

Crossroads Baptist Church  
February 7, 2007 6:30  
Matthew 5: 3  
Beatitudes: The Pursuit of Happiness #1

## “Can You Be Happy and Poor?”

Our Declaration of Independence tells us that "the pursuit of happiness" is a fundamental human right. But if you don't know what will really make you happy it's futile to pursue it.

But Jesus begins his greatest sermon with the pursuit of happiness. Look before Will Smith's block buster movie by the same title came out, Jesus was teaching us how to pursue happiness.

Since we are preaching through the book of Romans and in chapter four he talks about this word "blessed," I won't go back through that material with you tonight. But let me just remind you that it is the state of supreme blessing, the state of the gods, the state of the rich who have no worries.

It is interesting to note that the Old Testament ends with a curse and the New begins with the blessed event of Jesus' birth and now the good news of a blessed life. Jesus doesn't open his mouth with cursings, but blessings.

It's the same thought of Psalm 1. "O the blessedness of the man."

The Beatitudes are the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount as taught by Jesus. Some call this sermon the ordination sermon of the disciples, others The Magna Carta of the Kingdom. I believe this is the essence of the teaching of Jesus to the inner circle. This was not one sitting for the word "taught them" is imperfect tense which means a repeated and habitual action.

This is not describing how to be saved because the gospel is missing here (the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.) But instead it is a manual for the kingdom life of all who follow Jesus. It is a complete portrait of Jesus in you.

### I. The Sequence of the Beatitudes.

There is a unique sequence here revealed in the eight beatitudes.

T. W. Hunt, in his book *The Mind of Christ* reveals these thoughts.

#### A. The Basis of these beatitudes

The first four demonstrate need. The poor in spirit need God. The mourners need the Holy Spirit. That is one reason why God breaks them-to create the need, or to make them aware of the need. The meek need others. The hungry for righteousness need spiritual food.

The second four focus on giving. The merciful give God's grace to the world. The pure in heart give holiness to the world. The peacemakers give wholeness. The persecuted give themselves.

The two halves are in balance. God gives of Himself because of our desperate need. The greater the need, the more abundance His giving. After receiving Christ, we move into the area of self-giving (the second four).

#### B. The Keys revealed in these Beatitudes

The first four are the keys to God's heart – poor in spirit, mourning, meekness, and hungry for righteousness.

The second four are the keys to Christ's character – mercy, pure, peacemakers, and persecuted. These qualities are Christ like and we can practice giving because we have so much of God.

#### C. The Focus of these Beatitudes

The first four turn the mind to God. In poverty of spirit, brokenness, meekness and hunger we instinctively turn to God.

The second four turn the mind to others. We do not direct our mercy toward God, but toward our neighbor. We demonstrate peace, purity and grace under persecution to those around us.

This order follows the order of the Ten Commandments where the first four are related to our relationship with God and the last six our relationships with one another.

This order follows the order of the two greatest commandments. The most important commandment is to love God above all, and the second is to love our neighbor.

#### D. The Greatness of the Beatitudes

The first four are the door to greatness. They produce qualities that Jesus said make us greatest in the kingdom.

The second four are the practice of greatness.

### E. The Object of the Beatitudes

God changes our inner life with the first four. Our need for God and for others grows profoundly.

In the second four, God uses our outer life to affect the world around us.

In the first four, God uses circumstances to manifest our need of Him and His supply.

God expresses Himself to others through the outworking of the second four in our lives.

## II. The State of the person in the Beatitude.

The first beatitude deals with the poor. But what poor is he referring? Economical or spiritual?

Luke 21:3 speaking of the widow who was poor but she had some resources. Matthew 5 is the word to describe a beggar as in Luke 16:20 who had nothing.

The word carries the thought – to shrink or cover. A beggar would with one hand put out his hand and with another hand would cover his face in embarrassment.

In the Hebrew, there were four steps you went through for poor:

1. You were poor with no financial resources.
2. You had no influence, no power, no prestige.
3. You were down trodden by man and oppressed by men.
4. Your only resource left is God.

To be poor was to reduce a person to total destitution.

If Jesus was talking about being poor with no financial resources, then he would contradict himself in Matthew 5:42 where he said to share your financial blessings.

But this refers to a spiritual poorness.

Look at the quote from Isaiah 61: 1 “He will preach good tidings to the poor.”

Here the poor Israelites were in exile away from the Temple and far away spiritually from their God.

He can not be speaking here (in Isaiah) of the economic poor.

You must be spiritually poor in order to inherit the kingdom of God. It is impossible to receive a handful like the kingdom of God if your hands are already full of yourself and your good works. If you have need of nothing, then nothing is exactly what you will get.

You must be poor – not rich. Empty handed. Spiritually bankrupt. Recognize one’s utter helplessness and lack of spiritual merit and no saving resources in yourself.

“Nothing in my hand I bring,  
Simply to thy cross I cling;  
Naked, come to thee for dress;  
Helpless, look to thee for grace;  
Foul, I to the fountain fly;  
Wash me, Savior, or I die.”

There can be no haughty, self-sufficient spirit come to Christ and receive the kingdom. The world admires that spirit but God abhors it.

Proverbs 16:5 “Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord.”

To the church at Laodicea in Revelation 3:17, Jesus said that they thought they were rich and wealthy and had need of nothing, but he said they were wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked.

## III. The Surprise of the promise of the Beatitude.

To the person who has nothing, he is given the kingdom of Heaven.

What a gift.

The kingdom of Heaven implies that God is enthroned. Therefore, before God takes the throne it must be vacant of ourselves.

For our brokenness over our sin, we are given the assurance that our sin is forgiven.  
For our brokenness over our nothing, we are now “blessed richly.  
For our brokenness over our nothingness, we are given everything.  
For our brokenness over our needing to cover our face, we are now welcomed to come boldly in the presence of the king anytime

Why is this beatitude first? Because helplessness is the foundation of all other graces. You can’t receive with your hand full.

Matthew 18: 3-4 you must come as a little child

Luke 15 – prodigal son came to himself because he was in need

Until we see ourselves empty, we cannot be filled  
Until we see ourselves unworthy, we cannot be made worthy  
Until we see ourselves dead, we cannot be made alive.

How can one determine if they are poor in spirit?

1. See yourself properly. I am nothing, I have nothing, I can do nothing.
2. Don't complain about your circumstances or situations because you already receive more than you deserve.
3. See other people as far better than you because you know your own failures and weaknesses. I am the worse sinner I know.
4. Pray more because of your dependence on God.
5. Take Christ at his terms.
6. Remember that you don't change, it's Christ in you that produces change in you.

“Jesus, I am a needy person. Without you I am lost and undone. I am nothing apart from You. You are described by Paul as “all.” Just as the Father was the “I am that I am” to Moses, You are everything I need. You are my Source. I praise You for being all sufficient for my every need. Continue to work in me my own awareness of my nothingness so that you may continue to work in me Your all sufficiency.”