (cf. Psalm 37). The promise was always the same: “Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He will do it. And He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgment as the noonday” (Psalm 37:5,6).

Those who have come to acknowledge their unworthiness and spiritual poverty (verse 3), and who are genuinely contrite over their sins and others (verse 4) look for the time when righteousness will be established upon the earth. This righteousness is part and parcel with the coming Messiah and His millennial Kingdom.

Few Americans have any concept of the intensity of the hunger and thirst referred to by the Lord Jesus in the beatitudes. We are conditioned to thirst, something like Pavlov’s dogs, by television and the advertising media, who produce thirst sensations to sell their products. The thirst and hunger mentioned here is an unquenchable one, the result of prolonged deprivation.

Those who truly desire righteousness will be satisfied. First of all, Christians are clothed in the personal righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ (Zechariah 3; Romans 3:21,22; 10:4; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:21). Our filthy rags of self-righteous works are cast aside (Isaiah 64:6), and the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us when we trust in Him. Also, when our Lord returns, righteousness will prevail. “But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells” (2 Peter 3:13).

Implied in this beatitude is the assumption that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness recognize it is something which they do not possess in themselves. It is rather something which they lack, but desperately desire. The scribes and Pharisees were convinced that they possessed all the righteousness necessary for entrance into the kingdom of God. Our Lord’s response to the self-righteous religious segment of Israel made this fact clear: “… it is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners” (Mark 2:17).

**Those Who Are Merciful (verse 7)**

Another character trait of the true believer is that of mercy. Mercy as an attitude is closely related to pity. It is the painful response of a warm heart to tragedy and misery, pain and suffering. This attitude manifests itself in acts of kindness which are intended to relieve the suffering. Mercy sees the ugly and grotesque and reaches out to help rather than to look the other way and withdraw.

Mercy is one of the awe-inspiring attributes of God, whereby He looks upon man in his pitiful state of sin and rebellion and comes to his aid. The supreme act of mercy was the death of Christ upon Calvary’s cross. This mercy is therefore a characteristic of every true believer.

The scribes and Pharisees know nothing of genuine mercy. Any act of charity was simply an attempt to get public acclaim (cf. Matthew 6:2-4). In reality, the scribes and Pharisees looked upon the helpless and forsaken as potential prey: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you devour widows’ houses, even while for a pretense you make long prayers …” (Matthew 23:14).
Not only can the believer look back to God’s acts of mercy in the past, but he also can expect God to continue to deal with him in mercy. Thus every Christian can look forward to receiving mercy in the future. (We must not forget that God’s supreme act of mercy, the substitutionary atonement of Christ on the cross, was yet future to those to whom Jesus spoke this sermon.)

*Those Who Are Pure in Heart (verse 8)*

Inward purity is another facet of the character of a true believer. The scribes and Pharisees had occupied themselves with external, outward cleanliness. They were meticulous, for example, about the ceremonial washing of their hands, but at the same time they were corrupt within: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence” (Matthew 23:25).

Purity must begin inwardly, and then manifest itself by our overt acts (cf. Matthew 23:26). The people of God have always been marked by inner purity (Psalm 24:4; 51:10; 73:1).

It is they who have hoped to stand in the presence of the living God. And this is what our Lord has promised: “For they shall see God” (verse 8b).

This purity of heart, this absolute sincerity and openness before God and men is not the work of man. As David wrote, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me” (Psalm 51:10). Purity of heart is the work of God Himself.

*Those Who Are Peacemakers (verse 9)*

There are many kinds of peace these days. There is the ‘cold war’ kind of peace which means the absence of blatant aggression of warfare. This exists within nations and is characteristic of many marriages. Someone has described these marriages as ‘unholy deadlock.’ There is the peace of apathy and acquiescence. This is what might be called ‘peace at any cost.’ This is the peace of those who say, “Better Red than dead.”

But this is not the kind of peace of which our Lord speaks. Those who have come to faith in Jesus Christ as their sin-bearer and Savior have experienced peace with God. This peace spoke of our reconciliation with God, but it also involves the reconciliation of man with man (cf. Ephesians 2). Those who have experienced this peace will prove to be reconcilers of men (2 Corinthians 5:18-19).

Although we are to be peacemakers, we are not appeasers of men. We do not seek peace at any price, but we seek to share the peace achieved through the precious blood of Jesus Christ. In spite of our efforts to pursue the path of peace (cf. Romans 12:18) our faith will inevitably bring reaction, persecution, and conflict. The disciples were foretold by our Lord that such was to be the result of His ministry also:

“Do not think that I come to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-inlaw against her mother-in-law” (Matthew 10:34,35).

The proclamation of the gospel, combined with a life lived in accordance with the Word of God confronts men with a choice. They will either joyfully accept it, or vehemently reject it. Such are the natural (though not intended) consequences of Christian discipleship.

*The Response of the World to Christian Living (5:10-12)*

We have already seen that although a true believer may live a model life (as our Lord Jesus did without sin), there will be rejection and even persecution. Jesus did not present persecution on the liabilities side of the ledger, but rather on that of the blessings of discipleship. Thus, He began, “Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness …” (Matthew 5:10).

Persecution is a natural reaction to righteousness. Peter explained it this way,

“For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousals, drinking parties and abominable idolatries. And in all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excess of dissipation, and they malign you” (1 Peter 4:3,4).

The world is threatened by a Christian lifestyle. It convicts them of sin, and it condemns their way of life. The natural response to a threat is retaliation. Here is the source of our persecution.
There are three reasons which our Lord gives which explain why this persecution can be perceived as a blessing. First of all, it is suffering for His sake. It is a distinct privilege to suffer for the sake of Christ. “So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name” (Acts 5:41, cf. Philippians 1:29; 3:10; Colossians 1:24-29).

Second, suffering in the present gives promise of future rewards: “Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great …” (Matthew 5:12).

The writer to the Hebrews said of Moses, “By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing to endure ill-treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin” (Hebrews 11:24-25). The divine order has always been suffering, then glory.

Third, we can rejoice because persecution for Christ’s sake places us in the company of the prophets of old, who, for their testimony, were persecuted as well (Matthew 5:12b).

(Adapted from URL: https://bible.org/seriespage/fatal-failures-religion-1-secularism-matthew-51-16)

**Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary**

Taken together, the Beatitudes describe characteristics of people who are earnestly seeking the Lord. Living the God-honoring life can often go unrecognized and unrewarded by society in general, leaving the godly person to wonder, “Is it worth it?” Jesus promises, “Yes, it is worth it!” and gives hope for God’s blessing.

**Concluding Thoughts from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator**

In Matthew 5, Jesus pronounced on His disciples a series of blessings, known as the Beatitudes. Among others, He pronounced blessings on the poor in spirit (vs. 3), the peacemakers (vs. 9), and the merciful (vs. 7). It is important to remember that the different blessings are not intended for different groups of people. Instead, they are blessings for one group: God’s people. In the same way, the various blessings that Jesus promised are different ways of expressing the same basic blessing. Inheriting the earth (Matt. 5:5), possessing the kingdom of heaven (vs. 10), seeing God (vs. 8), and the other blessings are all expressions of the eternal salvation that Jesus gives. We might summarize the message of the Beatitudes in this way: Blessed are those who are truly seeking the kingdom of God, for the kingdom of God is near (cf. 3:2). Matthew 5:6 expresses one aspect of that general message. The people who are truly waiting for the kingdom are those who long to be truly righteous before God. Jesus promised that they will have their desire fulfilled. Ultimately, Jesus’ promise is related to what Paul would later teach: God has made us righteous in Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21). We have already had our desires to be righteous fulfilled because we have become righteous through what Jesus has accomplished. At the same time, we still look forward to a day when we will no longer sin. Some scholars dispute this. They argue that Matthew never teaches the idea of justification by faith that we find in Paul (cf. Rom. 3:28). As an alternative, they suggest that “righteousness” here really means justice. Under this interpretation, to hunger and thirst for righteousness is to look forward to a time when God will bring justice to the world, punishing the wicked and rewarding righteousness. When Matthew used the word “righteousness,” however, he usually meant personal righteousness, not justice for the world (cf. Matt. 3:15; 5:10,20; 9:13; 13:17;23:28). It is true that Matthew never stated the way in which people receive righteousness. Paul explained this in detail, particularly in the book of Romans. But this is the way God often reveals His truth in Scripture. While God always planned to send Jesus the Messiah and to make us righteous through His Son, the details of the plan become clearer as the story unfolds. Nevertheless, now that the divine plan has been fully revealed, we can look back and see hints along the way. It is significant that the Sermon on the Mount begins with a series of blessings (Matt. 5:3-12). By contrast, the covenant inaugurated under Moses began with a long series of curses and a forecast that these curses would come to pass when Israel failed to obey the law (Deut. 28). As Paul said, the law brings a curse (Gal. 3:10). With the coming of Jesus, the message of how to live began with a series of blessings. Before Jesus showed His disciples what a righteous life looks like, He promised that He would make them righteous. As for us, if we are to live the life Jesus commanded, we must remember that we are already righteous in Christ.
Concluding Thoughts from the Echoes Commentary

A Different Teaching - Jesus' earthly ministry drew huge crowds. In what has become known as the Sermon on the Mount, He outlined to His disciples and others how to live a life pleasing to God, one that was also against many of the values that His society held.

Be Blessed - The first part of the sermon is called the Beatitudes, from the Latin word meaning "blessed" that Jesus repeats several times. A truly "blessed" person in God's kingdom, Jesus explained, is first someone who confesses his or her sin and admits spiritual poverty. God's arms are outstretched to those who humbly say, in the words of the old hymn "Rock of Ages," "Nothing in my hand I bring, only to thy cross I cling...." The second beatitude talks about those who express a deep sorrow and grief over their fallen state before the heavenly Father. Those who mourn in this way are promised God's tender words and hand of encouragement. The third beatitude deals with meekness. This term is often associated with a person who is being pushed around, but this picture is incorrect. Biblically, meekness refers to a person who is patient, humble, gentle, willing to see themselves as they are, and submitted to God and His Word.

Blessed Assurance - Jesus continued to list God's blessings on those longing to serve Him: the compassionate, those honest from their heart, persons focused on peace and reconciliation, and finally people who take a stand for Christ but are persecuted for doing so. Those who show these characteristics will have rewards and accolades from God in this life and the one to come.

God's Way vs. the World's Way - The Beatitudes describe a radically different way of living that challenges the world's way of thinking and doing things. Christ's followers living out the beatitudes, in the power of the Holy Spirit, give the world a chance to see a reflection of Christ in them to those who need to know Him.