Bible Study Resources

Sunday 29 January

Matthew 5:1-12

**5**When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. **2**And he began to speak and taught them, saying:

**3**“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

**4**“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

**5**“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

**6**“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

**7**“Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

**8**“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

**9**“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

**10**“Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

**11**“Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falselyon my account.**12**Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Beatitudes are wisdom sayings that denote blessing when someone reflects God’s character, living as a participant in the kingdom of God.

How do you differentiate between blessing now, and blessing in God’s future fulfilment of all things?

Matthew’s audience had experienced persecution during/following the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70CE.

How is that reflected in the beatitudes?

Last week we explored the kingdom of heaven – what and who it comprises. Who are the people (according to the beatitudes) who inherit the kingdom of heaven?

Can you recall some beatitudes from the Old Testament?

Eg Psalm 1

*As modern western Christians reading Matthew’s gospel, we need to find a pathway between criticism of Jewish legalism and an over-generalisation that Matthew never intended. This means respecting the Jewish background and setting in which the text originated, while being 21st C participants in the kingdom of heaven.*

How do we do this?

Here are some of the verses which are the background to each of the. Beatitudes. How do they help to provide context?

Matthew 5:1-12

**5**When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. **2**And he began to speak and taught them, saying:

**3**“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

The OT tradition of God’s care for the poor:

Exodus 22:25-27; 23:11; Lev 19:9-10; Deut 15:7-11; Is 61:1

**4**“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Isaiah 61:2-3. The occasion for their mourning is the devastation of the First Temple in Jerusalem in 587BC

**5**“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Psalm 37:11. The Hebrew word for ‘meek’ here is basically the same as the word for ‘poor in spirit’.

**6**“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Psalm 107:5, 8-9

**7**“Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

Prov 14:21, 17:5. Mercy is first of all an attribute of God. In turn, God desires mercy from people.

Matthew quotes Hosea 6:6 twice in Matt 9:13 and 12:7

**8**“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Psalm 24:3-4

**9**“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

The background is the OT idea of *shalom.*

**10**“Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

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Here is another way to read the beatitudes – from *The Message* paraphrase.

What comes to mind as you read?

How are they a resource for living in God’s kingdom today?

*Arriving at a quiet place, Jesus sat down and taught his climbing companions. This is what he said:*

***3****“You’re blessed when you’re at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule.*

***4****“You’re blessed when you feel you’ve lost what is most dear to you. Only then can you be embraced by the One most dear to you.*

***5****“You’re blessed when you’re content with just who you are—no more, no less. That’s the moment you find yourselves proud owners of everything that can’t be bought.*

***6****“You’re blessed when you’ve worked up a good appetite for God. He’s food and drink in the best meal you’ll ever eat.*

***7****“You’re blessed when you care. At the moment of being ‘care-full,’ you find yourselves cared for.*

***8****“You’re blessed when you get your inside world—your mind and heart—put right. Then you can see God in the outside world.*

***9****“You’re blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That’s when you discover who you really are, and your place in God’s family.*

***10****“You’re blessed when your commitment to God provokes persecution. The persecution drives you even deeper into God’s kingdom.*

***11-12****“Not only that—count yourselves blessed every time people put you down or throw you out or speak lies about you to discredit me. What it means is that the truth is too close for comfort and they are uncomfortable. You can be glad when that happens—give a cheer, even!—for though they don’t like it, I do! And all heaven applauds. And know that you are in good company. My prophets and witnesses have always gotten into this kind of trouble.*

Collect

Righteous God,
you confound the world’s wisdom
by giving your blessing to the lowly and pure in heart:
give us such a hunger and thirst for justice
and perseverance in striving for peace,
that in our words and deeds
the world may see the promise of your kingdom,
which has been revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**