

Life of Christ

A study of the life and teachings of Jesus

Blessed are the Poor and Meek

by Bronson Duke

The Sermon on the Mount is considered by many to be the greatest message ever preached, and I would agree. Jesus teaches God's kingdom-culture, subverting how our world defines strength and power and shows us God's way to look at things. He kicks it off with a bang: the Beatitudes. Each of these phrases turns our way of looking at things on its head! We are going to look at three of them today in Matthew 5:2-5 (ESV):

And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Marc highlighted something significant in his devotional teaching today: we cannot jump straight into reading ourselves into the text. Why is that important? In this passage, if we do that in verse 3, we may well do one of two things:

- 1) We could say, "Well, I'm not financially poor, so this doesn't apply to me," or
- 2) We assume, "This is only talking about spiritual poverty."

If we do the first, we miss the truth that there is such a thing as spiritual poverty. Too often, we can miss that! But if we do the second, we could miss God's promise to bless those who are in poverty with His Holy Spirit. This would be a terrible mistake! We are called to bring hope to *all* people. He is applying the ultimate value and worth that can be given by giving any and every person who might call on His name the gift of His Spirit.

The same approach to Scripture equally applies to verse 4. If we jump immediately to how we perceive mourning in our own lives, we can miss God's promise to His people. The Jews in Jesus' day were in mourning for one primary reason: they were currently under Roman occupation and were crying out to God for a Messiah who would come as a conquering King. This Messiah would defeat the Romans by military force, run them out of town, and restore Israel to its independence as a nation under the one true God, Yahweh.

He says here that those who mourn and yearn for God's rule will be comforted: God will do what He promised. God will indeed comfort all those who mourn for all different reasons, but the way He did it was better than anyone could ever expect. Yes, He came as a Conquering King. Still, the enemy he defeated was far more formidable than the Romans. They prayed the Messiah would defeat the Romans and give them their land back. Yet, Jesus came and defeated the ultimate oppressor, sin, and death, and gave their lives back.

Our final verse for today, I believe, is the most challenging for our culture: "Blessed are the meek." Another way to say this is "Blessed are the humble." Our culture today values wealth and strength above all else. Jesus teaches quite the opposite: to be strong in the kingdom of God, you've got to be humble. To be strong in the kingdom of God, you've got to consider others as better than yourself. To be strong in the Kingdom of God, you've got to rely on God's power, provision, and strength rather than your own. What a challenge to the way we naturally think! I've found more often than not, the ways of God don't line up with the values of man, but if they did, what need would we have for a Savior?

Jesus came to teach us a new way to live from top to bottom—the way of living God intended for us. What would it look like to align every area of your life with the values Jesus taught?

Questions Do you value humility in your spiritual walk? Do you yearn for God's redemption? Do you align your spiritual life and practices with those values that Jesus valued?

Family Chat What does it mean to be humble? Talk about some examples of when you saw someone display a humble spirit by their actions.

Take Action Talk to your life group or accountability partners about practical ways to practice humility in your daily relationships, and how to create a culture in your family and community that yearns for God's redemption.