

BE God's People: A Study of the Beatitudes

Matthew 5:1-12; 1 Peter 2:9-10

Summer 2018

Main Point of Series: Jesus sets people free and transforms to live in God's blessing by Kingdom values.

INTRO *What are your summer plans? Where are you going? Who will you see? What will you experience?* These are typical questions that guide our plan-making in this season. *What if we reset the "metrics" by which we make and evaluate summer plans, and asked a better set of questions to shape the season and bless your life?*

At LifePoint, we have a plan for your life this summer. We want to challenge you not to replace your plans, but to raise the aim of experience. This Summer, set this as priority for your life, that God's Kingdom values would become, in ever-increasing and ever-deepening manner, the ruling guide of your heart, mind and life. Dare to set some new questions as the defining metrics for your summer plan. Proverbs 28:26 states, "*Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom will be delivered.*" *Walking in godly wisdom begins by embracing Kingdom values. Set your Summer aim to be set free and transformed by Jesus to live in God's blessing by His Kingdom values.*

BE Series Theme: 1 Peter 2:9-10

*But you are...a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people. **1 Peter 2:9-10***

"BE God's People" celebrates the blessing of God and the glory of His Kingdom by living His values. God saves to make us a people for His possession, to proclaim His excellencies! We are God's people to live as He redeems our life for His glory. Jesus calls His people to a higher glory for life, to live set apart from worldliness and dead religion by consuming our affections and defining our ethic through the gospel.¹ Christian, settle this matter once for all in your heart to receive all Jesus wants to do in your life; YOU are for God's glory, your whole life. There is NO greater glory, but there are countless lesser ones that tempt us daily to seek after. *LifePoint, this summer "BE God's People" aims to compel you to live in God's blessing by living as Jesus sets forth by His Kingdom values in the Beatitudes.*

Jesus sets people free and transforms to live in God's blessing by His Kingdom values.

TRANS Today I will introduce the "BE God's People" series to frame our expectations for God's Word each week.

The Scripture: Matthew 5:1-12

Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. ²And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

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

⁴Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

⁵Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

⁶Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

⁷Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

⁸Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

⁹Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

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

¹ John R. W. Stott, [The Message of the Sermon on the Mount \(Matthew 5-7\): Christian Counter-Culture](#), The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 18. Stott centralizes the message of the Sermon when he states, "To me the key text of the Sermon on the Mount is 6:8: 'Do not be like them.'"



¹¹*"Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.
¹²Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

Matthew 5:1-12

The Beatitudes begin the Sermon on the Mount which exalts life in God's Kingdom. We will not cover the whole Sermon in this series but will preach the Beatitudes from within this context. The first two verses provide a picture of God coming to us in Jesus to teach and lead us into His Kingdom. Understanding the Kingdom of God forms "the central theme of Jesus preaching"², and "perhaps the central theme of the entire New Testament."³ According to Jesus, understanding life in God's Kingdom is of utmost importance for the Christian. Jesus exhorts God's people through the Beatitudes to live as we've been redeemed by His love to live. ["BE God's People" proclaims Jesus' Kingdom values as a life of supreme glory and faithful witness.](#)

Christians live in the tension between two realities today. The "already, but not yet" tension of God's Kingdom in this world informs the Christian that though all creation is not fully under Christ's reign yet, we are, and this empowers life today. The Sermon on the Mount is not what we do to become a Christian but rather how we live because we are Christians.⁴ [Living in God's Kingdom means to live under the rule of King Jesus.](#)

The Beatitudes set forth values of God's Kingdom. Each Beatitude forms a contrast between Kingdom and worldly values. Where the world sees the proud, aggressive and accomplished as blessed, those that are blessed by Kingdom standards are poor in spirit and meek in life. This way of "being" for citizens of the Kingdom that is motivated and empowered by the gospel. One commentator states "The teaching in this sermon certainly sets a high standard. If we take it seriously we realize that we cannot attain it and therefore cannot merit salvation. It is the end of the way of law and drives us to seek salvation in Christ."⁵ [The rich meaning and radical nature of the Beatitudes challenge us to BE God's people by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.](#)

TRANS Now that we've looked at the Beatitudes, let's give more detail to shape our listening.

OBJ I want to pose [three questions to catalyze life transformation and experience a fuller presence of God in His Kingdom.](#)

1. [Do I seek God's blessing as my highest aim, deepest desire, and greatest aspiration for all of life?](#)

ILLUS I saw an article this week about a televangelist who started a "GoFundMe" account for a \$54M private jet. This provides a great opportunity to explain what "Blessed" does NOT mean. Blessed never means "decide what you want. Then use God to try and get it."

Each Beatitude begins with a promise of blessing. We must be clear about our understanding of "Blessed" so we don't hold a wrong expectation. This blessing is unique and not necessarily what we often think of when we hear the word. "Blessed" as "an exclamatory description of the state of happiness, privilege, or fortune that is upon someone as observed by someone else, a bystander, not the one providing or initiating the blessing." He continues, this is "the key biblical term to describe one in a state of human flourishing, and this should not be confused with the divine action of blessing, God actively

² H. N. Ridderbos, ["Kingdom of God, Kingdom of Heaven,"](#) ed. D. R. W. Wood et al., New Bible Dictionary (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 647.

³ Allen C. Myers, [The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 625. "The kingdom of God is perhaps the central theme of the New Testament."

⁴ D. Martin Lloyd-Jones, [Studies in the Sermon on the Mount](#), 11-12.

⁵ Leon Morris, [The Gospel according to Matthew](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), 91-92.



causing human flourishing.”⁶ God’s blessing on life stands for all who by faith in Jesus live by His Kingdom values. “Blessed” means we flourish in life when we live by God’s Kingdom values.

In light of this understanding of “Blessed”, we must guard against three wrong concepts. First, “Blessed” is never purchased as a commodity or possession from a right transaction. Second, “Blessed” is never earned like a reward by right action. Finally, “Blessed” is never achieved as a goal is accomplished. God does bless His people at times in this world through material means. As a matter of fact, for the Christian every “material means” is a blessing of God. But this is not what Jesus is teaching here.

ILLUS We are blessed to live in this part of the world known as the Ozarks. Our region consistently scores very high in major factors of quality of life; cost-of-living, healthcare availability, educational quality and opportunity, low crime, diversity of economic foundation, etc. I’ve lived here 19 years, and the one resounding qualification remains, ‘a little piece of heaven’. [And as close as it is at most times, a week like this one reminds us that this ain’t heaven. Heaven will not be 100*!] We enjoy the beauty of the Ozarks every morning because this is where we live. We enjoy the beauty and advantage that is continually ours because we are “blessed Ozarkians”.

The Beatitudes teach us that the greatest of God’s blessing is “house of true human happiness”. Righteous living (by faith through the gospel of Jesus Christ) is its own reward. The true reward of righteousness is NOT the reward received but the Rewarder, not the gift but the Giver, not the “reward” righteousness brings but the Righteous One Himself! Righteous living IS its own reward because we live by the One who IS Righteous, Jesus Christ! [The Beatitudes are God’s invitation to dwell in His unailing and unfading promise of joy, hope and salvation.](#)

Many lesser “blessings” compete with trusting God’s “Blessed-ness”. Self-sufficiency, aspiration, accomplishment and accolade that makes God’s blessing less desirable are constantly before us in the world. And while they may distinguish us in world ways, they can never mark us distinctively as God’s people.

Be careful to give no quick answer without detailed consideration of your life. Every beatitude presses us in different ways and various areas to consider whether the whole of our lives seeks God’s blessing at all times. This series leads us to press into Jesus’ exhortation to, “*seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*”^{Matt6:33} This first question presses us to identify and recognize what we hold as of highest value in our life. What you hold of highest value always receives your “first in seeking”. What we seek first in life marks us. [God’s people are identified by seeking first His Kingdom in life.](#)

[Seeking first God’s promise catalyzes in us life transformation as we hold His “blessed-ness” as highest esteem in our life.](#)
[Do you seek first God’s Kingdom for your life by living in His Blessed-ness as your highest aim, desire and aspiration?](#)

TRANS This leads us to the second question to catalyze life transformation in us.

2. [How do I embrace God’s kingdom value, Beatitude, as “first” with my life?](#)

This question presses us beyond a quick answer to a truthful consideration for our life. For us to truly know if we live to “seek first the Kingdom of God”, we must recognize whether we embrace the values of His Kingdom in the Beatitudes.

Beatitudes are never a what we would call a natural tendency. Each one is a disposition produced by grace alone and the work of Holy Spirit upon us. Any one of us, every one of us, whatever we may be by birth and nature, is meant as a Christian to be like this. And not only are we meant to be like this; we can be like this.⁷ The Christian’s greatest testimony in the world is the joy (happiness) we experience in God’s Kingdom. Joy shines brightly in a world searching and frantically

⁶ Jonathan Pennington, [Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing: A Theological Commentary](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2017), 49.

⁷Stott, [The Message of the Sermon on the Mount](#), 21-23. **OR** D. Martin Lloyd-Jones, [Studies in the Sermon on the Mount](#), 18. **Ck this!**



running after happiness in every place it cannot be found or achieved. [The brightest light of a Christian's faithful witness burns brightest in the world when our life is marked by unadulterated joy in God's blessing.](#)

Two extremes should be avoided in our evaluation. We should neither reduce them to a legalistic morality by direct application of action nor launch them as an individual, hyper-spiritual standard upon which no person could ever attain.⁸ Any time we answer this question without sincere thought or reflection, we will always fall on one end of this spectrum or the other, because we consider the command absent of the gospel's redeeming power. [Christians apply Jesus' teaching in light of His work on the cross for us, to deny the uselessness of self-sufficiency and the hopelessness of hyper-spirituality.](#)

Every Beatitude is rightly considered along with the whole of them. "The Beatitudes form a description of Christian character in general."⁹ They are not "multiple choice" but the whole of our being in Jesus Christ. Any degree of disregard or diminishing of any of the values identifies a place where we are striving to replace God's blessing with our own self-sufficiency.

Jesus contrasts each Beatitude against a worldly value. The contrast helps our discernment, to see the way one would naturally live versus the character of the Christian life. One can simply ask, ["how do I hold this value / beatitude, as of greater or less than the worldly value that contrasts it?"](#)

ILLUS [Have you ever played the game where you say the first thing that comes to your mind when you hear a word?](#) That can be a helpful exercise in answering this question. Your first response to each Beatitude reveals how you currently esteem it for your life.

APPL The Beatitudes challenge us to the core in every place where the world holds us. Our natural response to this is ["Lord, how can I be of any use or good for you if this is my character?"](#) This is Jesus' point. [Complete trust in Jesus by living out the values of His kingdom marks our lives for God's glory.](#)

The impossibility of living the Beatitudes is THE point of God's power set on us when we trust Him to live them out. The ONLY way to live the Beatitudes is by means of Luke 9:23.

["If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.](#)

[²⁴For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. Lk 9:23-24](#)

When we deny self, take up our cross and follow, Jesus' power works in and leads our life. And, verse 24 tells us, to deny the Beatitude as of higher glory is an attempt at self-salvation, which is always a useless exercise in futility. [Following Jesus is where life transformation occurs in us by faith.](#)

The Beatitudes for the defining values that shape a Christian's life, in attitude and action. This is how the Christian is meant to live. Every Beatitude is a confrontation for the throne of your life, full of hope and promise in Jesus and God's Blessedness when we deny self to live by His kingdom values. [Jesus taught the Beatitudes because He expects us to live them.](#)

[Are you embracing God's Kingdom value with the "first" of your life?](#)

TRANS The third question for each person to ask themselves extends from the second.

3. [Where is Holy Spirit convicting me to repent and walk in righteousness?"](#)

Jesus' pattern of contrast in teaching the Beatitudes forms a pattern for Christians in our receiving them. The contrast of values calls for a choice, to turn from one to the other. This is the pattern of gospel repentance. The gospel of Jesus Christ calls us to repent of values derived from the world and dead religion that we might walk in His righteousness.

⁸ Derived from D. Martin Lloyd-Jones, [Studies in the Sermon on the Mount](#), 18.

⁹ D. Martin Lloyd-Jones, [Studies in the Sermon on the Mount](#), 18.



Repentance begins with a change of mind and culminates with a new behavior defined by Jesus' righteousness.

Our change of mind is not merely a spiritual decision of the internal life, a conclusion of the intellect, an emotional response or an exertion of the will, but a practical one that expresses itself in our ethical and moral conduct to align with God's nature and will.¹⁰ The Beatitudes confront our lives where we are out of step with godliness and righteousness, to change our conduct in accordance with the new nature that is given to us in Jesus Christ. *When the glory of God's Kingdom in the gospel of Jesus Christ captures our affections, His truth will command our ethic!*

Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him.

*²And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying: **Matt 5:1-2***

Jesus comes to speak life by truth to us in the Beatitudes. Are you listening? Will you receive Jesus' words as life and let His truth transform your life?

Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones, medical doctor turned famed pastor and theologian of the Twentieth Century states; "If I do not want to be like this, I just be 'dead in trespasses and sin'; I can never have received new life. But if I feel that I am unworthy and yet I want to be like that, well, however unworthy I may be, if this is my desire and my ambition, there must be new life in me, I must be a child of God, I must be a citizen of the kingdom of heaven and of God's dear Son. Let every man examine himself."¹¹

Jesus sets people free and transforms to live in God's blessing by His Kingdom values.

CLOSE Every week as a Beatitude is preached, three questions to "plan your summer" for a higher aim of glory.

1. *Do I seek God's blessing as my highest aim, my deepest desire, and my greatest aspiration for all of life?*
2. *How am I embracing God's kingdom value as the highest esteem of my life?*
3. *Where or how is the Spirit convicting me to repent and walk in righteousness?*

Today, I invite you to make a commitment to receive what the Lord has for you this summer. Pray, "Lord Jesus, as we study the values of your Kingdom, ...

¹⁰Jonathan Pennington, *Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing: A Theological Commentary*, 90-91. Pennington states, "In light of the overall reading of Matthew as well as the emphasis of the Sermon on human flourishing, it makes sense to interpret *dikaiosyne* (righteousness) in Matthew not as imputed nor as something only God does, but in its natural ethical sense of what is expected of Jesus' disciples. In short, it is "doing the will of God" (7:21, 24; 12:50; cf. 6:10; 7:12; 18:14; 26:39, 42), that which is required to enter the kingdom of heaven (5:19-20; 7:21). In Sum, I define "righteousness" in Matthew as *whole-person behavior that accords with God's nature, will, and coming kingdom.*"

¹¹Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, 21-23. **OR** D. Martin Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, 18. **Ck this!**

