Matthew 5A

**Matthew 5:1-12**

**1***Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him,*

**2***and he began to teach them.*

*He said:*

**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 be shown 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 because of righteousness,  
    for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

**11***“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.*

**12***Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

* There are two major points of background we must appreciate
  + First, we need to understand the religious culture in the Israel of Jesus’ day
    - By the time Jesus appeared in the Galilee, Israel’s religious life had been warped by centuries of bad teaching
    - For at least four centuries, the nation had been led and taught by men who traced their origins to the scribes of
    - Yet, these men distorted and corrupted the high standard of teaching Ezra established
  + When the people of Israel returned from exile in Babylon, they were determined never to repeat the mistakes that led to their captivity
    - Among their leaders, was a teacher named Ezra, who began to instruct the people in following the Law of God
    - Ezra was a man who knew and loved God’s Word and he taught it truly
    - He desired to instill a heart of obedience in Israel so they might never be removed from the land again
    - As a result of Ezra’s leadership, the people of Israel recommitted themselves to knowing and following God’s commandments
  + Ezra also began a school to train religious leaders called, “scribes”, in the proper understanding of the Law
    - For a time, things went well for Israel
    - But after Ezra died, a new generation of scribes rose up, men who took Ezra’s program in a new and dangerous direction
    - Not content to teach only God’s Word, they began to expand the set of rules that the people should follow
    - For every “thou shalt not…” in God’s Law, this new generation of scribes added 10 more restrictions
    - They claimed these additional rules (“fences”) would ensure Israel’s obedience by preventing any violation of God’s law
* This new rabbinical movement resulted in two very serious problems for the people of Israel
  + First, they the people
  + The scribes’ manual of manmade rules, which eventually became known as the *Mishnah*, grew in size and importance over the centuries
    - Each new generation of scribes and religious leaders sought to invent new rules and reinterpreted old rules
    - Eventually, the rabbinical rules became so all-encompassing that they rivaled Scripture itself
  + In fact, the scribes and rabbis ultimately declared that their rules *were*
  + - They claimed the Mishnah was an “oral law” that God originally gave to Moses, yet Moses never wrote it down
    - This additional law was preserved over time, being handed down orally to these scribes, who now put it in writing
    - Once this myth took hold among the people, the Mishnah became indistinguishable from Scripture in the minds of Jews
  + As keepers of the Mishnah, the Pharisees were the self-appointed models of piety in Israel
    - They portrayed themselves as the gold standard for righteousness among the people
    - When a Jewish man or woman wondered what pleased God, they only needed to look at the Pharisees to find their answer
    - The Pharisees set the rules and also decided how they were to be interpreted
* After centuries of living under Pharisaical Judaism, Israel lost a true appreciation for what God’s Word taught
  + By the time of Jesus, Israeli society was regulated almost exclusively by the Mishnah’s precepts
    - Sabbath keeping, feast rituals, temple service, virtually all religious life and practice was conducted according to these manmade rules
    - These customs bear only a passing resemblance to the requirements of Scripture
    - In some cases, the rabbi’s teaching directly contradicted the Word of God
    - This is still the case among orthodox Judaism today
    - The Mishnah and later works, like the Talmud, drive Jewish religious life and custom today, not Scripture
    - **Addendum:** *The Mishnah is a collection of Jewish oral traditions, and forms the first part of the Talmud. The second part of the Talmud is the Gemara, rabbinical commentary of the Mishnah.*
  + Ironically, the system Ezra hoped would preserve God’s Word in Israel had become a means of obscuring it
    - With the result being that today (as in Jesus’ day), a typical Jew is largely ignorant of Scripture
    - In place of the truth, they bear the burden of literally thousands of meaningless manmade rules
    - The consequence being, that the Jewish people have largely forgotten God’s promise of forgiveness and mercy in the Messiah
* Second, Jesus was speaking to the person
  + These men and women came to Jesus because they heard Jesus was healing every kind of illness
    - Jesus had attracted literally thousands of sick, paralyzed, demon-possessed outcasts & gentiles
    - That’s not exactly an “A” list of the religious elite
  + On the contrary, from the perspective of the religious elites in Israel, these people were at the bottom of the pecking order
    - The Pharisees commonly held that those who suffered from incurable diseases and disabilities were experiencing God’s judgment for their sins,
    - That false charge gave Jewish society license to ignore their plight, because they were just suffering what they deserved
    - So, as a result, these people were marginalized and forgotten
  + Anytime their thoughts turned to God and heaven, or of their prospects of entering the kingdom, they would have found little reason for hope
    - They were being judged by God, or so the rabbis told them
    - How could they ever rise above their poverty and shame to equal the piety of the Pharisees?
    - If the Pharisees were God’s gold standard for righteousness, then they obviously had no chance to merit the Kingdom
  + Pharisaical Judaism yielded two seriously negative consequences for Israel:
    - First, it replaced God’s Word with rules that left Israel ignorant of God’s true desires for His people
    - Secondly, it perpetrated a false for righteousness by elevating corrupt hypocritical religious leaders as God’s representatives

* + - This combination of false teaching and false teachers resulted in an upside-down view of God and righteousness among God’s people
    - And it robbed many of the hope of salvation, since they couldn’t measure up to the Pharisees’ hypocritical standard
    - Anyone who has ever been trapped in a works-based false religion, that replaces grace with works, can certainly identify with the situation many is Israel found themselves stuck in
* Matthew 5, Jesus sits down near Galilee and delivers this sermon to overturn that upside down understanding and replace it with long-lost Biblical truth
  + That’s why so much of what Jesus says in this sermon may sound backwards at first
    - It’s Jesus repeatedly denying the authority of the Pharisees and their oral law so He can reassert the authority of God’s Word
    - He exposes the Pharisees’ wrong view of , so He can exhort the people to look elsewhere for the truth on these matters
    - In the process, Jesus establishes Himself as the One true authority on righteousness and the Kingdom
  + As He begins His sermon, Jesus issues a series statements, often called, “the Beatitudes”
    - Each of the nine statements begins with the word, *makarios,* usually translated as “blessed” or “happy”
    - We get the term “beatitude” from the Latin translation of this Greek word
    - So instead of “blessed”, you could say, “spiritually happy” or “spiritually rewarded”
  + Notice first, the blessing or reward Jesus is talking about here is not something vague…it’s something very specific
    - Jesus defines “blessed” at the beginning and again near the end of the nine statements
    - In v.3, and again in v.10, Jesus defines being blessed as

into the Kingdom of Heaven

* + - Today, we would say, “being saved” or “going to Heaven”
  + Jesus isn’t talking about trivial, everyday blessings of happiness on earth
    - Jesus is talking about the ultimate, eternal blessing of entering the Kingdom with Jesus
    - Each of these nine qualities or conditions is linked in some sense to entering the Kingdom
  + Secondly, notice that each of these qualities or conditions is

in nature, not physical

* + - It’s easy to see how qualities like purity or gentleness refer to the spiritual condition of a person’s heart
    - Even in cases of being poor or hungering, Jesus qualifies what He means, to ensure we understand that He’s talking spiritually
    - In v.3, He says poor *in spirit* and, in v.6, He describes hungering *for righteousness*
    - In all cases, Jesus was not talking about physical conditions…He was describing spiritual conditions
* Thirdly, notice that the reward for each condition does not come , but will come in the Kingdom
  + Beginning in v.3 again, Jesus says the poor in spirit will receive the Kingdom
    - Likewise, those who mourn today will rejoice in the Kingdom
    - And those who are meek today will be rewarded in the Kingdom
    - And those who desire to see righteousness and justice reigning will be satisfied in the Kingdom
    - And those who pursue purity will know the purity of God Himself in the Kingdom
  + We clearly see how Jesus is contradicting the false religious leaders of His day, as well as those of our day
    - The Pharisees set their minds on receiving the praises of men and obtaining the riches of the earth
    - Then, they pointed to their wealth and prestige as proof they were pleasing to God
    - Jesus taught that God’s children await to receive their reward in the Kingdom
    - God’s priority isn’t giving us our best life now, but rather granting us the joy of the Kingdom in the age to come
* Finally, notice in these nine statements, that Jesus was describing heart of the one who the Kingdom, not giving us a recipe for *how to* *receive* the Kingdom
  + If Jesus had intended the Beatitudes to be a roadmap for how to obtain the Kingdom, then He would have been teaching a Gospel of works
    - In fact, many teachers and churches teach that this the way we are to earn entrance to Heaven
    - But that view simply repeats the error of the Pharisees
    - It’s substituting new rules for the ones found in the Mishnah,
    - When in reality, rule-keeping never brought anyone into Heaven, no matter which rules you follow
  + On the contrary, the Bible teaches plainly that salvation cannot be obtained by good works, but only by grace through in Jesus Christ
    - Even common sense says that the Beatitudes can’t be a recipe for gaining Heaven
    - Because we know that not everyone who is gentle goes to Heaven
    - Not everyone who mourns over the death of a relative will be in the Kingdom, *etc*.
  + So what was Jesus trying to say here? Simply put, this is a character sketch of a

of the Kingdom

* + - He or she will look very different than a Pharisee
    - They will not be pious, hypocritical, self-righteous, proud religious leaders
    - Instead, the Kingdom will be populated by men and women who look a lot like Jesus’ crowd
    - They will be poor in spirit, hungering to see righteousness prevail, merciful, gentle, and pure in heart, *etc*.
* Let’s get to know this character Christ is sketching for us, so we can see how we compare
  + We can divide the list into two groups: a group of four and a group of five
    - The first four conditions describe the person’s with God, beginning with poor in spirit in v.3
    - To be poor in spirit is the opposite of being spiritually proud
    - To be poor in spirit is to acknowledge our inability to meet the lofty standard of Heaven
    - It’s recognizing that if we have to qualify for Heaven on our own merits, we have no chance…we are spiritually impoverished
  + Therefore, the one who is poor in spirit comes to understand that he is utterly dependent on God’s mercy and grace to enter into Heaven
    - It’s literally the opposite perspective of that of a Pharisee
    - Pharisees were proud in spirit, proud of their piety, proud of their reputation and completely in denial of their sinfulness
    - They weren’t just qualified for Heaven, they expected to be welcomed into Heaven with great fanfare and high praise
    - Jesus says that’s not who will we find in the Kingdom
    - The Bible says that obtaining such a perspective is a work done by God’s Spirit in our heart as part of our salvation experience

**2 Corinthians 7:10**

*For the kind of sorrow God wants us to experience leads us away from sin and results in salvation. There’s no regret for that kind of sorrow. But worldly sorrow, which lacks repentance, results in spiritual death.*

* As the Spirit convicts us, bringing us to repentance, He replaces our spiritual pride and self-righteousness with a humility that understands our true sinful condition
* And in that moment, we come to recognize that we need Jesus, for there is no other way to enter the Kingdom
* Even after receiving God’s grace, we are to continue to depend upon it
  + That’s a type of Pharisaical thinking, of spiritual pride, rather than being poor in spirit
    - If we slip into that state of mind, we’re taking the grace of God for granted
    - We’re forgetting how we gained the Kingdom in the first place
    - And we’re becoming a stumbling block for others who perceive our self-righteousness as cause to lose hope for their own prospects of Heaven
    - Don’t become so proud of your salvation that you become a stumbling block preventing others from sharing in it
* Next, Jesus connects being poor in spirit with mourning in v.4
  + By the context, we know mourning refers to feeling sorrow for the devastating effects of sin, both of our sin and that of others
    - Those who are destined for the Kingdom know true sorrow for having offended God by their sins
    - Christians mourn over our and especially for how our mistakes have others
    - This is the natural consequence of having a soft heart, made so by the conviction of the Holy Spirit
    - And in many cases, we will know literal sorrow - shedding tears - over these things
  + Once again, Jesus is flipping the tables on conventional thought
    - The world doesn’t mourn its sin, it celebrates it
    - Sure, the world sheds tears when the consequences of their sin catch up to them
    - But that’s not the kind of mourning Jesus is talking about
  + A good example of how the Godly mourn over their sins, consider David’s own words in Psalm 51

**Psalms 51:1-10**

**1***Have mercy on me, O God,  
    because of your unfailing love.  
Because of your great compassion,  
    blot out the stain of my sins.***2***Wash me clean from my guilt.  
    Purify me from my sin.***3***For I recognize my rebellion;  
    it haunts me day and night.***4***Against you, and you alone, have I sinned;  
    I have done what is evil in your sight.  
You will be proved right in what you say,  
    and your judgment against me is just.***5***For I was born a sinner—  
    yes, from the moment my mother conceived me.***6***But you desire honesty from the womb,   
    teaching me wisdom even there.*

**7***Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean;  
    wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.***8***Oh, give me back my joy again;  
    you have broken me—  
    now let me rejoice.***9***Don’t keep looking at my sins.  
    Remove the stain of my guilt.***10***Create in me a clean heart, O God.  
    Renew a loyal spirit within me.*

* Can you hear David mourning over his sins before God?
  + And yet David also appreciated that, in a time to come, when he received his glorified body in the Kingdom, he would be comforted
  + He would no longer mourn his sin, because his sin would be no more
  + That’s what Jesus promises those who mourn over sin: that one day, we will be comforted
* Moving to v.5, we see this pattern continuing
  + Jesus says gentleness will make citizens of the Kingdom, and they will inherit the earth
    - Our translation uses the words “the meek”
    - That’s probably a better word choice, because Jesus is talking about an attitude of submission to God’s authority
    - Being meek means accepting our station in life as God has assigned it, and seeking to please Him from that place
    - It’s the opposite of earthly ambition, of seeking the power and riches
  + The Kingdom citizen will exhibit this attitude, and to the extent he or she lives according to this conviction, they will receive reward in the Kingdom
    - That reward takes the form of a share in Christ’s inheritance
    - At His resurrection, Christ received back the earth and all it contains as His inheritance
    - One day, He will return to rule over His inheritance
    - And when He does, He will share His inheritance with all the children of God according to our faithfulness in serving Him
    - That’s meekness…seeking to please Christ with our service
  + This is an opposite state of heart compared to the one commonly held by Pharisees
    - They were men motivated by riches and willing to use their position of authority to gain wealth
    - They sought the approval of men and loved to receive greetings in the streets
    - They were anything but meek
    - And now, Jesus tells the stunned crowd that such naked ambition would have no part in His Kingdom
* Next, in v.6, Jesus says the Kingdom citizen will hunger and thirst for righteousness
  + When someone hungers or thirsts, it means they don’t have the thing they desire
    - You say you’re hungry because you want food, but don’t have it
    - Or you’re thirsty because you want water, but none can be found
  + Similarly, those destined for the Kingdom long to see righteous reigning on earth, yet we realize this is an unreachable goal apart from Christ’s ruling
    - We hunger and thirst for righteousness, but we don’t think we can achieve it by calls for social justice or at the voting booth
    - We recognize righteousness can only be found in a kingdom ruled perfect by the King of Kings
    - For now, God’s righteousness reigns in our hearts by His Spirit, but we await the day it reigns from sea to sea on earth
  + Jesus promises that those who look forward to such things will be satisfied in a day to come, in the Kingdom

The prophet Micah proclaims

**Micah 4:1-7**

**1***In the last days, the mountain of the Lord’s house  
    will be the highest of all—  
    the most important place on earth.  
It will be raised above the other hills,  
    and people from all over the world will stream there to worship.***2***People from many nations will come and say,  
“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,  
    to the house of Jacob’s God.  
There he will teach us his ways,  
    and we will walk in his paths.”  
For the Lord’s teaching will go out from Zion;  
    his word will go out from Jerusalem.***3***The Lord will mediate between peoples  
    and will settle disputes between strong nations far away.  
They will hammer their swords into plowshares  
    and their spears into pruning hooks.  
Nation will no longer fight against nation,  
    nor train for war anymore.***4***Everyone will live in peace and prosperity,  
    enjoying their own grapevines and fig trees,  
    for there will be nothing to fear.  
The Lord of Heaven’s Armies  
    has made this promise!***5***Though the nations around us follow their idols,  
    we will follow the Lord our God forever and ever.*

**6***“In that coming day,” says the Lord,  
“I will gather together those who are lame,  
    those who have been exiles,  
    and those whom I have filled with grief.***7***Those who are weak will survive as a remnant;  
    those who were exiles will become a strong nation.  
Then I, the Lord, will rule from Jerusalem  
    as their king forever.”*

* Once again, Israel’s leaders didn’t hunger or thirst for righteousness
  + They believed they had already found it in their law and customs
  + They were already satisfied by the they established
  + Especially since it rewarded them and kept them protected and in power
  + Such men will not be found in the Kingdom
* The second set of five beatitudes relate our with people in the world, beginning with being merciful in v.7
  + Jesus says those destined for the Kingdom are those who show mercy in their dealings with others
    - Believers appreciate the mercy we received from God when He extended salvation to us by His grace
    - We are inclined by our new nature to show mercy to others
    - This trait is very unlike the unsaved, especially among the religious in Israel, who have never known God’s mercy and have been taught an eye for an eye, *etc*.
  + In v.8, Jesus says the Kingdom citizen is one who possesses a heart
    - He’s referring to being upright and in the way we conduct ourselves in all matters of life and especially in our dealings with others
    - Kingdom citizens do not seek to profit from another’s loss or gain at another’s expense
    - Once again, this is not a recipe for gaining Heaven, but rather, the mark of those who have gained Heaven by faith in Jesus Christ
    - And in the Kingdom, these citizens will enjoy the unrivaled purity of seeing God face to face
  + In v.9, Jesus says the Kingdom will be occupied by those who make

in the world

* + - Jesus says God’s children will exhibit a sincere desire to mediate conflict, to reduce strife and encourage peace in their relationships
    - We may not always find the peace we want, but our new spirit is programmed to seek for it rather than to provoke, much less celebrate, conflict
  + Jesus says Kingdom citizens live this way because we will one day be called the sons of God in the Kingdom
    - Jesus is alluding to the role believers will play in the Kingdom ruling with Christ and establishing peace among the nations
    - As Paul taught

**1 Corinthians 6:2-3**

**2***Don’t you realize that someday we believers will judge the world? And since you are going to judge the world, can’t you decide even these little things among yourselves?*

**3***Don’t you realize that we will judge angels? So you should surely be able to resolve ordinary disputes in this life.*

* Finally, Kingdom citizens will know persecution and insult because our relationship with Christ will invite it
  + Yet, we rejoice in such things because it’s a mark common to all God’s children
  + Just as the prophets who came before us, if we share in their persecution, then we can know we will share in their reward in the Kingdom
* Consider this character sketch of the Kingdom citizen:
  + The person entering the Kingdom is a humble person aware of their own unrighteousness and resting in God’s mercy and grace
  + They are saddened by their own mistakes and long to see God’s righteousness prevail
  + They submit to God’s authority, seeking to please Him rather than placing their trust in the world’s rewards
  + They seek to show mercy to others, to deal honestly with others, seek peace with others
  + And yet, they will be persecuted by that world because they love Jesus
    - This is the person God has prepared to enter the Kingdom
  + Now if you’re a believer and you’re thinking, “I don’t do some of those things very well,” what does that tell you?
    - First, it tells you that this list sets the ideal standard, the new gold standard to replace the one offered by Pharisees
    - And as such, it’s an ideal, not something any of us can meet with perfection
  + Nevertheless, by the Spirit, we ought to be moving in this direction
    - So, if your behavior doesn’t measure up in any of these areas, then it tells you that despite the Spirit of God dwelling in your heart, you’re still living in the flesh
    - You have been saved by your faith and your future in the Kingdom is secure – but you still have some work left to do in sanctification, in representing Christ to this world as Jesus expects
* You won’t gain these things by mimicking the piety of the hypocritically self-righteous
  + Their hearts betray their ignorance, yet God’s children display His heart