



The Sermon on the Mount Study
Bible Study Session 03
Matthew 5:3-12: Topic 3.0 - Beatitudes

Study By
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Greek NT

5.3 Μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν. 5.4 μακάριοι οἱ πενθοῦντες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ παρακληθήσονται. 5.5 μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς, ὅτι αὐτοὶ κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν. 5.6 μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες καὶ διψῶντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην, ὅτι αὐτοὶ χορτασθήσονται. 5.7 μακάριοι οἱ ἐλεήμονες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ ἐλεηθήσονται. 5.8 μακάριοι οἱ καθαροὶ τῆ καρδία, ὅτι αὐτοὶ τὸν θεὸν ὄψονται. 5.9 μακάριοι οἱ εἰρηνοποιοί, ὅτι αὐτοὶ υἱοὶ θεοῦ κληθήσονται. 5.10 μακάριοι οἱ δεδιωγμένοι ἕνεκεν δικαιοσύνης, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν. 5.11 μακάριοί ἐστε ὅταν ὀνειδίσωσιν ὑμᾶς καὶ διώξωσιν καὶ εἰπωσιν πᾶν πονηρὸν καθ' ὑμῶν [ψευδόμενοι] ἕνεκεν ἐμοῦ. 5.12 χαίrete καὶ ἀγαλλιᾶσθε, ὅτι ὁ μισθὸς ὑμῶν πολὺς ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς· οὕτως γὰρ ἐδίωξαν τοὺς προφῆτας τοὺς πρὸ ὑμῶν.

Gute Nachricht Bibel

3 Freuen dürfen sich alle, die nur noch von Gott etwas erwarten – mit Gott werden sie leben in seiner neuen Welt. 4 Freuen dürfen sich alle, die unter dieser heillosen Welt leiden – Gott wird ihrem Leid ein Ende machen. 5 Freuen dürfen sich alle, die unterdrückt sind und auf Gewalt verzichten – Gott wird ihnen die Erde zum Besitz geben. 6 Freuen dürfen sich alle, die danach hungern und dürsten, dass sich auf der Erde Gottes gerechter Wille durchsetzt – Gott wird ihren Hunger stillen. 7 Freuen dürfen sich alle, die barmherzig sind – Gott wird auch mit ihnen barmherzig sein. 8 Freuen dürfen sich alle, die im Herzen rein sind – sie werden Gott sehen. 9 Freuen dürfen sich alle, die Frieden stiften – Gott wird sie als seine Söhne und Töchter annehmen. 10 Freuen dürfen sich alle, die verfolgt werden, weil sie tun, was Gott will – mit Gott werden sie leben in seiner neuen Welt. 11 Freuen dürft ihr euch, wenn sie euch beschimpfen und verfolgen und verleumden, weil ihr zu mir gehört. 12 Freut euch und jubelt, denn bei Gott erwartet euch reichlicher Lohn. So haben sie die Propheten vor euch auch schon behandelt.

NRSV

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 receive mercy. 8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. 9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. 10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

NLT

3 God blesses those who realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is given to them. 4 God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted. 5 God blesses those who are gentle and lowly, for the whole earth will belong to them. 6 God blesses those who are hungry and thirsty for justice, for they will receive it in full. 7 God blesses those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy. 8 God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God. 9 God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God. 10 God blesses those who are persecuted because they live for God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. 11 God blesses you when you are mocked and persecuted and lied about because you are my followers. 12 Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted, too.

The Study of the Text:¹

1. What did the text mean to the first readers?

The answer to this question comes from careful consideration of two perspectives of the scripture text: its context, both historical and literary; and its internal meaning, i.e., the exegesis of the text.

Context of our passage:

With the **historical context**, i.e., historical setting, one has to examine the use of the distinct

¹Serious study of the biblical text must look at the 'then' meaning, i.e., the historical meaning, and the 'now' meaning, i.e., the contemporary application, of the scripture text. In considering the historical meaning, both elements of literary design and historical aspects must be considered. In each study we will attempt a summary overview of these procedures in the interpretation of the scripture text.

literary form called beatitude in the ancient world. Matt. 5:3-12 represents the most creative use of this ancient form anywhere in the Bible, and it draws heavily on established forms of beatitude expression especially in the ancient Jewish world. In the Greek speaking ancient world, the beatitude was a way to express a proverbial saying that reflected wise insight into daily life. It had no particular religious base or orientation. But in the Jewish world the religious viewpoint was foundational to the beatitude. Additionally, it assumed the nature of a formal prayer that invoked God’s blessing on those who met the requirements set forth in the beatitude.² In the Jewish temple in Jerusalem, the pronouncing of beatitudes from the Psalms and Proverbs was an important part of the worship of God by Jews.

It is out of this heritage that Matthew shapes his account of Jesus’ use of beatitudes. Luke, on the other hand, reflects less of the Jewish influence and considerable personal creativity in his very different way of shaping the form of the beatitude in Jesus’ teaching. Thus Jesus is less ‘Jewish’ in Luke’s account, than in Matthew’s account. This shift is most likely dictated by the Jewish audience of Matthew and the more universal Jewish/Gentile orientation of Luke’s gospel to a wider audience.

Literary Form. The literary form, beatitude, had been around in the ancient world several centuries before Jesus made use of them.³

Third Person:

Blessed are⁴ _____ Subject Designation⁵
 |
 ‘Because’ Clause⁶

Second Person:

Blessed are _____ (You)
 |
 ‘Whenever’ Clause⁷

[Two types of structure](#) had developed among Jews by the beginning of the Christian era. There was the so-called **“Third Person” beatitude** where the core structure is **“blessed are those who...”** The subject designation (**“those who...”**) defines the required condition for the blessing to happen. The secondary element is the dependent causal clause **“because ...”** This serves as the foundation for the blessing, thus defining its content. The eight beatitudes in vv. 3-10 follow this structure.

The other form was the **“Second Person” beatitude**: **“blessed are you ...”** The causal foundation defining the content of the blessing is missing, but is replaced by a temporal clause (**“whenever you...”**) which now defines the required condition for the blessing. Matt. 5:11 follows this pattern. This beatitude then serves

²For a helpful discussion of the religious tone of ‘blessedness’ as foundational to the beatitude, see David P. Scaer, “Blessedness,” *Baker’s Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* online: “The Bible contains the words ‘bless,’ ‘blessing,’ and ‘blessed,’ but not the noun ‘blessedness,’ although the idea of a spiritual state of beatitude in which believers enjoy God’s fellowship permeates the Bible. Bless translates the Hebrew *asre* [אַשֶׁר] and *baruk* [בָּרַךְ] and the Greek *eulogetos* [εὐλογητός] and *makarios* [μακάριος]. All are used of believers, but only baruk and eulogetos [eujloghtov] of God. These words suggest divine protection, evoking believers’ trust in their benefactor. They know God as the origin of every good thing in both this life and the next. The English word “blessedness” is derived from the root word for “blood” and suggests something set aside through sacrifice and in the Bible through Christ’s sacrificial death for sins. Every aspect of the Christian life is embraced by blessedness with no credit assumed by the person experiencing it. It is purely God’s grace....”

³For a more detailed discussion, see my “Literary Forms of Beatitudes,” cranfordville.com.

⁴In the Greek, [makarioi](#).

⁵The subject designation defines the prerequisite condition necessary for the pronouncement of blessedness to come to pass in the life of the individual.

⁶The “because” [Gk., [hoti](#)] (causal) clause sets forth the foundation upon which the pronouncement of blessedness rests. In so doing, it defines the scope of the state of blessedness. Usually there is also an antithetical emphasis to the condition set forth in the Subject Designation. Sometimes this causal statement is omitted.

⁷The “whenever” [Gk, [hotan](#)] (indefinite temporal) clause sets forth the condition which the individual(s) must meet before the pronouncement of blessedness can take place in the individual(s) life. This takes the place of the Subject Designation in the Third Person form of the beatitude. A substitute clause which may show up is the conditional (ei, ean = ‘if’) clause. See John 13:17. The meaning is very close to the temporal hotan clause.

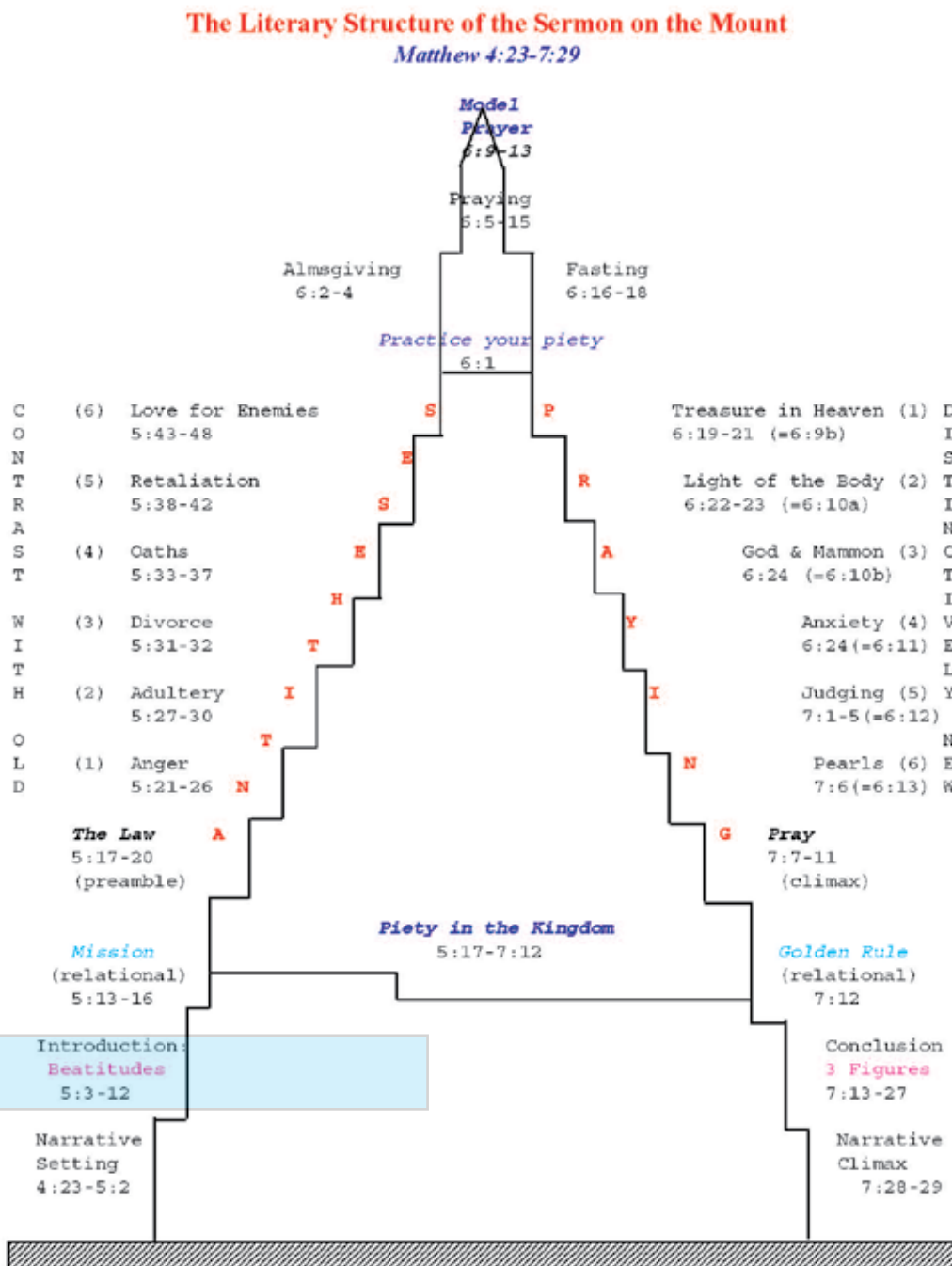
as a commentary expansion on the eighth Third Person Beatitude in 5:10.

In addition to this twofold structure of ancient beatitudes, another development among Jews took place during the intertestamental period before the Christian era. With the rise of intense messianic expectation in apocalyptic Judaism came a modification of the older Jewish form so common to the Wisdom Tradition in Proverbs and Psalms in the Old Testament, and other later Jewish writings. In the midst of persecution the expectation of God's Anointed Deliverer (the Messiah) who would liberate the Jews from foreign oppressors, the content part of the Third Person beatitude shifted time frames. In the older Wisdom beatitude the "because..." clause contained a *present tense verb* signaling that the blessing of God could be realized in the here and now, once the required condition was met. But the Apocalyptic beatitude shifted the verb tense to *future time*, thus projecting God's blessing to be realized when the Messiah arrived.

Literary Context.

As the outline reflects, the beatitudes in Matthew 5:3-12 serve as an Introduction to the Sermon. In so doing, they collectively paint a portrait of a disciple of Jesus in idealized terms. In these prayer invoking of God's blessings, these eight formal third person beatitudes lay a conceptual foundation for the rest of the Sermon. As such they become something of a summary of the core spiritual principles set forth in the Sermon. Thus they need to be studied in detail and understood correctly. With such, one can better, and more easily, understand the rest of the Sermon.

Their connection to the Decalogue in the Books of Moses in Exodus and Deuteronomy is important. Basically, they follow the core Jewish religious principle of the vertical / horizontal nature of true religion. The Ten Commandments reflect that one cannot be correctly related to God (the vertical) without being correctly related to other people (the horizontal). That is, religion includes behavior and morality as well as spiritual devotion. The Decalogue is divided into this twofold segment;



Source: Lorin L. Cranford, *Study Manual of the Sermon on the Mount: Greek Text* (Fort Worth: Scripta Publishing Inc., 1988), 320. Adapted from Gunter Bornkamm, "Der Aufbau der Bergpredigt," *New Testament Studies* 24 (1977-78): 419-432.

the Sermon follows the same pattern with four beatitudes for each. By so structuring Jesus' teachings, Matthew demonstrates the continuity of Christianity with correct Old Testament understanding. Luke in his depiction with but four beatitudes includes the vertical / horizontal, but without the overt emphasis found in Matthew's version. This Jewish continuity wasn't a major thesis of Luke's gospel, as with Matthew's gospel.

Comparison of Matthew's and Luke's beatitudes:

Matthew 5:3-12

Luke 6:20b-26

³ Blessed are the poor in spirit, <i>for theirs <u>is</u> the kingdom of heaven.</i>	^{20b} Blessed are you who are poor, <i>for yours <u>is</u> the kingdom of God.</i>	²⁴ But woe to you who are rich , <i>for <u>you have</u> received your consolation.</i>
⁴ Blessed are those who mourn, <i>for they will be comforted.</i>		
⁵ Blessed are the meek, <i>for they will inherit the earth.</i>		
⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, <i>for they will be filled.</i>	²¹ Blessed are you who are hungry now , <i>for you will be filled.</i>	²⁵ Woe to you who are full now , <i>for you will be hungry.</i>

⁷ Blessed are the merciful, <i>for they will receive mercy.</i>	Blessed are you who weep now , <i>for you will laugh.</i>	Woe to you who are laughing now , <i>for you will mourn and weep.</i>
⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart, <i>for they will see God.</i>		
⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers, <i>for they will be called children of God.</i>		
¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, <i>for theirs <u>is</u> the kingdom of heaven.</i>		
¹¹ Blessed are you <i>when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.</i> ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, <i>for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.</i>	²² Blessed are you <i>when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man.</i> ²³ Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; <i>for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.</i>	²⁶ Woe to you <i>when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.</i>

One quickly notices important differences between Matthew and Luke. **Matthew** has the eight traditional third person beatitudes in verses 3-10. The second person beatitude with amplification in verses 11-12 is attached to the eighth beatitude as expansion and emphasis. The vertical (vv. 3-6) / horizontal (vv. 7-10) emphasis in Matthew is clear and strong. **Luke**, on the other hand, limits his beatitudes to four, but sets the opposite emphasis in four parallel 'woes.' By a creative combination of elements of the third person and second person beatitude forms, he gives Jesus' words greater creativity and appeal to a non Jewish audience. The setting of both ancient forms of beatitude and woe in parallel opposites elevates the stress

on the concepts set forth. Antithetical parallelism in the ancient world was a common literary device for emphasis, normally on the first strophe by stating its opposite in the second.

Exegesis of the Text:

The meaning of the beatitudes now can be considered.

One quick word to note, lest misunderstanding take place. Matthew typically says "[kingdom of Heaven](#)" whereas Mark and Luke will say "[kingdom of God](#)." Is there a difference between these two labels? No. Matthew's Kingdom of Heaven is a part of his Jewish orientation to seldom if ever use the name "God" directly. Jewish tradition interpreted the Decalogue prohibition about using God's name in vain as demanding a cessation of using the main Hebrew word for God. Thus Jewish writings will avoid direct references to God. Matthew reflects this, not just with his Kingdom of Heaven reference, but also with his frequent use of the passive voice verb. For example, when Mark and Luke say "God did this," Matthew will characteristically say "This was done," leaving the reader to understand that God did it without directly using God's name. In writing to Jewish Christian readers, such pattern affirmed the Jewishness of the teachings of Jesus.

In light of this organizing structure, let's take a quick look at these eight beatitudes.

How does one reach out to God in Jesus' teaching? **Four requirements** are set forth in vv. 3-6: 1) "[poverty in spirit](#)" (οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι); 2) "[mourning](#)" (οἱ πενθοῦντες); 3) "[meekness](#)" (οἱ πραεῖς); and 4) "[hungering and thirsting for righteousness](#)" (οἱ πεινῶντες καὶ διψῶντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην). Both individually and collectively, these four requirements define a person who is profoundly aware of his own sinfulness and desperate need of God. This sense of poverty reaches down to the very core of his existence, his spirit. His sadness over his sinfulness and that of the world around him leads to deep grief and sorrow. His posture before God is not arrogance, but humility, meekness in his realization that submission to God is central. Framing that meekness is a passionate longing to do what pleases the Heavenly Father. Like a starving beggar longing for food, he craves a life of genuine obedience to God. Later in the Sermon, Jesus will make it clear that superficial obedience won't cut the mustard (7:21-13): "[21 Not all people who sound religious are really godly. They may refer to me as 'Lord,' but they still won't enter the Kingdom of Heaven. The decisive issue is whether they obey my Father in heaven. 22 On judgment day many will tell me, 'Lord, Lord, we prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.' 23 But I will reply, 'I never knew you. Go away; the things you did were unauthorized.'](#)"

In Luke's account in 6:20-26, a similar emphasis emerges but with some distinct tones.

"Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

"Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled.

"Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.

"Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.

"But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.

"Woe to you who are full now, for you will be hungry.

"Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep.

"Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.

By lining up the two sets side-by-side, one can more easily see the similarities and differences:

Matthew's Requirements:

Blessed are the poor in spirit,

Μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι,

Blessed are those who mourn,

μακάριοι οἱ πενθοῦντες,

Blessed are the meek,

μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,

μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες καὶ διψῶντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην,

Luke's Requirements:

Blessed are you who are poor,

Μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοί,

woe to you who are rich

οὐαὶ ὑμῖν τοῖς πλουσίοις

Blessed are you who are hungry now,

μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες νῦν

Woe to you who are full now

οὐαὶ ὑμῖν, οἱ ἐμπεπλησμένοι νῦν,

Clearly Luke puts more stress on the poverty / wealth angle in his emphases, than does Matthew. In his

contrast between blessing and woe, Luke exactly reverses the situation from each other. Matthew's more extensive presentation most likely grows out of his efforts to relate Jesus' teaching to the Suffering Servant emphasis in Isaiah 61:1-3.⁸ In both sets of requirements strong emphasis is set on genuine, deep commitment to God. In the original audience of Jesus, the extensive piety of Jewish peasants characterized by simplicity and non-legalistic expression, became the focal point of Jesus' pronounced blessing.⁹ If you truly want to be a disciple in the Kingdom, then your devotion to God must take on these qualities.

When our search for God takes on these qualities, what is our hope? **God's blessings** will come in the form of 1) "possessing the Kingdom now" (ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν); 2) "being comforted at the Messiah's arrival" (αὐτοὶ παρακληθήσονται); 3) "regaining God's good creation through the Messiah's victory over evil" (αὐτοὶ κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν); and 4) "setting down at God's eschatological banquet table to abundant nourishment that lasts for ever" (αὐτοὶ χορτασθήσονται).

Again a comparison of the promised blessing between Matthew and Luke is helpful:

Matthew's Requirements:

Blessed are the poor in spirit,

Μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι,

for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven

ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.

Luke's Requirements:

Blessed are you who are poor,

Μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοί,

for yours is the kingdom of God.

ὅτι ὑμετέρα ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ.

Woe to you who are rich

οὐαὶ ὑμῖν τοῖς πλουσίοις

for you have received your consolation.

ὅτι ἀπέχετε τὴν παράκλησιν ὑμῶν.

Blessed are those who mourn,

μακάριοι οἱ πενθοῦντες,

for they will be comforted.

ὅτι αὐτοὶ παρακληθήσονται.

Blessed are the meek,

μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς

for they will inherit the earth.

ὅτι αὐτοὶ κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,

μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες καὶ διψῶντες τὴν δικαιο-

σύνην,

for they will be filled.

ὅτι αὐτοὶ χορτασθήσονται.

Blessed are you who are hungry now,

μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες νῦν

for you will be filled.

ὅτι χορτασθήσεσθε.

Woe to you who are full now

οὐαὶ ὑμῖν, οἱ ἐμπεπλησμένοι νῦν,

for you will be hungry.

ὅτι πεινάσετε.

Now that's blessing! Real, undiluted, indescribable blessing! We get the appetizer now as His children, and the main course is yet to come in portions and quality never seen in this world. For those who reject Jesus as the center of the Kingdom, namely, the rich, Luke's woes predict the awesome wrath of God coming upon them with the Messiah's arrival. No blessing awaits them in eternity. Whatever positive they

⁸Isa. 61:1-3 (NRSV): "1 The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; 2 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; 3 to provide for those who mourn in Zion — to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display his glory. "

⁹For an extensive amplification of this see my university lecture "Frömmigkeit in den urchristlichen Gemeinden," or the English translation, "Piety in Primitive Christianity," at cranfordville.com: <http://cranfordville.com/Cranfordville/Lectures.htm>.

will experience from their wealth will have already been experienced in this life, and that's all.

But that's just the first part. The other side of that coin of religious commitment demands that we reach out to people around us, as an expression of our reaching out to God.

What's that involve? Again, four requirements are set forth with four promised blessings.

We must 1) "show mercy" (οἱ ἐλεήμονες); 2) "be genuine in our choices to reach out to people", that is, be a WYSIWYG¹⁰ kind of person (οἱ καθαροὶ τῆ καρδίᾳ); 3) "be a peace maker, not just a peace lover" (οἱ εἰρηνοποιοί); and 4) "not be looking for a chair when it costs to stand up for God's values" (οἱ δεδιωγμένοι ἕνεκεν δικαιοσύνης). These strokes in the portrait of the disciple underscore risk taking and courage. Also, genuine motivation and respect for the value of unity and harmony between people are critical. Compassion and caring are major traits.

Again comparison between Matthew and Luke becomes important:

Matthew's Requirements and Promise:

Blessed are the merciful,

μακάριοι οἱ ἐλεήμονες,

for they will receive mercy.

ὅτι αὐτοὶ ἐλεηθήσονται. .

Blessed are the pure in heart,

μακάριοι οἱ καθαροὶ τῆ καρδίᾳ,

for they will see God.

ὅτι αὐτοὶ τὸν θεὸν ὄψονται.

Blessed are the peacemakers,

μακάριοι οἱ εἰρηνοποιοί,

for they will be called the children of God.

ὅτι αὐτοὶ υἱοὶ θεοῦ κληθήσονται.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake,

μακάριοι οἱ δεδιωγμένοι ἕνεκεν δικαιοσύνης,

for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.

ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.

Blessed are you

when people 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 in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

μακάριοί ἐστε

ὅταν ὀνειδίσωσιν ὑμᾶς καὶ διώξωσιν καὶ εἴπωσιν πᾶν πονηρὸν καθ' ὑμῶν [ψευδόμενοι] ἕνεκεν ἐμοῦ.

χαίrete καὶ ἀγαλλιᾶσθε, ὅτι ὁ μισθὸς ὑμῶν πολὺς ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς· οὕτως γὰρ ἐδίωξαν τοὺς προφήτας τοὺς πρὸ ὑμῶν.

Luke's Requirements and Promise:

Blessed are you who weep now,

μακάριοι οἱ κλαίοντες νῦν,

for you will laugh.

ὅτι γελάσετε.

woe to you who are laughing now,

οὐαί, οἱ γελῶντες νῦν,

for you will mourn and weep.

ὅτι πενήθησете καὶ κλαύσετε.

Blessed are you

when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man.

Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.

μακάριοί ἐστε

ὅταν μισήσωσιν ὑμᾶς οἱ ἄνθρωποι καὶ ὅταν ἀφορίσωσιν ὑμᾶς καὶ ὀνειδίσωσιν καὶ ἐκβάλωσιν τὸ ὄνομα ὑμῶν ὡς πονηρὸν ἕνεκα τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου·

χάρητε ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ καὶ σκιρτήσατε, ἰδοὺ γὰρ ὁ μισθὸς ὑμῶν πολὺς ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ· κατὰ τὰ αὐτὰ γὰρ ἐποίησαν τοῖς προφήταις οἱ πατέρες αὐτῶν.

Woe to you

when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.

¹⁰What You See Is What You Get"

Once more, the different emphases between Matthew and Luke become clear. In the horizontal emphasis of both writers, Matthew fleshes out more detail of relationships with others. Luke's common theme is primarily on victimization, as he reaches out to the poor and oppressed in his presentation of the story of Jesus. The theme on 'weeping' is primarily victimization, as well as the obvious stress on being persecuted. Matthew doesn't overlook the theme of victimization, but he does include some positive themes of productive reaching out to others as essential to proper discipleship. This is in keeping with the Jewish thrust of his presentation of the beatitudes of Jesus.

Combine these four with the preceding four and you have the kind of people that Jesus wants his followers to become in this world.

The promise in reaching out to others is substantial: 1) "we stand to receive God's mercy in eschatological judgment" (αὐτοὶ ἐλεηθήσονται); 2) "we will see our God face to face and experience His tender care, as He wipes the tears of heartache from our eyes" (Rev. 21:4) (αὐτοὶ τὸν θεὸν ὄψονται); 3) "on that day we will hear God's voice calling us his children, despite others having called us heretics" (αὐτοὶ υἱοὶ θεοῦ κληθήσονται) and 4) "we will discover His powerful presence and leadership in the face of our enemies" (αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν). Note the expansion of this in vv. 11-12.

The promised blessing / woe section in Matthew and Luke move along similar lines. With the apocalyptic thrust in beatitudes four through seven in Matthew and beatitude three in Luke, the anticipation is of eschatological judgment and blessing at the coming of the Messiah at the end of time. In the wisdom thrust of Matthew's eight beatitude with its expansion and in Luke's fourth beatitude, the emphasis is upon the past and the present. Persecuted believers stand in the heritage of the persecuted prophets of the Old Testament. God's reward to come in eschatological judgment is already in place and is substantial. It's just waiting to be delivered in the final day. This anticipated blessing grows out of the present reality that persecuted disciples of Christ are today the true possessors of the Kingdom, not the persecutors who would have made this claim in Jesus' day.



Wow! We should take heart. God is with us now through the thick and thin of life's daily struggles. What we have to look forward to is unbelievable. Although we have been abused and called everything in the book for our Christian commitment in this life, when the final day of examination comes, we will pass with flying colors. Our accusers will flunk that exam miserably.

Jesus laid out a demanding agenda for his disciples. The demands are substantial; they cover every aspect of religious life -- both demands toward God and demands toward other people. But the promised blessing is equally great. We get to experience God's presence and direct leadership in this journey through life.

His road map puts us at a destination that no Powerball Lottery could ever purchase. And -- this prize lasts for ever!

2. What does the text mean to us today?

- 1) The Kingdom of Heaven / of God comes as a gift, not as something earned by human achievement. Have you accepted God's reigning authority into your life?
- 2) When God begins to control your life, the beatitudes define core areas of His promised blessing as He 'runs the show' in us through Christ. How much of these blessings have you experienced thus far in your spiritual journey through life?
- 3) The beatitudes paint a beautiful portrait of a disciple. How close a resemblance to this portrait do you have?

