

## **Leader's Guide - Matthew 5:1-12 "Humanity Made New"**

### **Read Matthew 5:1-12**

The sermon began by giving four observations that set the framework for our understanding of the beatitudes. They were:

- I The beatitudes are the fruit of receiving and experiencing good news.
- II The beatitudes are the practical application of Jesus' first sermon (Matthew 4:17; Mark 1:15)
- III Blessedness is not about our subjective state but about God's objective pronouncement
- IV The beatitudes are not describing eight different kinds of people but rather eight qualities of the same person.

1. Which of these four observations did you find most opened up your understanding of the beatitudes and why?

- I. *There are echoes in this story of Moses going up onto the mountain to receive the 10 commandments that he delivers to his people. The law is also the fruit of good news, for they do not begin with the words "Thou shalt not", they begin with the words "I am the Lord your God who rescued you out of slavery in Egypt, therefore you will not." There was a prophecy in the books of Moses that a prophet like him would come (Deuteronomy 18:15-19). Here is Jesus on the mountain delivering not a new set of commands but pronouncements of blessing as the fruit of good news, for immediately preceding the sermon Jesus proclaims the good news of the kingdom and then illustrates it by healing, restoring, breaking the power of evil over people's lives.*
- II. *Jesus first sermon was 'The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe.' The time is fulfilled, one era is ending another is beginning, God's future is breaking into the present, heaven is invading the earth. Repent – stop living in step with the way the world is and live in step with the way the world will be. The beatitudes are the application of this sermon, a portrait of a person in whom the kingdom is taking hold.*
- III. *Blessed is often interpreted happy – happy are those. That however will take us in the wrong direction for to us happy is related to happenings. These are best seen as pronouncements – this is how God views, feels about those in whom the kingdom is taking hold. O the blessedness of...*
- IV. *The promise connected to the first beatitude is the same promise connected to the last. This is an inclusio, a verbal tool to communicate that all of these things have to do with the same topic.*

2. Each of the promises associated with the beatitudes tell us something about the nature of the kingdom. Look at each promise in turn. What are each telling us about the kingdom?

*...they will be comforted. The kingdom is where tears are wiped away from all eyes. Everything sad will be undone.*

*...they will inherit the earth. The kingdom is where God's will is done on earth as in heaven. The kingdom is the coming together of heaven and earth.*

*...they will be satisfied. The kingdom is where the hunger and thirst for all things to be put right will be satisfied.*

*...they shall receive mercy. The kingdom is where we will experience the full bounty of God's grace and mercy.*

*...they shall see God. The kingdom is where we will behold God face to face.*

*...they shall be called children of God. The kingdom is where you and I will be transformed in the likeness of Jesus (God's son), bearing true family resemblance.*

3. John Chrysostom called the beatitudes a golden chain, each building upon the one before moving us naturally to the next. How does this impact how you read them?

*This builds upon the truth that these are describing 8 qualities of the same person – the person in whom God's kingdom is taking hold.*

*Poor in Spirit are those who are spiritual bankrupt – unable to help themselves.*

*The natural response to that reality is to mourn, mourn our sin, mourn the impact of sin, mourn the hold that evil and injustice have on our world.*

*If we have no ability to help ourselves the only true mourning is to cry out – O Lord order my disorderly desires, direct my passions toward good and glorious ends – for the meek are those whose every passion, every desire, every impulse have been put into their proper place.*

*As I receive the good news of Jesus for the forgiveness of sin, I also receive the good news of his purposes to make us, to make our world new, which stirs up in us a hunger and thirst for righteousness – to be made right with God – to take on the character of Jesus – and for everything in my world to be made right (justice for the oppressed, welcome to the stranger, freedom for captives, lifting up of the poor...)*

*Having tasted the mercy of God for the forgiveness of my sins by way of the cross my heart is shaped to extend mercy – to so vibrate with compassion for the state of others that we extend more than others deserve.*

*As I am transformed more into the likeness of Jesus by his mercy it integrates every aspect of my life – for the pure in heart are those whose mind, will and emotions are directed toward the same end.*

*That end is ultimately the mission that we are given by the Father whose whole being is given over to bringing peace – shalom – full flourishing in every aspect of life.*

*How do we know we are about the Father's business (peacemaking), have the life of the kingdom recreated in us? We will be persecuted, reviled, spoken poorly of as was Jesus.*

4. As we went through each beatitude in the sermon which one stood out to you and why? How will reflecting this beatitude impact the world around you?

*This is a personal reflection question. There may be wisdom in looking at the answers to the last question so that you can give a quick summary of each of them to jog people's memory. It is likely that people will either speak to the one they feel most confident in or the one they most yearn for. This may stir up a place to press in for prayer.*

*Press your group more toward that last part of this question as it pushes toward the intent of the sermon. For the Kingdom is both future and present – we are to live now as we will then as we point to and anticipate the kingdom coming in its fullness at Jesus' return in all with do and say and pray.*

5. These are not commands but pronouncements over those in whom the good news is taking hold. How can we receive this life of the kingdom, this new humanity?

*Jesus sat down and the disciples came to him (5:1). We must go to Jesus.*

*We must go to Jesus with a particular posture. Each word in the Hebrew vocabulary of praise anticipated a particular posture. The word bless anticipated humbling coming to Jesus upon our knees with our hands extended in a posture of reception.*

*Go to him and he will open the storehouses of the heavens to us, pouring out upon us the Spirit that we might have this new humanity recreated in us.*