

**"Go!!!!"**

**A Verse-by-Verse Study of the Book of Matthew**

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### **God's Way of Blessing....or Mine?**

**Matthew Chapter 5:1-16 (The Beatitudes)**

Before we begin to look at this first part of Matthew 5, turn back to the Old Testament with me and look at something the prophet Isaiah wrote 700 years before:

*"The Spirit of the Lord God is  
upon Me, because the Lord has  
anointed Me to preach good  
tidings to the poor;  
He has sent Me to heal the  
brokenhearted,  
to proclaim liberty to the  
captives,  
and the opening of the prison to those who are  
bound;  
to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the  
day of vengeance of our God;  
to comfort all who mourn,  
to console those who mourn in Zion,  
to give them beauty for ashes,  
the oil of joy for mourning,  
the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;  
that they may be called trees of righteousness, the  
planting of the Lord,  
that he may be glorified." Isaiah 61:1-3*

When this One would  
come...He would turn  
everything upside  
down.

Isaiah looked ahead and saw a time when God would richly bless the people of the world through the coming of One who would put everything back the way it was always meant to be. When this One would come, this Messiah, He would turn everything upside down.

In this passage in Matthew 5, Jesus has attracted great crowds in the Galilee area of Israel. He goes up into a mountain – not a mountain like the Rockies in Colorado – but more like the rolling hills of Brown County, Indiana. He

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sits down on a hill, where the great crowds of people can see him, His disciples come around Him, and He begins to teach them.

### **Israel**



Galilee area: There are small hills in this area. This is where Jesus sat down and taught "The Sermon on the Mount".

Wikipedia map

What is He going to say? Is He going to say what all the Priests and Levites always say? Be moral. Do the right thing. Quit doing the wrong things?

A new day has dawned. Jesus has true and piercing things to say which have never been said before...but, no, actually...they have been said before....in the scriptures....but it has been a long, long time since anyone realized what the scriptures were actually saying. It has been a long time since people remembered what life was always meant to be.

In the Sermon on the Mount, (Matthew 5, 6 & 7), up is down....and down is up....things are different in God's way of thinking and in the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Beatitudes – these first 12 verses in Matthew 5 – set the theme for the whole Sermon on the Mount. They are saying: Once you believe in Jesus Christ you enter the Kingdom of Heaven....not someday after you die...but

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right away, as soon as you believe. And the Kingdom of Heaven is not at all like the world you've been living in. The rules are different. The reality is different. Something might look absolutely horrible in your old world, but in the Kingdom of Heaven, it's a blessing!

Let me give you an illustration: In II Kings chapter 6, Elisha the mighty prophet of God is suddenly surrounded by enemies intent on killing him and his servant. We are not told the servant's name. When the servant gets up in the morning, and looks outside, he sees horses and chariots and a great army waiting to capture and probably kill him and Elisha. He's terrified. Nothing worse could have happened! He runs back inside, waking Elisha and crying out "Alas, my master! What shall we do?"

Life is lived differently  
once we enter the  
Kingdom of Heaven

But Elisha is not moved by these events. He tells his servant "Don't worry – we have an even greater army protecting us!" Then he asks the LORD God of Israel, to open the eyes of his terrified servant and show him what Elisha already knows is there. The servant looks up into the hills again, and, Wow! "Behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha!"

The Beatitudes are going to show us 8 different examples of the way life is lived differently once we enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

8 different examples of times when life will look frightening and devastating...but really is a slam-dunk blessing.

1. (:1-10) There are 8 "Beatitudes" in this passage. Take them one by one and ask yourself: What about this statement is different than people's usual way of thinking?

The poor in spirit are  
those who are spiritually  
bankrupt.

1) :3 "*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*"

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The "poor in spirit" are those who are spiritually bankrupt. In other words, they have no ground to stand on in front of God. They have no great depths of spirituality. No way to be proud of their relationship with God. They are lower than the low. They have wrecked their lives. They are nothing. This is true of any person before they come to faith in Christ. But it could also be true of any believer in Jesus who has sinned, fallen short of trusting God and obeying Him, or not been walking with God for awhile.

So...our usual way of thinking about such people is that they're just a mess, and maybe not worth even paying attention to. They are losers who will waste our time. They might never come to faith but will probably live the rest of their lives rebelling against God.

But God doesn't think that way. God says the poor in spirit are blessed – or, in other words, - the poor in spirit have reason to be happy. For goodness sake, why?

Because they have reached the bottom - they know they are nothing. They can reach out in faith to the One who paid the price for their sin and believe in Him – trust Him - because they know they are lower than the low. All the props which most people have under them – those things which we count on to keep us standing and pull us through – have been knocked away. They know they need Jesus. They know they have nothing else or no one else to turn to. They can put their faith in Him...and then, wonder of wonders, the Kingdom of Heaven stands wide open before them!

That's God's grace, you know. God...reaching down to give enormous happiness and blessing to someone who has rebelled, messed up, destroyed other people's lives, caused great unhappiness.

What's Matthew telling us? The happy person is the one who stands sorrowful before God...knowing what a mess he has made....ready to have God's grace poured out on him/her.

*"...good tidings to the poor" Isaiah 61:1a*

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2) :4 *"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."*

The ones who mourn are the ones who have had a great loss. Surely there is no reason to be happy about this? But yes, in God's way of thinking, there is great reason to be happy about this...because when you mourn you are in the privileged position of being comforted by the Lord Himself. He puts His arms around you and fills you with peace and joy. He fills you with Himself. There is no blessing in the world greater than that.

An example of this? How about Mary and Martha when their brother Lazarus had died, and been in the tomb 4 days? They mourned. They were full of

The ones who mourn  
are the ones who have  
had a great loss.

that groaning pain that makes you feel like you want to die, too. (John 11) Jesus also felt that pain. He wept. (John 11:35). But when Jesus showed them what resurrection was all about, the sorrow went away, replaced with a deep, abiding joy which could never be taken away, even when some day Lazarus must die again. Now

they knew – death could not hold a believer in Jesus Christ.

Mourning is a blessing because you get to experience the comfort of God Himself...and you get to know, in a way other people may not, that death has no power.

"...to comfort all who mourn" Isaiah 61:2c

3) :5 *"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."*

The meek are the ones who just don't have what it takes to put themselves forward and make things happen in life. They just don't have the courage or the self-confidence. And everyone knows that it is the "type-A" personalities who get the great jobs and who make the most money, and have the nicest homes. The meek simply live quietly, and usually under the thumb of someone else.

So why would God say they are blessed?  
Because in God's economy they are the

The meek are the ones  
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richest – not based on their own efforts, but based on what God Himself desires to do for them. He has gifts to give. And homes to give. And friends and neighbors and purpose to give.

The meek can't make it happen for themselves. They have to wait and watch the Lord of the Universe do it for them. Blessed.

"...the oil of joy for mourning..." Isaiah  
61:3b

4) :6 *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled."*

Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness are the ones who live in the midst of a sinful and filthy world and inside they are dying because they long to live somewhere else.

Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness are the ones who live in the midst of a sinful and filthy world and inside they are dying because they long to live somewhere else.

The Psalmist said "Woe is me that I dwell in Meschech, that I dwell among the tents of Kedar. My soul has dwelt too long with one who hates peace. I am for peace, but when I speak, they are for war." Psalm 120:5-7

He is expressing his grief at the pain he experiences every day, living amongst people who do not love or believe in the One, True God. He is injured by their hatred, their warring spirits, their ugliness. And he hungers and thirsts for righteousness.

According to Matthew 5:6, he is blessed. Why? Because that hunger can be satisfied...that hunger can be filled...one soul at a time. James says: "Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and covers a multitude of sins." James 5:19&20. If you hunger and thirst for a world full of righteousness, you get the blessing of telling people about the righteousness of God – which is given as a gift to those who come in faith to Jesus. When His righteousness fills and

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covers one more sinner – wow – that thirst for righteousness is so filled up within you!

"...beauty for ashes..." Isaiah 61:3a

5) :7 *"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."*

The merciful step away from revenge. They offer forgiveness right away. They are only a breath away from restored relationships. They are not bitter. Quite often they are taken advantage of because of their merciful

The merciful step away  
from revenge.

hearts. Sometimes you find yourself wishing they would stiffen up a little, and not be quite so ready to forgive and forget – so that they wouldn't get hurt so often.

And most of the time, the merciful people I have known are the ones who have themselves experienced the most mercy from Jesus. They know what they were. They know of what they have been forgiven. They couldn't think of holding a grudge, because He doesn't hold a grudge against them.

The merciful have experienced mercy. They give mercy. And there is more mercy to come.

"...heal the brokenhearted..." Isaiah 61:1b

6) :8 *"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."*

The pure in heart. Forgiven. Pure because the blood of Jesus has covered over their sins, washed them clean.

God didn't make us pure just so we can be happy.

And He didn't make us pure just so we can go to heaven.

The pure in heart are  
forgiven.

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He made us pure so that we can see Him. Gaze on His glory. Know Him completely.

That's what He had in mind when He planned, in eternity past, before we had ever been born, to go to the cross for all of us. "He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world..." I Peter 1:20a

"...that they may be called the trees of righteousness,  
The planting of the Lord,  
That He may be glorified" Isaiah 61:3d

7) :9 *"Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the sons of God."*

The peacemakers. My sister, Susan, is a peacemaker. She works hard all the time to bring people together, and to fill the holes others leave behind. She is the oldest in our little group of 4 siblings, and she is the one who will call us all to let us know about family troubles, or get us all to a funeral or a wedding. She's a peacemaker.

I sometimes wonder if Susan is wanting our Mom and Dad to say to her: "Well done, Sus." But I don't think she ever hears it. They just expect her to be the peacemaker. It's her job.

But the peacemakers in God's kingdom will be called the "sons of God". They will hear "well done" from the Father who values them very highly. Blessed.

The peacemakers work hard to bring people together and fill the holes others leave behind.

"...the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness..." Isaiah 61:3c



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8) :10-12 *"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you"*

And finally, the persecuted. The ones who speak the truths of God and take a beating for it. They are blessed? Happy?

Oh, yes. You cannot read any church history book without feeling the "blessed" persecuted ones jumping out of the pages into your living room and shouting "it was worth it!!!" "I would do it again!!!"

Jesus goes on in verses 11 & 12 to expand on what He said in verse 10. He again says how blessed it is to be a persecuted one. Nobody I know would agree with that...because nobody I know has ever been persecuted, and they (we) are afraid of it.

Sabrina Wurmbrand was a Christian, a Jew, and also the wife of a renowned Pastor. One day she learned that her mother, father, three younger sisters, and nine-year-old brother had all been brutally murdered in a concentration camp. She didn't let her personal grief and agony hinder her from being a public encourager to those around her. Death and suffering were prevalent

The persecuted speak the truths of God and take a beating for it.

for everyone. Many eyes were on her. If she lost hope, what hope would they have? She then spent 3 years in prison and slave labor camps, where women faced the most humiliating and brutal acts of all the prisoners. Yet even in prison, she was known as a friend to all, and she always had a kind word.

Before leaving Romania, God gave Sabrina her reward. She and her husband, Richard, later brought their family's murderer to Christ! (taken from "Extreme Devotion", page 157)

Matthew gives us two reasons to be convinced that being persecuted is a blessing.

- One – You have a reward waiting for you.

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- Two – You are in good company. You are joined by the prophets of old who also were persecuted for telling the truth.

I want to be in the company of Sabrina Wurmbrand and countless others..... to tell the story of Jesus boldly, everywhere, and look forward to the blessing.

"...to proclaim liberty to the captives,  
And the opening of the prison  
To those who are bound..." Isaiah 61:1c

In our hearts and  
minds we really do not  
want to be blessed in  
God's ways.

In summary, most of us reading this might agree that these 8 Beatitudes are really great concepts. So high and lofty and wonderful to think about.

But in our hearts and minds we really do not want to be blessed in these ways which God says are His ways.

We want to be blessed in our ways, like:

- With self-confidence and good decisions, not guilt or shame
- With intact, happy families, free of tragedy.
- With growing and strong personalities which are able to navigate the rough spots of life without falling apart.
- With good people surrounding us who have our same values
- With hearts full of love, but never being taken advantage of
- With someone else tackling the hard things, and making the world peaceful for us
- With friends and neighbors who value us and listen to us and never make fun of us or persecute us.

Should we want to be blessed in God's way? Should we seek it? Or should we hope God doesn't bless us that much?

*"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men." 5:13*

What does it mean to be the "salt of the earth"?

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Salt seasons or preserves. It keeps the food palatable. It keeps things from spoiling.

So if we are the "salt" in this world, then we are pretty valuable, aren't we? We keep life from being totally unbearable. We keep life going.

The world can't see by  
simply hearing our  
words...

So what is it that would make us lose our "saltiness"? I think Jesus is directly referring to the Beatitudes above when He says we are "salt", and also in the next verse when He says we are "light". I think He's saying we need to be "blessed" in God's ways in order to keep the world intact. We lose our "saltiness" when we fight hard to have our blessings come in the way we think they should come. I think He's challenging us to accept the "blessings" we may not want....so that we can be used of Him to make a difference in our hurting, injured world.

*"You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."*  
5:14-16

We all know what light is. It tells us what's out there. It makes us feel safe. It keeps us from stumbling. You don't hide a light, you lift it up. In the same way, as a believer in Jesus, you don't hide yourself by putting a wall up around you – keeping out all possible hurt. You allow yourself to be lifted up so that the world can see that Jesus is sufficient for every need – He can heal the deepest wound. The world can't see by simply hearing our words. They can see that when they watch us go through it and then hear our words.

As I was teaching this chapter in our church in 2011, I asked my daughter-in-law, Julie, to come speak to our class and just share her story of knowing Jesus. She used this opportunity to share a painful time in their lives when it seemed like life had been snatched out from under them, and joy and happiness and prosperity seemed to just be gone like a vapor. She communicated the puzzlement they felt as they realized people they thought

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were friends ended up being hateful to them. And the personal agony they experienced as a business they had poured themselves into crashed to the ground. And the helplessness they knew when the health they took for granted was gone.

But she also shared the joy they learned when they realized how little all of that actually meant after all....and the awakening they experienced to the ever-present blessing of God, especially in the midst of all these confusing and painful events.

That's a testimony worth hearing. That's a story which can touch a crying heart and give it a reason to look to Jesus.

She finished by playing this song – the words are the words of the beatitudes for today's blessed Christian:

[Words to Build a Life On – Michael Crawford & His Secret Siblings](#)

(click on the title above to go to the U-tube video)

These are words to build a life on  
These are Your words how can they be mine  
These are words to build a life on  
These are Your words I want them to be mine

Blessed are the poor  
Blessed are the weak  
Blessed are the ones  
Who can barely speak

Blessed in your hurt  
Blessed in your pain  
Blessed when your teardrops  
Are falling down like rain

Blessed when you're broken  
Blessed when you're blind  
Blessed when you're fragile  
When you have lost your mind

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Blessed when you're desperate  
Blessed when you're scared  
Blessed when you're lonely  
Blessed when you've failed

Blessed when you're beat up  
Blessed when you're bruised  
Blessed when you're tore down  
Blessed when you're used

These are words to build a life on  
These are Your words how can they be mine  
These are words to build a life on  
These are Your words I want them to be mine

Blessed when you're heartbroke  
Blessed when you're fired  
Blessed when you're choked up  
Blessed when you're tired

Blessed when the plans  
That you so carefully laid  
End up in the junkyard  
With all the trash you made

Blessed when you feel like  
Giving up the ghost  
Blessed when your loved ones  
Are the ones who hurt you most

Blessed when you lose your  
Own identity  
Then blessed when you find it  
And it has been redeemed

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Blessed when you see what  
Your friends can never be  
Blessed with your eyes closed  
Then blessed you see Me

These are words to build a life on  
These are Your words how can they be mine  
These are words to build a life on  
These are Your words I want them to be mine

Blessed when you're hungry  
Blessed when you thirst  
Cause that's when you will eat of  
The bread that matters most

Blessed when you're put down  
Because of me you're dissed  
Because of me you're kicked out  
They take you off their list

You know you're on the mark  
You know you've got it right  
You are to be my salt  
You are to be my light

So bring out all the flavor  
In the feast of this My world  
And light up all the colors  
Let the banner be unfurled

Shout it from the rooftops  
Let the trumpets ring  
Sing your lungs out  
Jesus Christ is King!

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Jesus is my Savior  
Jesus is divine  
Jesus is my answer  
Jesus is my life

These are words to build a life on  
These are Your words how can they be mine  
These are words to build a life on  
These are Your words I want them to be mine

Give us ears that we may hear them  
voice that we may sing them  
life that we may live them  
hope that we may give them  
hearts that we can feel them  
eyes that we can see them  
thoughts that we may think them  
tongues that we may speak Your words

I have a challenge for you – one I took myself as I was preparing this:

Go home and re-read this passage today.

Then get on your knees and pray:

"Jesus, don't let me lose my saltiness.  
Lift me up to shine light on my dark little corner of the world.  
You choose how.  
I trust You."

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Bible Studies

**Questions For Your Personal Use or Group Bible Study:**

1. (:1-10) There are 8 "Beatitudes" in this passage. Take them one by one and ask yourself: What about this statement is different than people's usual way of thinking?
  - a. :3
  - b. :4
  - c. :5
  - d. :6
  - e. :7
  - f. :8
  - g. :9
  - h. :10
2. (:13) What does it mean to be the "salt of the earth"?
3. (:14-16) What does it mean to be "light"?

**Apply This To My Life:**

4. So, should we want to be blessed in God's way? Should we seek it? Or should we hope God doesn't bless us that much?