

The Sermon on the Mount (Part 1)

The Good Life – A Fresh look at the Beatitudes

Study 2- True Repentance

Introduction

As we saw in our last study, the Beatitudes give us insight into what Jesus preached as He proclaimed the end of the exile and the arrival of the kingdom of heaven (4:17). The Beatitudes are thus first and foremost an announcement of an event, a declaration that the judgment of the exile is over and that the blessings of God's kingdom have arrived. Thus even though the Beatitudes are a very important description of a particular group of people (those who are waiting and longing for the kingdom), they point us first to the significance of Jesus' arrival. He is the Christ, the One who ushers in the kingdom and its blessings. It is because the King is here that He can declare "Blessed are"

This arrival of the King and His kingdom precipitates a crisis for every person. In the Beatitudes Jesus gives us His description of the people to whom the kingdom of heaven belongs (5:3,10). The Beatitudes thus force each of us to ask important questions: Am I like the people that Jesus describes in the Beatitudes? If not, what must I do to change? We have already seen from the wider context of the Beatitudes that the arrival of the kingdom of heaven and the King demands one particular response from everyone and that is true repentance. In the first two Beatitudes, Jesus goes on to explain what *true repentance* is. The first two Beatitudes are thus the gateway to the other six and the rest of the Sermon on the Mount.



Investigate and Think



Read Matthew 5:3-4

- If you are asked to complete the sentence "Blessed are the for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" what would you write?

- In vs 3 Jesus declares that the kingdom of heaven belongs to the 'poor in spirit'. How does this statement of Jesus' differ from your answer above?
- In what way(s) do you find this statement of Jesus' surprising?
- In vs 4 Jesus promises comfort to those who mourn. What kind of mourning do you think he has in mind?
- What comfort do you think Jesus is offering to the mourners?
- The 'poor in spirit' and the 'mourners' are the same people. How do you think these two characteristics fit together?

Read Psalm 40:1-4,16-17

- David is the speaker in this Psalm. How does he describe himself in vs17?
- What is surprising about this?

- In vs 4 David describes the poor man of vs 17 as a blessed man. How would you therefore describe what it means to be 'poor' in terms of vs 4?

Read Isaiah 40:1-2; 61:1-3

- In Isaiah 40:1-2 God offers comfort to his people who are under judgment and in exile because of their sins. What is the comfort that God gives to them?
- In Isaiah 61: 1-3 the Spirit Anointed King (the Christ) comes with good news for God's exiled people. How are these people described in these verses? (See if you can find six words to describe them!)
- In the light of Psalm 40 and Isaiah 61, what do you think Jesus means when he says that the 'poor in spirit' possess the kingdom?
- In the light of Isaiah 40 and Isaiah 61 what do you think Jesus means when He promises comfort to those who mourn?
- What qualifies Jesus to announce this 'good news' of the comfort and the gift of the kingdom to the poor who mourn? (Hint: Compare Isaiah 61:1 with Matthew 3:16-17)

- Last week we saw that the coming of the kingdom demanded repentance. In the light of what we have learned in this study how would you explain what repentance is?



Apply

- In what way do the words 'poor in spirit' and 'mourn' apply to you?

- In what way has God's comfort come to you?

- Based on what you have learned in this study, what would you say to someone who asked you "How do I enter the kingdom of heaven?"