

Lessons from the Sermon on the Mount: Lesson 3

Matthew 5:7-12

I. The Portrait of a Citizen:

A. We are continuing our studies through those amazing lessons that Jesus left us in what we most often refer to as “The Sermon on the Mount”

1. As we’ve previously stated, these principles and commands were left for us as citizens in God’s Kingdom, and member’s of His family: As Matthew described it in 4:23, Jesus was preaching to those crowds “the Gospel of the Kingdom”
2. As Jesus began His teaching with “the Beatitudes” we see that it was of great importance that His audience understand that this Kingdom, which would be like none other, would be made up of men and women who behaved like no others!
3. The characteristics that we have seen so far may be traits that we through knowledge of scripture understand to be the markers of true strength, but for those listening to Jesus teach they surely must have seemed like a recipe for failure and weakness!
 - a) A meek individual, going around with “poor spirits”, hungry and mourning was not a description that most people then or today would wish to describe them;
 - (i) We could venture to say that even if they understood Jesus’ greater spiritual meaning behind those words, they still wouldn’t be lining up to be those kinds of people.

B. As Jesus continued to describe the sort of people who would be called blessed in the Kingdom, He no doubt continued to surprise those present; both with what kind of men and women they were to be, and perhaps most of all, how the world would receive them:

II. “Blessed are the Merciful” (v7)

A. Something that we have stressed in our previous two lessons is that in part, what makes these attributes stand out so much is how harshly they run counter to the normal way of the world:

1. And while we may not find many who place much value in what Jesus has held up so far, *mercy*, is something that is often recognized as a good, or important quality for society: Even those who are not fond of showing it will desire it should they find themselves in need of it:
 2. But the mercy that is shown by those of the world is very different from what Jesus would have His followers practice:
 - a) For one thing, it is wildly inconsistent:
 - (1) Mercy may only be extend to those that someone likes (It is something that Jesus elaborates on in v46)
 - (2) Mercy might only be offered if there is something to be gained
 - (3) Mercy could be shown in one moment because the mood is right, but refused the next because it would be too great of a burden to have to help someone else!
 - (4) Others might show one mercy to someone who has never done them any wrong, but would never think of offering mercy to someone that they have the chance to get back at:
 3. No, the mercy that Jesus is speaking of is completely unique from the type of mercy that may or may not be shown in the world:
- B. While the mercy of the world may not have any particular moral basis, the mercy that a citizen of the Kingdom must show comes from our awareness of God's mercy: The fact that we are aware of just how much we depend on His mercy, and just how much he has shown it to us:
1. **This sort of** mercy shows compassion in all situations, not simply towards those who are able to help themselves or may be able to return the favor, but to those who are helpless and weak.
 - a) It is the type of mercy on display in the parable of the Samaritan in Luke 10:
 - (1)At the end of the parable, when the actions of all the men who had the chance to help the poor, robbed, dying man on the side of the road, are compared, Jesus asks who proved to be a neighbor to that man?
 - (2) The Response in v 37 is the one who showed mercy... Jesus commands that we go and do the same

2. **It is a mercy** that doesn't run out when we get tired or impatient: It is consistent:

a) When Peter came to Jesus in Matthew 18, he asked how many times he had to forgive his brother: *how many times do I have to extend mercy?* Is 7 times good enough?

b) Jesus no doubt surprised Peter when He answered in verse 22, not 7 but up to 70x7!

3. **And so, where** do we find this kind of mercy? Where do we get the "willpower" to treat people like this? If we want to have the kind of mercy Jesus is speaking of then it cannot be based on the same whims that the world uses:

a) It must come from our sense of gratitude and indebtedness to God: There was absolutely nothing enticing or desirable about us when God showed us mercy:

b) Paul describes it best when writing to the Romans:

(1) *For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.- Romans 5:6-8*

(2) He goes on to further emphasize this point in verse 10 by stating that we were enemies of God!

c) If a citizen of the Kingdom is every struggling with having a merciful attitude, it will most likely be because they have forgotten what they were like before they took advantage of God's mercy:

(1) *For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, - Titus 3:3-5*

d) As Jesus continued to teach Peter and the other disciples in Matthew 18 by telling the store of the unforgiving servant, He made the point that showing mercy to others does not put God in our debt, forcing Him to show mercy to us.

(i) But showing mercy and compassion to others is required if we want God to show it to us: It is the way that we show that we are humbly seeking His forgiveness, that we are showing it to others:

4. Therefore, we should not only be willing to show mercy, but should be *looking* for opportunities to show it.

a) The greatest act of mercy that we can do is to share the gospel with the lost: Matthew will record in Matthew 9:36 that it was Jesus compassion, or mercy, that drove Him to say to the disciples to look out on a plentiful harvest and lament that there are so few workers:

III. Blessed are the Pure in Heart:

A. When we think of purity, we associate it with cleanliness: Something that is not mixed or blended with other things:

1. Most often we go on to think of this as referring to a life of righteousness: And while that is certainly a Biblical principles that is taught, I think that Jesus may have something else in mind here: *related, but slightly different*:
2. Some have stated that we might word this “blessed are the utterly sincere”: I think that this meshes well with what Jesus would say in other passages about the single minded devotion that one must have in order to draw near to God:
 - a) If someone enters the Kingdom, it will not be by accident, it will be because it was the sole purpose of his heart to do so:
 - b) It would seem that this is part of what Jesus would state later on in Matt 6:22-24;
 - c) It is this kind of heart that a sinner must have if the seed is going to take root: Luke 8:15
3. A good example of this is in the book of James:
 - a) In chapter 1, James warns that a double-minded man is unstable in all of his ways, and shouldn't expect anything from God:
 - b) He will then urge them in chapter 4:8 to cleanse your hands you sinners, purify your hearts, you double-minded; in order to draw near to God:

- B. All of this is to say that those who try to stand with a foot in the Kingdom, and one out of the Kingdom, are not going to be the pure in heart that Jesus describes here:
1. In order to see God, to fully understand and have a close and personal relationship with Him requires that to be the single pursuit of the heart:

Conclusion:

- As we draw near to the end of this portion of Jesus sermon, we continue to see that Jesus expects a lot out of the citizens of His Kingdom
- But I hope what we also see is that all of these are to our benefit:
 - If we view these as more than just a list to be memorized, but truly as a standard for living; what kind of people we want to be, then our lives cannot be kept from improving: