

**#BLESSED**  
**LIVING THE GOOD LIFE**  
**ACCORDING TO JESUS**

A STUDY OF THE BEATITUDES

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# ABOUT THIS STUDY

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We are excited to journey through the Beatitudes together in community. This study is designed to help you further understand the good news of Jesus and apply the gospel to your life and the lives of those around you. We believe—and have seen over and over again—that hearing God’s Word preached, studying God’s Word privately and encouraging one another through God’s Word in community results in freedom in the gospel and lives changed more and more into the image of Jesus.

Each week the study is broken into various sections to help you understand, apply and pray through God’s Word, both alone and in community. We encourage you to work through the studies individually, which will then prepare you to help others grow through discussion.

## **SECTIONS OF THE STUDY**

**OVERVIEW** - This section gives a basic overview of what the passage is seeking to teach, how it points to Jesus and what it means for us today.

**MESSAGE APPLICATION** - This section gives space to write things you learned, thought were helpful or had questions about from the sermon. In community groups, use these notes and questions to help one another grow in understanding and application of what was taught.

**PASSAGE QUESTIONS** - This section encourages you to study the Bible on your own. Through study, we grow in our desire and ability to understand the written Word of God—how it points to Jesus, how it connects to our lives and how it fuels us to live as a community that brings glory to God and sheds light in a dark world.

**PRAYER / PRAYER REQUEST** - This section reminds us of our dependence on God and how God uses others in our lives to serve and care for us. We are called to persevere in praying for others as well as ourselves. The prayer prompts encourage us to pray specifically that we would live for the good life in the kingdom of heaven and that others may experience that good life as well.

**AS YOU GO...** - Use this section throughout the week—not necessarily the night your group meets. It is intended to provoke thoughts and conversations with your kids, friends, spouse, or others as you spend time with one another in everyday life. Think along the lines of Deuteronomy 6, where the call is to talk of the things of God when “you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.”



"YOU ARE THE LIGHT  
OF THE WORLD, A CITY SET  
ON A HILL..."  
-MATTHEW 5:14

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## BEATITUDES OVERVIEW

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### OVERVIEW

Jesus sits down with his disciples, opens his mouth and gives them this beautiful vision of a community that will be a light in a dark world and a city set apart to experience his Kingdom and invite others to do the same (Matthew 5:13-14). Prior to giving this call to be the light of the world and a city on a hill, he lays out the type of community that will actually accomplish this. In his upside-down way, Jesus doesn't say exactly what they will do; he explains who they will be—he doesn't start externally; he starts internally. Internally, a people who will actually bring change and bring light won't be the prideful, the self-righteous or those who thirst for power. To bring real change, to bring real light, it will be a people

who are transformed by Jesus and are broken, who mourn sin, who are humble, who seek righteousness, are merciful, pure, and seek peace. In all, they will be people who trust in the one, Jesus, who perfectly embodied these attributes in his life, death and resurrection.

Trusting in Jesus results in a blessed life—a life that is approved by God through Jesus and finds its joy and satisfaction in him. As this community trusts in Jesus and follows him their light will shine before others, and they will be a city set apart. The city will grow as others see their good works, give glory to the Father who is in heaven and live the good life with them.

## MESSAGE APPLICATION

As you listen to the sermon, write down what catches your attention, challenges or confuses you.

## PASSAGE QUESTIONS

1. Read Matthew 5:1-16. What characteristics lead to the people being a "light" and a "city set on a hill"?
2. Read John 1:1-18. What do these verses state about Jesus as light?
3. Read Psalm 1. What do we learn about living a life that is blessed?

4. Throughout this week, scan through the gospel of Matthew. Jot down examples where you see Jesus embodying and fulfilling the attributes laid out in the Beatitudes, John 1 and Psalm 1.
5. As you read through the attributes in the Beatitudes, what areas do you see that you would like God to help you grow in through this study?

In what specific areas has God placed you and your community group?  
How can you bring the light of the gospel to these places?

Write down some ideas of how you can actually live this out in the natural rhythms of your life and your group's life this season.

## **PRAYER**

- Pray that we would better understand and believe that Jesus is the light of the world in our own lives.
- Pray that we would live the true good life together by seeking the upside-down life that the Beatitudes reveal.
- Pray that as a church, as a community and as people we will be a city on a hill and a light that points to Jesus.



## PRAYER REQUEST

### AS YOU GO...

- Talk about what light reveals to you in the room or space you are in. Talk about how Jesus being the light of the world brings light to the life you find yourselves in.
- Talk about the beauty of the words in the Beatitudes and what life could be like if we all embodied these virtues in the world.
- Make a list of the normal places you go in a given day, week or month. Write down ways you could be a light in those areas.





"BLESSED ARE THE  
POOR IN SPIRIT, FOR  
THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF  
HEAVEN."

-MATTHEW 5:3

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## BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT

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### OVERVIEW

**A gospel-centered person is keenly aware of his or her spiritual poverty.** The Sermon on the Mount produces despair in the heart of the natural man, and that is the very thing Jesus intends for it to do. As soon as we reach the point of despair, we are willing to come as paupers to Jesus Christ and fully receive his grace. Awareness of our spiritual poverty is the entrance into the kingdom of God. The knowledge of our own poverty brings us to the threshold of Christ's transforming work in us.

sinful and without the moral virtues adequate to commend us to God." **This is the first principle of the kingdom.** Until we are gripped by God's grace with this beatitude then we cannot experience any other beatitudes.

In *The Sermon on the Mount: The Message of the Kingdom*, R. Kent Hughes states that "Poverty of Spirit...is the awareness and admission that we are utterly



## MESSAGE APPLICATION

As you listen to the sermon, write down what catches your attention, challenges or confuses you.

## PASSAGE QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean to be poor in spirit? How does that allow you to be blessed and have the kingdom of heaven?
2. Read Luke 18:9-14. Compare the Pharisee with the tax collector. What is the contrast between being rich in spirit and poor in spirit? Where and toward whom do you have the tendency to be rich in spirit?
3. Read Matthew 27:50-54. How does Jesus being made poor in spirit on the cross bring new life in the kingdom of heaven?

4. What do we learn about the kingdom of heaven in these passages?

- Matthew 3:2
- Matthew 5:3, 10, 19
- Matthew 19:14
- Luke 12:32-34
- 1 Corinthians 15:50-58
- Galatians 5:21
- James 2:5

5. How can being poor in spirit shape how you view and treat others this week?

What are ways you can experience the kingdom of heaven this week?

How can you help others experience the kingdom of heaven this week?

## **PRAYER**

- Thank God that, although we all seek to be rich in spirit, he sent Jesus to become poor in spirit for us on the cross.
- Pray that we would be poor in spirit this week, leading to a life of gratitude toward God and generosity toward others.
- Pray that, as we look to the sacrifice and beauty of Jesus, we will be communities of people who experience and help others to experience God's kingdom of heaven here on earth through the power of the Holy Spirit.

## PRAYER REQUEST

### AS YOU GO...

- The opposite of poor in spirit is rich in spirit, or being all about yourself. Talk about what the world (even your home) would be like if the goal were for everyone to be rich in spirit.
- Have each person talk about someone who has the characteristics of being poor in spirit and what they love about him or her.
- Talk about Jesus' life and examples of how he was poor in spirit.
- Identify and talk about areas in your week where you saw and experienced the kingdom of heaven—things like generosity, kindness, sacrifice, community and grace.





"BLESSED ARE THOSE  
WHO MOURN, FOR THEY  
SHALL BE COMFORTED."  
-MATTHEW 5:4

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## BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO MOURN

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### OVERVIEW

The proper response to seeing our spiritual bankruptcy (5:3) is to mourn. *"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted"* (5:4). By God's grace, when we see the depth of our spiritual bankruptcy it produces a godly grief, which produces the kind of repentance that leads to salvation.

Conviction of sin must precede conversion—a real sense of sin must come before there can be true joy of salvation. This mourning involves grieving the sin in our own life, grieving the sin that is in the world around us, and grieving these sins as the sins that put Jesus on the cross. When we see the great pain that results from sin—and how

it seeks to rob God of his glory and people of true joy—we can no longer tolerate the sin in our own lives or in our communities.

As we mourn and turn from sin, we turn to find comfort in Jesus and the promises of God. Our comfort and joy, and the comfort and joy we offer the world, is not found in the temporal, fleeting pleasure of sin, but in the eternal, unchanging truth of the gospel. The great paradox Jesus preached was that those who mourn will find deep joy.

## MESSAGE APPLICATION

As you listen to the sermon, write down what catches your attention, challenges or confuses you.

## PASSAGE QUESTIONS

1. Why is mourning the proper response to sin in and around you?
2. How does Jesus respond to the effects of sin in this world? (see Matthew 1:21, John 11:32-36, Luke 19:41-44, Colossians 2:13-16, John 3:16-17)

3. What do we learn about mourning and comfort in these passages?

- 2 Corinthians 7:6-10
- Isaiah 61:1-4
- Zechariah 12:10-13:1
- James 4:1-10
- Revelation 21:1-7

4. Where do you typically turn to find comfort outside of Jesus?

5. Read these passages, and write down how God brings comfort and what it results in.

- 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17
- Isaiah 39:8-40:1
- Revelation 7:17

How have you experienced this comfort from God recently?

## **PRAYER**

- Pray for eyes to see and a heart that is grieved by the brokenness both in you and around you.
- Pray to see how the gospel of Jesus and specific promises of God bring comfort to the brokenness you see and experience.
- Pray for opportunities this week to bring comfort to others who are experiencing brokenness from the effects of sin in this world.

## PRAYER REQUEST

### AS YOU GO...

- Take some time of silence and solitude this week to think about and mourn the sin and effects of sin in your life. Worship Jesus for the comfort he brings and for defeating sin through his life, death and resurrection.
- Pay attention to the news (local, national, international) and discuss the brokenness you see. Talk about it through the lens of compassion rather than being critical and prideful.
- Talk to people to learn why they think there is brokenness in this world and what they look to for comfort.
- Seek opportunities to bring comfort to people during the week (kids, spouse, neighbors, coworkers, Facebook friends, etc.). Be intentional about reminding or telling them of the God of all comfort and his promises.







"BLESSED ARE THE  
MEEK, FOR THEY SHALL  
INHERIT THE EARTH."  
-MATTHEW 5:5

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## BLESSED ARE THE MEEK

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### OVERVIEW

The Christian life is altogether different from the various systems of life and thought the world teaches. Where the world calls for revenge, Christ teaches us to turn the other cheek. Where the world teaches us to pursue pleasure as the highest good, Christ says we must deny ourselves, take up our crosses and follow him. And where the world tells us to use whatever means at our disposal to lord our strength over others, Christ tells us that the meek will inherit the earth. This tells us a great deal about our profession of the Christian faith."

In *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, Martin Lloyd-Jones put it this way, "If you and I are not... problems and enigmas to the non-Christians around us, then

## MESSAGE APPLICATION

As you listen to the sermon, write down what catches your attention, challenges or confuses you.

## PASSAGE QUESTIONS

1. Use these passages, which clearly depict meekness in action, to craft a functional definition of the word "meek."
  - Genesis 13 (Abraham and Lot)
  - 1 Samuel 24 (David and Saul)
2. The call to be meek naturally flows from the previous beatitudes listed by Christ. How does each one suggest and point to the one that follows? How is meekness as a quality harder to attain than the ones before it?

3. Spend some time in Philippians 2. What are some of the character qualities we see in Christ that paint a picture of meekness?
4. The person who is truly meek is the one who is always satisfied—the one who is already content because of their trust and dependence upon God. What then is dissatisfaction a sign of? What dissatisfaction gnaws at you?
5. What does meekness look like in the everyday rhythms of your life? In other words, if Christ were to come live out Philippians 2 in your life, what would he do differently?

## **PRAYER**

- Pray for a deeper understanding of Christ's humility and what it means to be humble and meek like he was.
- Pray that you would be able to exercise self-control through the Holy Spirit as a means to put the attribute of meekness on display in your life.
- Pray for opportunities this week to display meekness that is rooted in the gospel of Jesus.

## PRAYER REQUEST

### AS YOU GO...

- Discuss how meekness relates to the first beatitudes. ("poor in spirit" and "mourning")
- Talk about some of your own motivations that drive you when you aren't being meek. Try to figure out the root of those motivations.
- Discuss some practical ways that you can practice meekness in your own life.





"BLESSED ARE THOSE  
WHO HUNGER AND THIRST  
FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS, FOR  
THEY SHALL BE SATISFIED."  
-MATTHEW 5:6

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## BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO HUNGER AND THIRST FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

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### OVERVIEW

When writing on this passage in *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount* and offering pastoral advice, Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said that the first test of determining if one hungers and thirsts for righteousness is to figure out how we view our own righteousness. "Do we see through all our own false righteousness?...We are not hungering and thirsting for righteousness as long as we are holding with any sense of self-satisfaction to anything that is in us, or to anything that we have ever done." Now this isn't to say that we aren't to strive to live righteous lives; Jesus' sermon (and the Gospel

of Matthew) is soaked with calls to righteous living. The heart of the matter is the heart. What is your heart trusting in—your own righteousness or the righteousness of God?

*"But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness."*

— Romans 6:17-18

## MESSAGE APPLICATION

As you listen to the sermon, write down what catches your attention, challenges or confuses you.

## PASSAGE QUESTIONS

1. Hunger and thirst are feelings of desire. Read 1 John 2:16 and expand on the three categories it reveals as you think through the natural desires of life. How might these desires play out in the context of the American ideals of “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness”?
2. Based on the following verses, what is the result of ill-placed desire?
  - Isaiah 55:2-3
  - Jeremiah 2:12-13

3. Write down what you learn from these passages about Jesus' view of righteousness.

- Deuteronomy 6:20-25
- Matthew 5:17-20
- Matthew 6:1-4
- Matthew 6:31-33
- Romans 3:21-26
- 1 John 1:5-10

4. How do Matthew 5:6 and the passages in question 3 point us away from the desire to secure our own righteousness? Why is this vital?

5. Why is Jesus the only proper object of our desires as we hunger and thirst for righteousness?

## **PRAYER**

- Pray for the hunger and thirst that you lack.
- Pray for the daily faith to trust in Jesus for your righteousness.
- Pray for the strength and passion to live righteously.



## PRAYER REQUEST

### AS YOU GO...

- Think about the things that feed your spiritual appetite. Talk with friends or family about how you can feast on those things in the daily rhythms of your life.
- Discuss the things in your life that need to be transformed by Christ's righteousness so that you can live righteously.
- Think about the things that you hunger and thirst for in the world. Examine how those desires can be transformed and redirected to thirsting after righteousness.





"BLESSED ARE THE  
MERCIFUL, FOR THEY SHALL  
RECEIVE MERCY."  
-MATTHEW 5:7

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## BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL

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### OVERVIEW

Extending mercy comes from receiving mercy. Mercy is produced in us by God's grace as we see our spiritual poverty, mourn our sin and are comforted by God's grace and mercy. This leads to the pursuit of righteousness. The righteous life is one that pursues mercy. Mercy moves toward need, not away from need. The greatest demonstration of mercy the world has ever known was accomplished by Jesus Christ. Being born a man, Jesus moved toward humanity and took the sins of the world upon himself. He continues to pursue rebellious people and bring new life through his Spirit. This act of mercy makes it possible for us to be forgiven of a debt

of sin that we have no hope of repaying ourselves. The amazing mercy Christ so freely gives us is a mercy that must overflow out of our lives. The cross makes this possible! If we live every moment of our lives in full view of the cross, it will make us merciful people. We will move toward the needs of our family, friends, neighbors... and even our enemies.

"Mercy really means a sense of pity plus a desire to relieve the suffering...pity plus action" (Lloyd Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*)

## MESSAGE APPLICATION

As you listen to the sermon, write down what catches your attention, challenges or confuses you.

## PASSAGE QUESTIONS

1. Read the following passages and write down what you learn about mercy (what it is, what it looks like, the right response to receiving it, etc.).
  - Luke 7:36-50
  - Luke 10:25-37
  - Luke 18:35-43

2. Read Philippians 2:1-11.

How does the gospel (good news) of Jesus Christ demonstrate the greatest act of mercy in history?

How does being a recipient of God's mercy through Jesus provide the ultimate motivation and ability to extend mercy to others?

3. Why is it important that we are not merciful in an attempt to earn God's mercy, but rather that we are merciful because we already received mercy through Jesus?
4. Why is it important that mercy includes both compassion and action? What happens if one is missing?
5. Read Lamentations 3:22-24. List times and places in your life where you have experienced or are currently experiencing God's mercy.

Where can you share the overflow of God's mercy for you by moving toward need and extending mercy this week?

## **PRAYER**

- Pray for fresh understanding of God's mercy in your life through Jesus.
- Pray for opportunities for people to reveal the areas they need the mercy of God in their lives and for the boldness to tell them of the good news of Jesus.
- Pray for opportunities to extend mercy to those around you this week.

## PRAYER REQUEST

### AS YOU GO...

- Talk to one another (friends, kids, neighbors) about what mercy is, what the opposite of mercy is and what the world would be like without mercy.
- Sit with your family or friends and list the ways you experience God's mercy. On a blank sheet of paper, write down as many as you can think of.
- Seek to intentionally extend an act of mercy each day (even small), and pray that mercy becomes part of your everyday rhythm of life.
- Talk about a demographic of people in your city who need mercy because of their circumstances. Talk about ways to intentionally move toward them and extend mercy.





"BLESSED ARE THE  
PURE IN HEART, FOR THEY  
SHALL SEE GOD."  
-MATTHEW 5:8

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## BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART

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### OVERVIEW

As we begin to realize the importance and meaning in these words, we approach them with a sense of awe and complete inadequacy. Indeed, **to see God is the whole purpose of all religion.** In a sense, we can never exhaust the riches found in this teaching of Jesus. It is, of course, the very essence of the Christian position and of Christian teaching.

But what seems like such an impossible standard (complete purity of our inner being), was achieved by Jesus Christ and is now offered to us as an attainable reality through his sacrifice and offering of peace on the cross.

**As we begin any study on this verse, we do so in complete**

**humility**, realizing the incredible grace of God given to us in Jesus.

## MESSAGE APPLICATION

As you listen to the sermon, write down what catches your attention, challenges or confuses you.

## PASSAGE QUESTIONS

1. What is meant here by “pure in heart”? Discuss the implications of the word “heart” as Jesus uses it in verse 8.

2. It says in verse 8 that the pure in heart “shall see God.” In what sense will they see God? Why must there be a correlation between purity of heart and seeing God?

3. Read Psalm 24:3–6.

How does this passage help explain what Jesus says in Matt. 5:8?



What does it look like for you to seek God in your life and help others do the same?

4. Read Matthew 15:19. How can Jesus expect purity of heart when he also acknowledges that out of the heart comes wickedness? What part does Jesus play in reconciling these seemingly contradictory truths?

5. Read Psalm 51 in its entirety.

What is King David's ultimate pursuit in this prayer? How is purity of heart achieved?

How does Psalm 51 connect repentance to the sharing of the gospel?

Where in your life do you need to ask for purity of heart?

## **PRAYER**

- Pray Psalm 51.
- Pray for God to show you how you can help others see him.
- Praise God for giving you a new heart.

## PRAYER REQUEST

### AS YOU GO...

- Think about the work God has done in your life or in the life of someone close to you. Tell of the evidence you see pointing to a purity of heart. Tell of how this encourages you.
- Discuss what it will be like to “see God” in the final sense. Have each person share their excitement and fear at this thought.
- Speak to one another about the example that Jesus is to us of someone who is pure in heart.
- The Beatitudes each start with “blessed are....” Have each person share how they have experienced blessings related to the beatitude in Matthew 5:8.





"BLESSED ARE THE  
PEACEMAKERS, FOR THEY  
SHALL BE CALLED SONS OF  
GOD."

-MATTHEW 5:9

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## BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS

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### OVERVIEW

Here in this statement, "Blessed are the peacemakers," we have a further outcome and outworking of being filled by God. We are reminded that this outworking in the Christian is altogether different from everything that can be known by the non-Christian. **Jesus came to establish a kingdom that is entirely new and different from the kingdoms of men.** Where men expect conquest with power and might, Jesus establishes his kingdom through peace. Jesus makes peace with people through his sacrifice on the cross and makes them sons and daughters. He then calls his followers to be makers and pursuers of peace. Jesus shows and teaches that those who

make peace are those who are blessed and live the good life.

There is perhaps no clearer pronouncement of what the scriptures, and the gospel especially, have to say about the world and life in this world, and nowhere is there a more appropriate word for our modern times than in this beatitude—*"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."*

## MESSAGE APPLICATION

As you listen to the sermon, write down what catches your attention, challenges or confuses you.

## PASSAGE QUESTIONS

1. Where do you see difficulty and trouble in maintaining peace in our world? Why?

Where have you seen peacemakers who swim against the current of discord?  
How are their lives blessed?

2. What is a peacemaker? What does this involve and imply?
3. What keeps you from being a true peacemaker? In addition to this week's message, think back to last week's study on purity of heart.

How does the gospel and your standing as a son or daughter of God in Christ empower you live out Matthew 5:9?

4. What do we learn about being a peacemaker in these passages?

- James 1:19
- Romans 12:14-21
- Philippians 2:3-4.

What are some practical ways you can actively seek peace with those around you?

5. Read Colossians 1:19-20. How does Jesus show himself to be the ultimate peacemaker?

Read 2 Corinthians 5:16-21. How does the idea of making peace entreat us to share the gospel with others?

## **PRAYER**

- Confess your sin to God and pray a prayer of confession for the sin of the world.
- Thank God for being merciful as we learn to live in harmony with one another, and pray that we will be a blessing to others—even those who persecute us.
- Pray that you will be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger (James 1:19). Pray this over the church as well.

## PRAYER REQUEST

### AS YOU GO...

- Discuss the role self-forgetfulness plays in actively seeking peace in your communities.
- Share with one another what it means to you that, as a Christian, you are labeled as a “son” or “daughter” of God. Talk with your kids about this.
- Identify one or two major road blocks for you, personally, that inhibit peacemaking. Share these with one another.
- Talk about the numerous ways in which Jesus is a peacemaker. Share how this teaches and inspires you. Pursue opportunities to bring peace this week.





"BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO ARE PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS' SAKE, FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN."

-MATTHEW 5:10

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## BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO ARE PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS' SAKE

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### OVERVIEW

As Jesus is wrapping up his teaching on the Beatitudes, he changes gears a bit. Instead of showing characteristics of the one who pursues righteousness (meekness, poor in spirit, merciful, etc.), he shows how the world responds to the ones who follow after him. The previous beatitudes had a nice ring to them: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied" and "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." Now the tables turn... "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake." Jesus is showing us that there is a cost associated with pursuing the life that he is laying out for us. If we are going to pursue a life of righteousness, we need to be prepared for a life of persecution.

In *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, Martyn Lloyd-Jones gives a couple of keen insights that are

helpful for understanding what it means to pursue righteousness. "We can bring endless suffering upon ourselves, we can create difficulties for ourselves which are quite unnecessary, because we have some rather foolish notion of witnessing and testifying, or because, in a spirit of self-righteousness, we really do call it down on our own heads. We are often so foolish in these matters. We are slow to realize the difference between prejudice and principle; and we are slow to understand the difference between being offensive, in a natural sense, because of our particular makeup and temperament, and causing offense because we are righteous. We are not persecuted because we are fanatical, persecuted because of a cause, persecuted because of a religio-political purpose. We are persecuted for practicing righteousness, which really means being like the Lord Jesus Christ."



## MESSAGE APPLICATION

As you listen to the sermon, write down what catches your attention, challenges or confuses you.

## PASSAGE QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean to be “persecuted for righteousness’ sake” (see quote above)? How does this differ from what you may have thought about this verse and persecution in the past?
2. When we think we are being persecuted, we need to examine the what and why behind our actions. When have you confused persecution for righteousness’ sake with pushback from people for pursuing your own agenda?
3. How was Jesus persecuted for righteousness’ sake? What did it result in?

If being righteous and practicing righteousness are ultimately living lives that reflect the life and teaching of Jesus, how would you characterize such a life?

4. Write down what these verses say about Christian persecution.

- 1 Peter 4:14-16
- John 15:18-21
- 2 Timothy 3:10-17

What does persecution look like in our present world? What does it look like in your life?

5. What do you find difficult about living a righteous life that is modeled after Jesus?

Are there specific areas in your life where repenting and turning from sin would bring about persecution?

What are some ways you can encourage each other to live righteously?

## **PRAYER**

- Pray that we will know what it means to be persecuted for righteousness' sake. Thank God for sending Jesus to die so that we might receive his righteousness.
- Pray that we will become more like Jesus and live our lives in constant pursuit of righteousness; not that we would earn God's love, but that we might be lights in a dark world.
- Pray that God will give us wisdom to not claim the unfavorable results of our own foolishness and self-centered pursuits as persecution for Jesus' sake.

## PRAYER REQUEST

### AS YOU GO...

- It is hard to think of persecution as Christians in America. Our persecution may look different from those in places without religious liberty. Look up on the internet and talk about those who are persecuted for Jesus' name around the world right now. Pray for them.
- Talk about Jesus' righteous life and how it led to persecution. Talk about the challenges he faced and what motivated him.
- Get others to help you identify specific areas of your life that need to be shaped by God's grace in order for you to pursue righteousness. Talk about ways that righteousness can be a part of the everyday things of life.





**"BLESSED ARE YOU WHEN OTHERS  
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 SO THEY PERSECUTED THE  
PROPHETS WHO WERE BEFORE YOU."  
-MATTHEW 5:11-12**

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## BLESSED ARE YOU WHEN OTHERS REVILE YOU AND PERSECUTE YOU

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### OVERVIEW

There is no doubt that this beatitude is an elaboration of the previous one. Because we are persecuted for righteousness' sake, we will also be reviled and falsely spoken of. Here, however, Jesus notes that it is also that we are falsely persecuted on his account, and somehow this should lead to rejoicing. This is interesting because it tells us a couple things about the Christian life. First, if we are to be like Christ, we should not retaliate or resent our persecution. Second, we should rejoice in our persecution because our eternal reward is much greater than anything we could experience here in the present age (see 1 Corinthians 15 and Revelation 21). Third, our persecution helps show us that we are practicing righteousness and that God's grace is working in us. Lastly, this helps us align

with the life of Christ and the saints who experienced persecution before him.

In his commentary on Matthew, David Turner writes, "As [Christians] maintain this countercultural witness to the world, they may look to their master, who perfectly exemplified the character traits of the Beatitudes. Jesus was meek. He mourned. He 'fulfilled all righteousness.' He was merciful. And above all, he was oppressed and persecuted. Thus, as disciples cultivate the countercultural graces of the Beatitudes, they are in reality cultivating likeness to the Master. Living in the present by the values of the future kingdom marks Jesus's disciples as out of step with their contemporaries and equips them for witness, to which the sermon now turns."

## MESSAGE APPLICATION

As you listen to the sermon, write down what catches your attention, challenges or confuses you.

## PASSAGE QUESTIONS

1. What do you think it means to be persecuted and reviled on Jesus' account?  
Has this ever happened to you? How do we suffer like Jesus?
  
2. Write down what you learn about Jesus' persecution, character and rewards from these passages.
  - Philippians 2:3-11
  - Hebrews 12:1-2
  - 1 Peter 2:19-25
  
3. Read Hebrews 11. Who are some of the prophets who have been persecuted?

Write down and discuss how these great men and women suffered and were persecuted for the sake of God's mission.

4. What is your natural response to persecution (fight? flight? engagement?)?

What do we learn from these verses about God, his plans and eternity that allows you to rejoice in the midst of suffering?

- Romans 8:18-23
- 1 Corinthians 15:50-58
- Hebrews 4:14-16

5. What do you think about the phrase “your reward is great in heaven”? What does this phrase mean– what is the reward? (see Colossians 3:23-25)

What is hard to believe about the idea of a reward in regard to the Christian life?

6. If we are to rejoice in the midst of persecution and suffering, we need to understand the character and faithfulness of God.

How has God been faithful to his people in the past?

How is God currently being faithful to you?

What does our future with him look like?

## **PRAYER**

- Pray for the ability to rejoice in the midst of suffering and persecution, just as Jesus did.
- Pray that we will persist in rejoicing in the future we have with our Heavenly Father, which surpasses anything we could ever fathom.
- Thank God for the salvation he has given us through Christ’s persecution and work on the cross.
- Pray that we will not grow weary in living lives that bring the heavenly kingdom to earth in this present age.

## PRAYER REQUEST

### AS YOU GO...

- Talk about how your life would be different if you were to rejoice in the midst of persecution.
- Write down some of the earthly things that you trust in. What lies beneath your trust in them (approval, security, acceptance, etc.)? Think about what it would look like to forsake those things and rejoice in the coming of the New Heavens and New Earth and our future with Christ.
- Look up and learn about a Christian who came before us who suffered and was persecuted.







**"YOU ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH, BUT IF SALT HAS LOST ITS TASTE, HOW SHALL ITS SALTINESS BE RESTORED? IT IS NO LONGER GOOD FOR ANYTHING EXCEPT TO BE THROWN OUT AND TRAMPLED UNDER PEOPLE'S FEET."  
-MATTHEW 5:13**

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## YOU ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH

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### OVERVIEW

In verse 13, the sermon enters a new section and shifts to the application and effects of the Christian character Jesus described in verses 3-12. This distinct Christian character is what allows us to be salt in the world. As Martin Lloyd-Jones states, "having realized what we are, we must now go onto consider what we must be."

When Jesus calls us the salt of the earth, he is saying that Christians will be distinct—in character, motives and actions—from those around them. If we are the same as the world, we will lose our saltiness and "no longer [be] good for anything." The followers of Jesus are called to be like salt, which gives and expends itself for the good of something else—it prevents decay and

benefits that with which it comes in contact. While Christians are distinct from the world around them, they are not absent. In *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, John Stott puts it this way, "Christian salt has no business to remain snugly in elegant little ecclesiastical salt cellars; our place is to be rubbed into the secular community, as salt is rubbed into meat, to stop it going bad."

This all points us to Jesus, who is God yet expended himself by becoming man; who remained sinless yet was a friend of sinners; who was trampled underfoot on the cross to bring life to others. It is through Jesus and pointing others to Jesus that we will bring restoration and "saltiness" to the earth.

## MESSAGE APPLICATION

As you listen to the sermon, write down what catches your attention, challenges or confuses you.

## PASSAGE QUESTIONS

1. What does Jesus mean by “you are the salt of the earth”?
2. What do we learn in these passages about being distinct yet giving yourself for the good of those is around you?
  - Mark 2:13-17
  - Romans 12:1-2
  - 1 Corinthians 9:19-27

3. Through his life, death and resurrection, how did Jesus fulfill the command to be the salt of the earth?
4. What does Jesus mean when he asks, "if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored?" and states that "it is no longer good for anything"?
5. Do you lean toward being too much like the world around you or toward being too separated from the world around you? What would it look like for you to be distinct yet not absent?
6. What are tangible ways for you to point others to Jesus through giving and expending yourself?

## **PRAYER**

- Thank God for allowing us to see our great need for his mercy.
- Pray that the Lord will help us to abide in his grace as we seek to follow him and be the salt of the earth.
- Pray for wisdom in our daily interactions, that we may view everything through God's grace and truth. (John 1:14)
- Pray that God's priorities will be our priorities. Ask God to help us realize that only in him can we find the path of life, fullness of joy, and pleasure forevermore. (Psalm 16:11)

## PRAYER REQUEST

### AS YOU GO...

- Take time to think about someone who was salt in your life whom God used to help you know him. Talk about them, what they did and how it changed you. Take a minute to email or call and thank them.
- Read or watch the headlines in the news. Talk about where you see decay and brokenness in your city. Pray, think and talk about what it would look like to be salt in those places.
- Discuss with your kids, family and friends what it would look like to be distinct yet lovingly engaged in the three places you find yourself most frequently (your street, school, work, hobby, etc.).





**"YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD. A CITY SET ON A HILL CANNOT BE HIDDEN. NOR DO PEOPLE LIGHT A LAMP AND PUT IT UNDER A BASKET, BUT ON A STAND, AND IT GIVES LIGHT TO ALL IN THE HOUSE. IN THE SAME WAY, LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE BEFORE OTHERS, SO THAT THEY MAY SEE YOUR GOOD WORKS AND GIVE GLORY TO YOUR FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN."  
-MATTHEW 5:14-16**

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## YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

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### OVERVIEW

In this passage we find one of the most remarkable statements regarding the Christian life. We see a missionary God providing a job description for all who follow him. Jesus himself is the light of the world (John 1) and is saying he will illuminate the world through his followers. Martin Lloyd Jones wrote "we have become reflectors of Christ, reproducers of Christ. As he is the light of the world so we have become the light of the world." (*Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*)

call. A community of Jesus which seeks to hide itself has ceased to follow him." As opposed to flight into the invisible, Jesus calls his followers to let their good works—their righteousness, everything they are, do and say that reflects Jesus—shine before others. As Jesus' work in and through you shines, others have the opportunity to know and follow Jesus, and God will get his due glory and praise. live the good life with them.

And this is a city and light that cannot be hidden. In *The Cost of Discipleship*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes, "flight into the invisible is a denial of the

## MESSAGE APPLICATION

As you listen to the sermon, write down what catches your attention, challenges or confuses you.

## PASSAGE QUESTIONS

1. What do we learn in these passages about Jesus as the light of the world and what he accomplished?

- Isaiah 42:6
- Isaiah 49:6
- Matthew 4:12-17
- John 1:1-18
- John 8:12
- John 12:35-36
- 1 John 1:5-10

2. What do we learn in these passages about Jesus' followers becoming the light of the world?

- Acts 13:47-49
- Ephesians 5:8-10
- Philippians 2:12-18
- 1 Peter 2:9-12

3. Where are you tempted to just blend into the world? What fears do you have that keep you from shining the light of Jesus to those around you?
4. Write how you might reflect Jesus' light to the world around you in the various situations below.
- |                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| In moments of success  | In the midst of sorrow                 |
| To encourage the weak  | In response to personal sin or failure |
| In relational conflict | In persecution                         |
5. Read Ephesians 2:1-10. Discuss the relationship between salvation and good works. Why is the distinction that we are saved FOR good works, not BY our good works important?

## PRAYER

- Thank God for Jesus, who brought light into our lives and delivered us from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of marvelous light.
- Thank God for allowing us to be a part of his mission to rescue and redeem a world that is trapped in darkness.
- Pray that God will help us to experience his grace anew every day so that we can shine his light to the world.
- Pray that God will receive glory by the sum of our lives. Pray Psalm 19:14: "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer."



## PRAYER REQUEST

### AS YOU GO...

- Look around where you are. What would you not see if there were no light? Talk about how Jesus brings light and allows us to properly see ourselves as well as the world around us.
- Talk about areas where each of you struggle to let your light shine. Pray for boldness in bringing light through words and deeds.
- What are areas of darkness in your community and the world? Pray for those areas.
- How can you, your family or your community intentionally be a blessing and bring light to someone this week? Think of as many ways as you can.

