

## The Beatitudes – J. C. Ryle

### Matthew 5:1-12

<sup>1</sup> And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: <sup>2</sup> And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, <sup>3</sup> Blessed *are* the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. <sup>4</sup> Blessed *are* they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. <sup>5</sup> Blessed *are* the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. <sup>6</sup> Blessed *are* they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. <sup>7</sup> Blessed *are* the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. <sup>8</sup> Blessed *are* the pure in heart: for they shall see God. <sup>9</sup> Blessed *are* the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. <sup>10</sup> Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. <sup>11</sup> Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

The three chapters which begin with these verses deserve the special attention of all readers of the Bible. They contain what is commonly called the "sermon on the mount."

Every word of the Lord Jesus ought to be most precious to professing Christians. It is the voice of the chief Shepherd. It is the charge of the great Bishop and Head of the Church. It is the Master speaking. It is the word of Him who "spoke as never man spoke," and by whom we shall all be judged at the last day.

Would we know what kind of people Christians ought to be? Would we know the character at which Christians ought to aim? Would we know the outward walk and inward habit of mind which become a follower of Jesus? Then let us often study the sermon on the mount. Let us often ponder each sen-

tence, and prove ourselves by it. Not least let us often consider who they are that are called BLESSED at the beginning of the sermon. Those whom the great High Priest blesses are blessed indeed.

The Lord Jesus calls those blessed, who are ***poor in spirit***. He means the humble, and lowly-minded, and self-abased. He means those who are deeply convinced of their own sinfulness in God's sight. These are they who are not "wise in their own eyes and holy in their own sight." They are not "rich and increased with goods." They do not imagine that they need nothing. They regard themselves as "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Blessed are all such! Humility is the very first letter in the alphabet of Christianity. We must begin low, if we would build high.

The Lord Jesus calls those blessed, who ***mourn***. He means those who sorrow for sin, and grieve daily over their own short-comings. These are they who trouble themselves more about sin than about anything on earth. The remembrance of it is grievous to them. The burden of it is intolerable. Blessed are all such! "The sacrifices of God are a broken and contrite spirit." One day they shall weep no more. "They shall be comforted."

The Lord Jesus calls those blessed, who are ***meek***. He means those who are of a patient and contented spirit. They are willing to put up with little honor here below. They can bear injuries without resentment. They are not ready to take offence. Like Lazarus in the parable, they are content to wait for their good things. Blessed are all such! They are never losers in the long run. One day they shall "reign on the earth." (Revelation 5:10.)

The Lord Jesus calls those blessed, who ***hunger and thirst after righteousness***. He means those who desire above all things to be entirely conformed to the mind of God. They long not so much to be rich, or wealthy, or learned, as to

be holy. Blessed are all such! They shall have enough one day. They shall "awake up after God's likeness and be satisfied." (Psalms 17:15.)

The Lord Jesus calls those blessed, who are ***merciful***. He means those who are full of compassion towards others. They pity all who are suffering either from sin or sorrow, and are tenderly desirous to make their sufferings less. They are full of good works, and endeavors to do good. Blessed are all such! Both in this life and that to come they shall reap a rich reward.

The Lord Jesus calls those blessed, who are ***pure in heart***. He means those who do not aim merely at outward correctness, but at inward holiness. They are not satisfied with a mere external show of religion. They strive to keep a heart and conscience void of offence, and to serve God with the spirit and the inner man. Blessed are all such! The heart is the man. "Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." (1 Samuel 16:7.) He that is most spiritual-minded will have most communion with God.

The Lord Jesus calls those blessed, who are ***peacemakers***. He means those who use all their influence to promote peace and charity on earth, in private and in public, at home and abroad. He means those who strive to make all men love one another, by teaching that Gospel which says, "love is the fulfilling of the law." Blessed are all such! They are doing the very work which the Son of God began, when he came to earth the first time, and which He will finish when He returns the second time.

Lastly, the Lord Jesus calls those blessed, who are ***persecuted for righteousness sake***. He means those who are laughed at, mocked, despised, and ill-used, because they endeavor to live as true Christians. Blessed are all such! They drink of the same cup which their Master drank. They are now confessing Him before men, and He will confess them before

His Father and the angels at the last day. "Great is their reward."

Such are the eight foundation-stones, which the Lord lays down at the beginning of the sermon on the mount. Eight great testing truths are placed before us. May we mark well each one of them, and learn wisdom!

Let us learn how entirely contrary are the principles of Christ to the principles of the world. It is vain to deny it. They are almost diametrically opposed. The very characters which the Lord Jesus praises, the world despises. The very pride, and thoughtlessness, and high tempers, and worldliness, and selfishness, and formality, and unlovingness, which abound everywhere, the Lord Jesus condemns.

Let us learn how unhappily different is the teaching of Christ from the practice of many professing Christians. Where shall we find men and women among those who go to churches and chapels, who are striving to live up to the pattern we have read of today? Alas! there is much reason to fear, that many baptized people are utterly ignorant of what the New Testament contains.

Above all let us learn how holy and spiritual-minded all believers should be. They should never aim at any standard lower than that of the sermon on the mount. Christianity is eminently a practical religion. Sound doctrine is its root and foundation, but holy living should always be its fruit. And if we would know what holy living is, let us often bethink ourselves who they are that Jesus calls "blessed."

From *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels - Matthew*, Christian Classics Ethereal Library.

**J.C. Ryle** (1816-1900): Evangelical bishop of the Anglican Church. Revered author of *Holiness*, *Knots Untied*, *Old Paths*, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels*, and others. Born at Macclesfield, Cheshire County, England.

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