

## Upside Down Kingdom 3 1-25-04

Matthew 5:1-12

<sup>1</sup>Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, <sup>2</sup>and he began to teach them, saying: <sup>3</sup>"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. <sup>4</sup>Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. <sup>5</sup>Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. <sup>6</sup>Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. <sup>7</sup>Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. <sup>8</sup>Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. <sup>9</sup>Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. <sup>10</sup>Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. <sup>11</sup>"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. <sup>12</sup>Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. Matthew 5:1-12 (NIV)

We have come to verse 7 in Jesus' discourse of the blessed man, the man that lives before the face of God. Last week I shared with you that Jesus is really describing Himself. He is telling us what it is like to walk in the Spirit and be surrendered to God. It begins with the recognition that we are poor in spirit, in need of the Father's direction. The Spirit filled life mourns with the heart of God over man's condition. It expresses itself in meekness that is obedient to the voice of God. It always exhibits a hunger and thirst for righteousness. We've seen how Jesus is the ultimate example of all these descriptions and how only a work of the Spirit in our hearts can make these things true of us.

A little over a month ago, our brother Will explained that mercy was not getting what we deserve. In declaring the merciful blessed, Jesus described how they would be blessed. They will be shown mercy. Near the end of this sermon, Jesus will tell us that this principle of sowing and reaping is applicable in every area of life. (Matthew 7:2) If you are unforgiving, people will not forgive you. In fact, Jesus only comment on His prayer in this same sermon is that you must forgive others if you want to be forgiven. (Matthew 6:14-15) If you love others, you will reap loving relationships. If you are generous, others will be generous toward you. But here in this passage we have the fact that those who are merciful will not only be shown mercy, they will be blessed. Remember that means they will see God active in their lives. They will live before the face of God.

I don't need to show you how this was true of Jesus. You know that His life was an act of mercy. His death in our place was the most merciful act ever to have been performed. The Apostle Paul wrote, "...that in the coming ages He might show the incomparable riches of His grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus." Ephesians 2:7 (NIV) We will forever look back on the cross as the ultimate expression of mercy. He was merciful in His forgiveness of those who crucified Him. He was merciful in using the disciples after they failed Him. He is merciful in calling us, redeeming us, transforming us, and working through us. If we in turn don't express that mercy towards others, we will be held accountable. (James 2:13)

**Commented [notes1]:** For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Matthew 7:2 (NIV)

**Commented [notes2]:** <sup>14</sup>"If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. <sup>15</sup>But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins. Matthew 6:14-15 (NLT)

**Commented [notes3]:** <sup>13</sup>because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment! James 2:13 (NIV)

Jesus told a story of a man who had been forgiven a great deal. It is in this same gospel, chapter 18. After being forgiven, the man went out and wrung the neck of a guy that owed him a minor amount, and then threw him in prison until the whole amount could be paid. His master asked him how he could be so merciless after he was so merciful to him. Then he rescinded his forgiveness and threw the man in jail. What a lesson! What a warning! We are expected to be to others as God is toward us. We are expected to be like God, because He is the only right standard. His character is what is right. He told the Jewish nation to be holy BECAUSE He is holy. (Leviticus 11:44a) Likewise, we should be merciful BECAUSE He is merciful. (Exodus 34:6)

**Commented [notes4]:** <sup>44</sup>I am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy. Leviticus 11:44a (NIV)

God's mercy should be our standard. The Hebrew word for mercy is really untranslatable. Barclay writes that it "*means the ability to get right inside the other person's skin until we can see things with his eyes, think things with his mind, and feel things with his feelings.*" —Barclay's Daily Study Bible (NT) First consider how close that makes God to you and your need today. He is seeing things with your eyes, hearing your every thought, and feeling your every feeling. Now consider what that is telling us in regards to how we need to treat one another. Who do you need to extend mercy towards? Remember, mercy means they don't deserve it, but you do it any way because you didn't deserve God's mercy! That is one of the quickest ways to get out of the dumps; get your eyes on someone else's need. Have mercy on someone because God has had mercy on you.

**Commented [notes5]:** <sup>6</sup> And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Exodus 34:6 (KJV)

We've been noting how the world thinks in direct contrast to the teachings of Jesus. The world would say the people who show mercy are suckers. They will get swindled out of every last dime and die broke both in finances and spirit. We may die broke, but we'll die blessed. As far as having a broken spirit, the world thinks that is bad. David said that God never rejects someone comes to Him with a broken spirit. (Psalm 51:17) We certainly see two different worlds. Maybe that is what Jesus is trying to do with these sayings, open their eyes to another world, the upside down world of the kingdom. I'll address that more fully next week.

**Commented [notes6]:** <sup>17</sup>The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. Psalms 51:17 (NIV)

<sup>8</sup>*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.* They see the active work of God in their lives. They recognize His glory in the earth. They know that purity is worthwhile. We are so used to being mixed in motivations. The teaching of our day says there is no black or white; everything is in shades of gray. The purity that God is after is of the heart. We are back to relationship. It is the "ALL" in the Great Commandment to love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. It is the purity of passion that says, "This one thing is worth all my desire. Nothing else compares!" (Psalm 27:4) We see it in some of the parables that Jesus told later in Matthew. There was a man that was seeking the perfect pearl. When he found it, he sold all that he had to buy it. (Matthew 13:46) There is the man that found buried treasure. He sold whatever was necessary for him to purchase that field. (Matthew 13:44) Do you get from these parables that the pure heart is after one thing? Purity of heart isn't distracted by all the glittery things of the world. It sees the bright light of God, and everything else pales in comparison. The pure heart sees God in every

**Commented [notes7]:** <sup>4</sup>One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple. Psalms 27:4 (KJV)

**Commented [notes8]:** <sup>46</sup>When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it. Matthew 13:46 (NIV)

**Commented [notes9]:** <sup>44</sup>Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Matthew 13:44 (KJV)

situation and knows His loving character will see them through whatever comes their way.

There is only one way to have a pure heart. It is to be born again of the Spirit. God promised through the prophets that the time would come when we receive a new heart. (Ezekiel 36:26-27) The Apostle Paul declared that when we are in Christ we are a new creation. (2 Corinthians 5:17) This is confusing to many Christians. They read about being made new, about a new heart, and about being holy, and they know they are struggling with sin. They know they often fail. And if we are made new, why is it that we must die daily? It doesn't seem like things are as they should be.

Let me share a passage of Scripture that I hope will clear this up for us.

... *by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.*  
Hebrews 10:14 (NIV)

Did you notice what almost sounds like a contradiction right in this one verse? Jesus' sacrifice on the cross made you perfect, but you must understand that that means in the eyes of the Father. He took your sins and gave you the merit of His righteousness. In God's eyes, you have the righteousness of Christ, but not in mine! Sorry! In mine, you and I are still being made holy. We are a work in progress. What Christ has put within us, He is working out of us when we will cooperate. We aren't robots, and we have to learn to cooperate with His Spirit within us. We have to allow Him to break some of our old patterns and recognize some of our old desires for what they really are. So, as this verse says, Jesus made you perfect, but you are still being made holy.

That means you have a pure heart, but at the same time it is being purified.

When your heart loves God with your whole being, it begins to see God in everything. You see Him in your circumstances. You recognize He is at work in you and in the lives of those you know and pray for. There are no random acts. Everything has a purpose. Even that painful tragedy you went through is being used by God to purify your heart. He didn't cause it, but in the fallen condition of this world, He has allowed it and is using it for your good.

The pure in heart see God in their brothers and sisters in Christ. The proud heart has a critical and condemning eye. When people start telling you what is wrong with other people, try to tune them out. I want to hear how you see Jesus in that brother or sister. Tell me how you see God at work in them. That's what I want to hear. The pure in heart see God not faults. When people start to complain about someone, they are only declaring that they themselves are a work in progress.

Isn't it wonderful when someone recognizes something of Christ in you? They share a word of encouragement about your gift, and you know that it was God using this vessel of clay. You know the work of being made holy isn't complete, but you know you are in the process. How exciting!

A pure heart sees God at work in the world around them! It sees God at work in the church, in the city, in the nation, and in the world. When you watch the news you

**Commented [notes10]:** <sup>26</sup>I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.  
<sup>27</sup>And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.  
Ezekiel 36:26-27 (NIV)

**Commented [notes11]:** <sup>17</sup>Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!  
2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV)

can't help but think of how God is working in the nations. You see doors opening for the Gospel. You see believers being tested and strengthened. You see the fires of refinement coming and going in the earth. You see judgments and blessings. The pure in heart see God at work in the earth.

The pure in heart will see God in eternity. If you have received Christ as your Savior, if you've made that exchange of your sins for His righteousness, you've entered into that work of being made holy. You will stand before God and declare that Jesus is your righteousness, and that He paid for all your sins. When you stand at the gates of heaven and are asked why you should be allowed in, there is only one answer, "The Lord Jesus is my righteousness." It's all because of Him. You will stand with a glorified body in His presence and worship from the depths of your pure heart. We can pray with David, "...give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name." Psalms 86:11 (NIV) and "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me." Psalms 51:10 (NIV)

Once again, this is Jesus! He is the pure in heart. Was there ever a purer heart? His whole focus was doing the Father's will. He calls us to this impossible place, but doesn't leave us on our own to get there. He lives within us to assist us in the process.

How does the world see the pure in heart? They think the pure in heart are naïve. They think they are missing something, you know, they just don't quite get it. They laugh and say, "You think that somehow being so pure will result in some good. You don't realize that life is a bear and then you die." That is really the attitude of the world. But in reality, the divided heart, the corrupt heart, is missing out on the fullness of the Spirit, on the presence of God. They have swallowed a lie that says the destructive is of value and worth giving your heart to. It's the path of certain destruction. How treacherous is the heart that sees purity as a pointless goal!

*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.* Matthew 5:9 (NIV) Peacemakers can intervene in personal, group, national and spiritual conflict. A peacemaker has to be humble enough to see both sides and take neither. He must be willing to set aside his own preferences to get the factions involved past their difference. In the 18<sup>th</sup> chapter of this gospel, Jesus will tell us how to settle personal differences. We need to read that passage regularly because we will always have differences and find reason to be offended.

The peacemaker is not out for his own good or glory but for that of the parties involved. In many cases, those in conflict both end up disliking the peacemaker because he or she will not take their side. It is often a thankless task, but God appreciates it. He calls peacemakers His children. That means they bear a family resemblance. That's because God is always at work through the Holy Spirit trying to bring peace between Himself and those that aren't in Christ.

The ministry of Christ was a peacemaking mission. He came to bring peace to Jew and Gentile and peace with God. (Ephesians 2:14-17) Now the peace of Christ is supposed to rule our hearts, which makes us peacemakers. The Apostle Paul wrote,

**Commented [notes12]:** <sup>14</sup>For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, <sup>15</sup>by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, <sup>16</sup>and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. <sup>17</sup>He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. Ephesians 2:14-17 (NIV)

"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful." Colossians 3:15 (NIV) It is Christ's own peace within us that causes us to become peacemakers.

Again, we find the world has the opposite spirit. The world is always seeking to benefit self first. Our old nature has a contentious spirit because of our pride and arrogance. We may want others to be at peace with us, but we make no effort to be at peace with those that rub us the wrong way. Instead, we go about influencing others against them, criticizing and condemning them. The world drives a wedge between themselves and anyone that is not "on my side". The most intelligent people I've met are those that share my view and opinion. (That is a joke.) One of the works of the flesh is building up factions so that one gets their way. (Galatians 5:19-20) It is the opposite of peacemaking; it is divisive. I hope and pray that this church is done with politics forever. We must strive to let the Spirit make us peacemakers, not faction builders. We can have differences without politicking. We can differ, and yet do so in love and understanding.

At the same time, we cannot compromise truth for the sake of superficial peace. The Hebrew word *shalom* does not just mean the absence of evil, but the presence of all good things. The Apostle Paul acknowledged that it is not always possible to be at peace, but that we should make every effort at it. (Romans 12:18) It takes two parties to make peace. It is up to us to have the peace of Christ within us as we endeavor to make peace in the relationships of our lives. Every peacemaking endeavor should be bathed in prayer and approached with a sincere desire for some kind of reconciliation. When you do that, you will be called children of God. If we are at peace with God, the refusal of another to accept our apologies and gestures of peace is not on our shoulders. We must then commit it to prayer and always be open to resolution, while rejecting any spirit of bitterness. (Hebrews 12:14-15)

Merciful, pure in heart, and peacemaking, all are descriptions of our Lord first, but also of His children as they live in the Spirit. Would you say it describes your life? If not, remember, you are a work in progress. This is what God is making you into. If you don't feel any progress in the transformation process, ask yourself if you are in Christ who is all of these things. Perhaps your life has never been hidden in Christ. You may be going about trying to find fulfillment and purpose outside of Christ. He came to give you life to the full, which is life in Him. (John 10:10) You can try on your own, but it will always in some way be focused on making you look good, unless it comes from His life in you. Only when His Spirit fills your heart and mind can you express His mercy, His purity, and His peace.

Next Sunday we will finish the Beatitudes. It will be a special sermon. I'm anxious for you to hear it. I'll be sharing about those who have seen beyond this physical realm that fills our eyes, and with eyes of the Spirit have seen the real world, more real than the one our senses experience. Don't miss it!

**Commented [notes13]:** <sup>19</sup>The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery;  
<sup>20</sup>idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions  
Galatians 5:19-20 (NIV)

**Commented [notes14]:** <sup>18</sup>If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.  
Romans 12:18 (NIV)

**Commented [notes15]:** <sup>14</sup>Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.  
<sup>15</sup>See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.  
Hebrews 12:14-15 (NIV)

**Commented [notes16]:** <sup>10</sup>The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.  
John 10:10 (NIV)