

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

An Introductory Message

Scripture Reading: Matthew 5:1-12.

Intro: Today I am beginning a series of messages on the Sermon on the Mount as we find it in Matthew, chapter 5, 6, and 7. It is also found in a more abbreviated form in Luke 6:20-49. From the circumstances described in connection with each of these passages, it appears that they were delivered at different times, *but both Matthew and Luke make it very clear that when the Lord spoke these words, He was speaking to His disciples*. Therefore, what we call, *the Sermon on the Mount*, was not intended for the people of the world generally, but only for those who had experienced the transforming power of Christ in their hearts. In other words, it is a message for Christians, those who are truly Christians.

One of the mistakes that many people make is that they will take the teachings of Scripture and try to live by them even though they have not been saved. *In order to live like a Christian, you must first of all be a Christian*. And no one can rightly claim to be a Christian who is not personally trusting Jesus Christ as his or her Savior. We must have divine life before we can live godly lives. This is a truth that is too often neglected by people in their handling of Scripture. Until a person is saved, he is dead, alienated from God, without spiritual life. But when he is saved, then he has eternal life, and by God's grace can live according to the Word of God. *It is difficult enough for a child of God to live the Christian life, but for a person who has not been born again, it is an utter impossibility!*

What I am saying is that there is a great difference between people who profess to be Christians simply because they go to church, or are a member of some church, or even those who seek to live a life with high moral standards. You can profess to be a Christian without really possessing eternal life. I trust that we all understand this. A true Christian is one who is trusting in Christ as his Savior, and thus has life eternal.

There have been differing ideas among expositors as to those for whom our Lord's message "on the Mount" was intended. Since it is generally agreed that Matthew was written for the Jews, some think that it was given to apply to the time when the Lord will be reigning upon the earth. But there is no suggestion of any such postponement in what our Lord said. In fact, His concluding words at the end of chapter 7 suggest an immediate

application of His teaching. These were teachings which the disciples were to live by, and were to teach to others.

So I look upon “the Sermon on the Mount” as having present importance for all of us. It may be that it will have a special emphasis during the Kingdom Age, but the NT epistles clearly support what our Lord was teaching when He was here on earth. Holy living is of the same character regardless of the time in which the people of God are living, so this is a message which has great meaning for us. It will only be our great loss if we neglect it.

But now let us turn to our text.

I. THE SETTING OF THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT..

This, according to Matthew, was shortly after the beginning of our Lord’s public ministry. The Lord had been baptized, tempted by the Devil, had moved from Nazareth to Capernaum, and had started to call the men who were to be His apostles. You see all of this at the end of Matthew 3 and the first 22 verses of chapter 4.

In these verses we learn from verse 12 that the Lord did not begin His ministry until John the Baptist had been cast into prison, signifying that his ministry was coming to an end.

This is when our Lord moved from Nazareth to Capernaum which was to be His headquarters throughout His ministry until He went to Jerusalem shortly before His death.

His purpose in going to Capernaum was that it was predicted that He would. (See the quotation from Isa. 9:1-2.) But if we look for a reason beyond that, *i. e.*, why He would make such a move, several suggestions have been made:

- 1) It was the area from which several of our Lord’s disciples came.
- 2) It was an area where there were many Gentiles, and so it would have been a place which was relatively free “from that intense bigotry which even to this day characterizes all places where Jews in large numbers dwell nearly alone” (JFB, V, 21).
- 3) The expression in Isa. 9:1, “Galilee of the Gentiles” meant that the area “made it ‘the frontier’ between the Holy Land and the external world” (*Ibid.*).

So we see that from early in His ministry there were indications of the

Lord's intention to minister to Gentiles as well as to the Jews.

Then continuing with Matt. 4:23 and going down through the first verse of chapter 5, we read the following. (Read Matt. 4:23-5:1.)

In verse 16 of chapter 4 we see what happened in the lands of Zebulun and Naphtali, or what was to happen, as a result of our Lord's ministry. (Read Matt. 4:16.)

This is followed with a statement about our Lord's preaching. The "light" was obviously the Gospel, the Gospel of Christ, and in verse 17 of Matt. 5 we see the Lord's appeal in His preaching: "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Then going down to verse 23 we see that priority in our Lord's ministry was given to "teaching" and "preaching," both before "healing."

But then, as we go into chapter 5 we see the although our Lord was followed by "great multitudes of people" from many different areas (see Matt. 4:25), the Lord left them, went up into a mountain, and there "he opened his mouth , and taught them." That is, He taught His disciples.

And so what we have in chapters 5, 6, and 7 is the teaching and preaching of our Lord, which, by the way, is the longest "sermon" given by our Lord which is recorded in the four Gospels.

The Gospel records leave no doubt but that our Lord in His public ministry was a Teacher and a Preacher, *an expository Teacher and Preacher!* Then it was that the Lord began to teach His disciples the great truths which follow in Matthew 5, 6, and 7. The Apostle Paul was emphasizing the importance of preaching when he wrote in 1 Cor. 1,

17 For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God (1 Cor. 1: 17-18).

And then he followed those words with these three verses later:

21 For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

22 For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after

wisdom:

23 But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness;

24 But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:21-24).

Back in 1959 when Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones published his two volumes on the Sermon on the Mount, he lamented two things in particular about the work of the Lord in those days:

- 1) The lack of expository preaching. This is preaching where the preacher takes a passage of Scripture and carefully explains what it means, verse by verse.
- 2) The superficiality of the church in evangelism. And in this he was thinking about the methods that evangelists used to get decisions out of people. There was also in those days a lot of superficiality in the messages preached by evangelists.

What would Dr. Lloyd-Jones say if he were alive today? Things have not gotten better; they have gotten worse, much worse!

The situation in the local church today makes it that much more important that we take a sermon like our Lord gave to His disciple “on the mount,” and examine it carefully, word by word. These are the words of the Lord Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, but none could possibly be more important than the words of our Lord. As it was in our Lord’s day, it is only as the Word of God is taught and preached that people today who are sitting in darkness will be able to see the great light of the Gospel and of all of the truth of God’s Word.

Now, in the light of what we are going to be doing each Sunday morning for many weeks to come, ***I have one request to make of you, and one suggestion.***

First, in preparation for this series of messages, let me ask you to set aside time each week to read through these three chapters. Our studies together will mean much more to you if your heart is full of the truth that we find in these verses. Second, the suggestion is this: a few years ago the Sermon on the Mount was our memory assignment for the first of the year. Many of you probably have that memory book somewhere among your belongings. You might want to get that out and work on memorizing these three chapters in Matthew again. Books are available for those of you who do not have one. I sincerely hope that all of you will do the reading, and that many of you will commit these chapters to memory.

Now, before we go any farther, let me survey these chapters for you. There is no perfect outline although there are many good outlines. The one I am going to give you is my own. You can probably come up with one better than mine, but I am going to use mine in the messages that I will be bringing, and so that is why I want to give it to you now.

Let me emphasize that this sermon was delivered to the disciples, and so it is meant for all of us who know the Lord. It was not given to the world; it was given to the disciples. It contains truth for Christians. Only true Christians can live as our Lord was teaching we should live when He gave this message. It was so important that the disciples learn to live the life of a child of God before then went out to teach it and preach it to others. And that is why it is so important for me, and for you. The world will see the truth when the truth is proclaimed by the Lord's people who are seeking by God's grace to live the kind of a life that is described in these verses. We are not here just to learn a lot of facts about the Bible. We are here to learn the truth, and then to live the truth. And we can only do either one of these with the Holy Spirit as our Teacher and our Power.

And so let us in the moments that remain to us in this service, turn our thoughts to:

II. A SURVEY OF THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

I hope that going through this today will be a help to you in your reading of this great Sermon. I will give this survey to you in outline form with a key verse, or key verses for each section. And I have divided the three chapters into five parts. So you will have five headings to the three chapters if you would like to write these down.

Roman numeral "I." is:

I. The Character of a Christian (Matt. 5:1-16).

Mr. Spafford read these verses to us in our Scripture reading. The Lord presented His description of what we all are to be like in these verses. The first part consists of what we call Beatitudes, beginning with the word, "Blessed." And then these are followed with our Lord telling His disciples, and telling us, that we are both "salt" and "light."

These verses are the foundation of the whole message. I hope you will memorize the whole message, but, if you can't do all of it, **be sure to**

memorize these first sixteen verses.

Now I told you that I would give you a key verse, or key verses for each section. The key verse for this section is verse 16. (Read.) It is your life which is your light. And it is my life that is my light. As we manifest the characteristics that our Lord mentioned in these verses, together they make up our light. And this is what is to shine forth from our lives. This is where we all must begin.

We will see as we examine these characteristics that these are qualities of life which the world is not interested in. In fact, most of them, if not all are scorned. But they have a real appeal to those of us who really know the Lord. But more about this in the days to come.

The second point in our outlines is:

II. The Christian and the Word of God (Matt. 5:17-48).

The first part of this message tells us *what* we are to be; this part tells us where we learn about how we are to live. It is God's Word which is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path, as the Psalmist said in Psa. 119: 105. We wouldn't know anything the way we need to know it if we did not have the Bible. And so we will see what the Lord had to say in this passage about the Word that He has given to us.

The key verse: Matt. 5:48. (Read.) You see, the verses I have picked as key verses are the verses in which we have the practical exhortations having to do with each section of the message. You and I will make no progress in sanctification (which is perfection) unless we know the truth that our Bibles give to us.

All right, we are ready for Roman number "III."

III. The Personal Life of the Christian (Matt. 6:1-34).

The Lord was speaking to all of the disciples, but each was to make the application to himself. And we must do the same. There is a strong personal emphasis in this part of the sermon.

In verses 1-3 our Lord spoke of how they did their alms. In verses 4-15, about how they should pray. In verses 16-18, about how they should fast. You see, all of this is very, very personal. And the Lord continued in this

way throughout the chapter. We all need to do these things. No one else can do them for us. If we don't do them, they are left undone as far as we are concerned. How important it is to read all of the practical exhortations of Scripture in the same personal way.

The key verse: Matt. 6:33.

Now we come to Number IV.

IV. Some Special Instructions for the Christian (Matt. 7:1-12).

These obviously were to meet special conditions and needs which would come up in the disciples' relationships with other people—both saved and unsaved. The Lord began with criticism, went on to speak of what to do when their message was rejected, then spoke again of prayer, and concluded with what has to be *the key verse* of this section: Matt. 7:12.

This verse is often cited by people are not Christians as the Golden Rule of life, but it is not possible for anyone but a true child of God to live consistently in this way.

The last section of the sermon emphasizes:

V. The Christian's Need for Assurance (Matt. 7:13-29).

Even professing Christians can be deceived about their relationship with the Lord. The Apostle Peter encouraged believers to "make their calling and election sure" (2 Pet. 1:10). And the Apostle Paul said this to the Corinthian church:

Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? (2 Cor. 13:5).

And what about a key verse? In this case there are two, and they come at the beginning of the section: Matt. 7:13-14.

Concl: I hope that surveying this message given by our Lord so long ago will be used by the Holy Spirit to whet your appetite for the things that are to come. This message had to do with the sanctification of those early disciples. We know how slowly they learned the lessons that are set out in this sermon given by our Lord. And we are the same way, slow to learn the truth, and probably even slower in applying the truth to our lives.

Selected verses from Matt. 4-7 (8)

None of us is fully sanctified, and we won't be as long as we live on this earth. And so we all need to be growing continually. We all need to become more like our Lord. And the Sermon on the Mount was designed by our Lord for that same purpose. If we want a perfect example of the truth that our Lord gave in these three chapters, that Example will be found in our Lord Himself. But while the Lord is our Example, He is more than that for each one of us. *He is our very life*. And it is only as we trust Him to make us what He wants us to be, and to live His life through us, that we will ever be able to attain the godly life that is so wonderfully set before us in our Lord's words in His Sermon on the Mount.

I ask your prayers for me as I prepare the messages in the weeks to come, and pray that I may profit along with you in becoming more like our blessed and wonderful Lord Jesus Christ. If you have any questions about the truth I have covered today, I hope you will feel free to talk to me about them.

“BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT”

Matthew 5:3

Intro: I am not asking for a show of hands today, but I wonder how many of you have read the Sermon on the Mount at least once this week. I hope all of you have. If not, please make it a part of your schedule for this coming week. Going through it each Sunday morning will be a greater blessing for all of us if we will do this. I am doing it, and I trust you will, too.

I want to spend a few moments refreshing all of our minds and hearts on the divisions of these three great chapters, and several of you reminded me that I did not give you the key verse, or verses, for the fifth and last section according to the outline that I have you. So I want to give you that this morning as well.

Now for the outline:

I. The Character of a Christian (Matt. 5:1-16).

The key verse: Matt. 5:16.

II. The Christian and the Word of God (Matt. 5:17-48).

The key verse: Matt. 5:48.

III. The Personal Life of the Christian (Matt. 6:1-34).

The key verse: Matt. 6:33.

IV. Some Special Instructions for the Christian (Matt. 7:1-12).

The key verse: Matt. 7:12.

V. The Christian's Need for Assurance (Matt. 7:13-29).

The key verses: Matt. 7:13-14.

Now today I want to begin with the first section, and especially with the first of the Beatitudes:

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for their's is the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5:3).

What is a beatitude? It is a statement which declares for us where true happiness is to be found. Man, in his spiritually corrupted condition, is more inclined to pursue mistaken ideas of happiness than he is the truth. Man's idea of happiness is usually focused on things outside of himself. And most of the time money is involved in one way or another. Man thinks in terms of position and possessions—a beautiful home, a fine car, the latest in clothing fashions, the ability to go where you want to go, and to do what you want to do. People are inclined to think along the lines of the Epicurean philosophy which says, “Eat, drink, and be merry, for

tomorrow you die.”

Such thoughts had to have been in the hearts of the disciples by nature because they were men of like passions with others. And so one of the first things that the Lord did with them was to correct their ideas of what true happiness is. Christians can be deceived along this line as well as people who are not Christians. But that is where having the Bible makes the difference, and we should get our direction for happiness, not from our own hearts, nor from what other people say, but from God in His Word.

I think that I can truthfully say that the word that the Lord used nine times in this first part of the Sermon on the Mount, “Blessed,” is a word which speaks not only of being happy, but of being *supremely happy*! There is enough in the Bible to indicate to us without any question that God wants and expects His people to be happy—happier than anyone can possibly be if all he has is this world. We are bombarded every day with commercials telling us how our lives can be better than they are. But rarely do you hear anyone talk about God and His Word as the place to go, or what to do, to find true happiness. It is obvious from what our Lord said here, as well as from teaching that we have elsewhere in Scripture, that the possibility of being truly happy is not limited to a certain class of people, but it crosses all social and economic lines. The fundamental issue is in a person’s relationship with the Lord. Matthew Henry was right when he said that the Beatitudes constitute an invitation for people to come to Christ, not just to get good advice, but to have their hearts cleansed and changed through the Gospel so that they will be enabled to live the kind of a life that our Lord was describing in these verses. The Beatitudes give us such a different way of happiness that only people with changed hearts will be interested in such a life, and only they will be capable, by the grace of God, of living such a life.

In speaking of the characteristics which are given in the Beatitudes, Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones made the following observations:

- 1) The Beatitudes describe what all Christians are to be like. In other words, they describe Christian character.
- 2) We as Christians are to manifest all of these characteristics. It is not the case that some are “poor in spirit,” and that others are “meek,” etc. But we all are to show all of these characteristics.
- 3) These characteristics are not natural tendencies we have, but are produced by grace and through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. There are some human traits which appear to be like these, but in a Christian they are totally different.

4) These characteristics point out the essential differences between a Christian and a non-Christian.

And then Dr. Lloyd-Jones made this significant comment:

As I see things at the present time, the first need in the Church is a clear understanding of this difference {i.e., the difference between the Christian and the non-Christian. It has become blurred; the world has come into the Church and the Church has become worldly... There were certain popular padres [chaplains] during the first world war who mixed with their men, and smoked with them, and did this, that, and the other with them, in order to encourage them. Some people thought that, as a result, when the war was over, the ex-service men would be crowding into the churches. Yet it did not happen, and it never has happened that way. The glory of the gospel is that when the Church is absolutely different from the world, she invariably attracts it. It is then that the world is made to listen to her message, though it may hate it at first. That is how revival comes. Thus must also be true of us as individuals. It should not be our ambition to be as much like everybody else as we can, though we happen to be Christian, but rather to be as different from everybody who is not a Christian as we can be. Our ambition should be to be like Christ, the more like Him the better, and the more like Him we become, the more we shall be unlike everybody who is not a Christian (*Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, Volume One, pp. 36, 37).

So you can see how extremely important it is that we understand the Beatitudes, and, in fact, that we understand and practice the whole Sermon on the Mount.

And so let me reemphasize what I have been saying in order that the meaning of the word "blessed" it might be more firmly established in our minds and hearts.

It is a word which has long been associated with *happiness*, but not just happiness in the world's interpretation of the word. In Nelson's Bible Dictionary we find this definition:

The Greek word translated blessed means "spiritual well-being and prosperity," the deep joy of the soul. The blessed have a share in salvation, and have entered the kingdom of God, experiencing a foretaste of heaven. Some scholars render each beatitude as an exclamation: "O the bliss [or blessedness] of..."

It is a deep, true, and abiding joy that is in one's heart. It is a joy which does not come from the world, nor from earthly things, but that which has to do with one's relationship with the Lord.

— It is a word which is found many times in the OT, *e.g.*, Psa. 1:1, "Blessed is the man that..." This is a joy which only a child of God can experience. It is a joy which is the fruit of a right relationship with the Lord, when the Lord is pleased, and we are the recipients of His blessing. As with all of the Beatitudes, God's blessing comes to us in the form of great joy on His terms, and not our own.

A reading of the Scriptures clearly indicates that the Lord expects His people to be a joyful people, a joy that is centered in the Lord, and not in ourselves.

To whom does this blessedness belong?

I. "THE POOR IN SPIRIT."

The words "in spirit" refer to the inner man, and what we are in ourselves.

— Thomas Watson, in his book *The Beatitudes*, mentioned that the Greek word for "poor" speaks of a person who lives on alms. He has nothing in himself, and so he is dependent upon others for his very survival. This is the insight which God gives us of ourselves, which results in humility. We are conscious of our sins, of the way they have defiled us beyond what we have in our very nature, and how they have shown that we have no goodness in ourselves, nothing that would commend us to God, but everything that would cause a holy God to turn from us *if it were not for His grace*.

The publican in our Lord's story of the two men who went up to the temple to pray—one a Pharisee, and the other a publican—gives us an excellent illustration of one who is "poor in spirit." The story is recorded for us in Luke 18:10-14:

10 Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.

11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.

13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so

much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying,
God be merciful to me a sinner.

The Greek say, *the sinner*. And then the Lord continued:

14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather
than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased;
and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

Justification is a part, a major part, of the blessedness that one who is
“poor in spirit” receives.

The Apostle Paul was expressing what it is to be “poor in spirit” when he
wrote, “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good
thing...” (Rom. 7:18a).

Many who call themselves Christians today have taken up the language of
unregenerate people which they speak of self-worth, and self-love, and
manifest that they are filled with self-confidence. These terms, and all
others that are like them, speak of pride, not poverty of spirit. They are a
part of the psychology of the world.

The beatitudes are paradoxical in their appearance. And poverty of spirit
is despised by the world. And they often appear to be so in the eyes of
believers. But the point that the Lord was making was that to be “poor in
spirit” is that which prepares the way for the blessing of God.. And it is
this attitude which keeps the door open for the continued blessing of God.
Until a person is “poor in spirit,” his heart will never be open to the
Gospel. And it is only to the “poor in spirit” that Christ becomes the
delight of our souls.

Watson raises the question, “How may we know whether we are ‘poor in
spirit?’” And he gives the following answers:

- 1) We no longer trust in ourselves, but trust in the Lord.
- 2) We have the highest regard for Christ. We see that we cannot live
without Him.
- 3) We are never satisfied with ourselves, but always regret that we are not
more thankful to the Lord, not more conscious of our own lack of broken-
ness before the Lord. We regret that our faith is so small, and our love so
fickle.
- 4) The “poor in spirit” are lowly in heart, like our Lord was. We don’t do
what we do to be seen of men, but are very anxious that what we do is
pleasing to the Lord.
- 5) We are “poor in spirit” when prayer becomes a major priority in our
lives. We know that we have no right to come before the Lord, and yet

realize at the same time how utterly dependent we are upon the Lord for His blessing in every way.

6) We are “poor in spirit” when we sincerely want the will of Christ instead of always insisting on our will.

Augustus Toplady described what it means to be “poor in spirit” in the second and third stanzas of his well-loved hymn, “Rock of Ages.” Let me read those two verses to you. It is #421 in our Hymnal if you want to follow the words.

Not the labors of my hands can fulfil they law’s demands;
Could my zeal no respite know, could my tears for ever flow,
All for sin could not atone; Thou must save, and Thou alone.

Nothing in my hands I bring, Simply to Thy Cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress, Helpless, look to Thee for grace;
Foul, I to the Fountain fly; wash me, Saviour, or I die.

And we can add to Toplady’s words, those words of Robert Murray McCheyne in his hymn, *When this passing world is done*:

Chosen not for good in me, wakened up from wrath to flee,
Hidden in the Saviour’s side, by the Spirit sanctified,--
Teach me, Lord, on earth to show, by my love, how much I owe.

This is why I took our Scripture reading today from Rev. 3:14-22. The church at Laodicea had forgotten what it means to be “poor in spirit.” Listen again to Rev. 3:17,

Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

But we need to realize that we can be hypocritical about any of the above points. Our hearts so easily deceive us, and we need to ask the Lord to be continually searching our hearts and rooting out those things which are displeasing to Him. Remember that you and I are “poor in spirit” whether we realize it or not, but our Lord wants us to know what we are, and then always to remember it and to live as people who have nothing that would commend us to God except what we have in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But what is the reward that the Lord mentioned as belonging to those who are “poor in spirit”?

II. "THEIR'S IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN."

What is "the kingdom of heaven"?

— This term is found only in the Gospel of Matthew. Neither Mark nor Luke nor John ever used it—at least in their writings. This was the subject of John the Baptist's preaching. See Matt. 3:2. It was also the subject of our Lord's preaching. See Matt. 4:17.

But what does it mean here?

Isn't it the equivalent of saying, "For their's is the true salvation."
Whether we speak of entering into the kingdom of heaven, or entering into the kingdom of God, isn't that the same as being saved?

In my outline of this part of the Sermon on the Mount, I said that the Beatitudes were, *The Character of a Christian*. We are all spiritually "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" in ourselves. It is only in Christ that we are clothed with the righteousness of Christ so "that the shame of or nakedness" does "not appear" (Rev. 3:18). But the point that our Lord was making both in the Sermon on the Mount, and in His letter to the church at Laodicea, was that we are to manifest in our lives from day to day the humility which is rightfully ours.

How could we possibly compare what we are by nature with what we have become by grace? This is what the Lord was talking about. How pathetic it is to hear a child of God boasting in what he is, or in what he has, or in what he has done! To do so is to glory in our shame. The words of the Apostle Paul should be engraved upon all of our hearts, those words which he wrote to the churches of Galatia,

14 But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature (Gal. 6:14-15).

Concl: A proud person is never a truly happy person, and especially is that true if you have a proud person who professes to be a child of God. It is inconsistent with our profession as Christians, and certainly most unlike our precious Lord Who was always "meek and lowly in heart" (Matt. 11:29). The Scriptures make it very clear that some day the Lord is going to reign upon the earth as King of kings and Lord of lords. But now

He reigns within the hearts of His people. All of the recent discussion about whether the Lord can be our Savior without being our Lord, is ridiculous. He is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We may not be as submissive to Him as we should be. We may not be as humble as we should be. We may have forgotten that there was not a single merit in us that made the Lord choose us or draw us to Himself. But, if that is the case, then we can be sure that the Lord in His most gracious ways will be working in our hearts to remind us, that we are “poor in spirit,” and that we need to live that way, drawing the true riches from our precious Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

What will be the result? And it will always be so without exception. “Blessed is the poor in spirit: for their’s is the kingdom of heaven.”

This is the first step to happiness—not trying to build up our self-esteem. It is too big already. That is our problem. What we need to do is to see that our sufficiency is not in ourselves, but in Christ! And the more we submit ourselves to Him, and the more we draw upon Him for the supply of our needs, the greater will be our joy.

Closing verses: Col. 3:1-4.

“BLESSED ARE THEY THAT MOURN”

Matthew 5:4

Intro: Today’s message is the third in a series that I plan to give, the Lord willing, on the Sermon on the Mount. I know that there are Christians who believe that this message is for a later day when the Lord has established His kingdom upon the earth, but it is my conviction that there is truth in these three chapters of Matthew’s Gospel, chapters 5, 6, and 7, that we as Christians desperately need today.

There is nothing in our Lord’s message here in these three chapters that would indicate that it was only for a later day. He spoke to His disciples here, as He always did, with the intention that they were to make an immediate application of these truths to their own lives.

Besides, in this message the Lord spoke of enemies, of false prophets, of lustful thoughts, and problems like divorce. Do these seem to be consistent with the time when our Lord will rule with a rod of iron, and where peace will prevail? I am sure that they don’t. So let us approach these chapters expecting to find truth which can help us today as we seek to live lives that will be pleasing to the Lord, lives which, by the grace of God, will be useful under the blessing of the Lord to turn others to our Savior.

I won’t take the time again today to go over the outline which I have suggested for these three chapters, but I will be referring to that outline as we go along so we can hopefully see the progress in the truth that our Lord made as He moved from the beginning to the end. And so I will mention that in the first sixteen verses of Matthew 5 we have, *The Character of a Christian (Matt. 5:1-16)*. And the appeal that our Lord made to His disciples at the conclusion of this section is found in verse 16. (Read.) Contrary to what we are hearing today, *character is important! It is extremely important! Without a godly life there will be no light for a world in darkness*. I am sure that there are many professing Christians who accept this idea. However, such teaching is clearly contrary to Scripture, and we need to dismiss it immediately as total heresy.

Last week we looked at the first Beatitude: “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for their’s is the kingdom of heaven.” To be “poor in spirit” is a term that is spiritual. It tells us that one of the identifying characteristics of a Christian is *humility*. And that is brought out by the last statement of the verse: “For their’s is the kingdom of heaven.” There are several verses in Matthew’s Gospel which speak of entering the kingdom of heaven as

referring to salvation. Let me read these to you.

In Matt 5:20 we read these words of our Lord:

For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

And then in Matt. 7:21, these words:

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

Going from there to Matt. 18:3, we have these words from our Lord.

And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

In Matt. 19:23-24 we have a case where “the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God are used to show that they can be used interchangeably:

23 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.

24 And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

And then I want to read one verse from John’s Gospel where the Lord spoke along this same line, but used “the kingdom of God”

5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again (John 3:5-7).

So to say of certain people that “their’s is the kingdom of heaven,” is to say that they are genuinely saved. So a person who shows by his life that he or she is not fit to be saved, but is greatly humbled by the thought that he or she is saved, is one characteristic that you will always find in a true Christian. We are not worthy to be saved. We are spiritually bankrupt (so to speak) in ourselves. If it had not been for the grace of God and the love of God, we would still be in our sins.. We deserve hell, not heaven. We deserve to be held accountable for our sins, but we are humbled to know that Jesus Christ took our penalty upon Himself when He died on the Cross.

Look for this sense of your own unworthiness in your own heart. And expect to see this same characteristic in the lives of all others who claim to be the people of God.

Now the reason that we should truly be humbled because of our salvation, is brought out in the second Beatitude. (Read Matt. 5:4.)

Here we have:

I. A PARADOX: “Blessed are they that mourn.”

A paradox can be defined as a statement which seems to be contradictory, and yet is true. And it concerns the two words “blessed” and “mourn.”

We learned last week that “blessed” means *happy*, and so it appears that our Lord was saying that the people who mourn are the happy people. For people in general mourning is associated with sadness, not gladness. So if you are sad, how can you possibly be described as being happy. Do you see the problem that people have with this verse? What is the answer?

Well, it follows from what we learned about the first Beatitude. The Lord was not speaking in the first Beatitude about financial poverty, but about being “poor in spirit,” *spiritual poverty, poverty of heart, humility*. The first Beatitude teaches us that the truly happy people are the people of God who know that they have absolutely no reason to be proud. Instead, they have every reason to be humble.

Now what is the major reason for our humility? And please remember that I am speaking, as our Lord was, to those who claim to be the people of God. The major reason for our humility is that we are sinners.

I mentioned to you last week that Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones in his book on the Sermon on the Mount was lamenting the fact that the professing church today is not what it ought to be. And he said that forty years ago. During those forty years, conditions in the church have continued to decline. We seem to be moving more and more in the world’s direction, emphasizing entertainment and having a good time, instead of being distinctively different from the world. And Dr. Lloyd-Jones pointed out that the church today has lost its sense of sin, personal sin, and the awfulness of sin in any form. People often profess to be saved who have no consciousness of their own terrible sinfulness. And those who profess to be Christians often are lacking in any understanding of the sinfulness of

sin. And this is a great change from the way the church has been in the past.

— Recently here at Trinity we have had a strong dose of exposure to verses of Scripture which have to do with man's moral depravity, his total depravity! We have had this in the opening chapters of the book of Romans which we are studying in our Sunday School at the present time. And quite providentially, at the same time, without any idea on our part that these two would be before us together, we are learning verses on Total Depravity. Let me mention a few of the verses we have been considering to re-establish in our minds how great a problem sin is.

For example: Gen. 15:6. This verse states what God saw when He looked upon the earth in the period just before the great Flood which we are told about in the book of Genesis:

And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually (Gen. 6:5).

Notice the words "great" and "every" and "only." You talk about Total Depravity that was it.

— But listen now to the way our Lord described those days of Noah, and followed His description of those days with the days of Lot, Abraham's nephew. I am reading from Luke 17:26-30:

26 And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.

27 They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.

28 Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded;

29 But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all.

30 Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.

— What were the people doing? Well, they were doing a lot of things that the Lord did not mention when He spoke these words, but mainly they had no time for God. They were eating and drinking, having a good time, marrying and giving in marriage, buying and selling, planting crops and building homes and barns. But it was all without God. God was given no place in their lives. They lived as though God did not exist, and that He

didn't care what they did. But notice those words at the beginning of Gen. 6:5, "And God saw..."

— That is America today, isn't it? We don't have time for the Lord as a nation. We legalize that which is abominable in His sight. We think we are getting away with whatever we want to do. And all the time there is not a single thing that escapes the eye of God. Solomon wrote almost 3,000 years ago, "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good" (Prov 15:3). And those words are still true today.

Listen to another passage: Rom. 14:1-3:

1 The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good.

2 The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God.

3 They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

(Comment.) This has been God's portrait of human life from the beginning, and it is no different today.

— But let me point out that this description was true of all of us until the Lord saved us from our sins. But what a tremendous day it was when the Lord opened our eyes so that we could see our sin, and we realized what Isaiah had to say about all human beings by nature:

6 But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

7 And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities (Isa. 64:6-7).

Now, when we learn what sin is, and how our sins have grieved the Lord, and put us in danger of eternal judgment, what will our attitude be? And here is the point of our second Beatitude: **We will mourn!** But this is what so often is missing when people are supposedly saved. They are not grieved over their sins. There is no repentance. It seems that comparatively few say what the publican said in the temple, "God, be merciful to me, the sinner!" See Luke 18:13.

— People today often go to church because they want to "feel good about themselves." People who don't know the Lord need to feel "bad" about

themselves. But they don't like to hear about sin. They would like to get that word out of the English language, and all other languages. But let me say today on the authority of Jesus Christ Himself, that if you are *mourning* before God because of the many, many ways you have displeased Him, then you are on the way to knowing what true happiness is for the first time in your life. And Christians, if we have to sneak away to the world for our joy, perhaps we are playing around with sin in our lives, we have ceased to mourn over our sins, and so the joy of the Lord has been taken out of our hearts.

The people who are the most to be pitied in all the world are the people who do not mourn over their sins. And another thing that will be true of us when we mourn over our own sins, is that we will begin to mourn over the sins of others. Our Lord did. And the Apostle Paul did. It is easy to get disgusted with others because of their sins, but when we have learned to mourn and to regret and to repent for our own sins, then it will make us feel differently about people who are content to live their lives without God.

But let me tell you another thing will happen when we learn to mourn over our sins. *We will mourn, we will be grieved, because of the price our Lord Jesus Christ paid on Calvary's Cross to deliver us from our sins.*

Do you know what it is to weep over your sins? Have you every told the Lord that you are sorry that you ever did anything that displeased Him? It is said that when Handel was composing The Messiah, and came to the place where he was setting the words of Isaiah 53 to music, that when he came to the words, "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities," that he put his head down on his desk and wept as though his heart would break. Have you ever done that? "Blessed are they that mourn." This is the kind of mourning that the Lord was speaking about.

But is this the end of the Beatitude? No, it isn't. The Lord saved the best for the last. The first part of the verse sounds like a paradox; the last part is:

II. A PROMISE: "For they shall be comforted."

Our comfort is not to be found in our tears. Nor is it found in our desire to make it up to God for all of the sinning we have done. And it surely is not in any promise we might make to God that we will try to do better.

Augustus Toplady eliminated all of these in his great hymn, Rock of Ages, in these words, and then points us to the only comfort there is:

Not the labors of my hands
Can fulfill Thy law's demands;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone;
Thou must save, and Thou alone.

We are comforted by the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ, "in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Eph. 1:7).

What can wash away my sins?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus;
What can make me whole again?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

If Jesus Christ is not your Savior, I earnestly hope that coming to church today has not made you feel good, but bad, unless during this service you have placed your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. If that is the case, then praise Him because He has given you the faith to believe. And only the Lord can make us grieve over our sins as He gently draws us to Himself.

For those of us who know the Lord, let me ask: Have you, have I, gotten careless in our lives about sin? Are we continually asking the Lord to lead us in what we do, and in what we say, and even in what we think? Are we condoning some sin which has taken away our joy in the Lord? Have we been neglecting the reading of the Word, and prayer? Have we excused ourselves because of our busy-ness" from taking proper care of our fellowship with the Lord? If so, then turn back to the Lord right where you are, ask Him to make you like our Lord Jesus Christ Who loved righteousness, and hated iniquity.

Concl: We come to the Lord's Table this morning. It is here that we need to search our own hearts, and then repenting and confessing our sins, be comforted that "the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all of our sin. The Lord wants all of us to be happy, not with the world's false happiness, but that which is true and so satisfying. That happiness can be ours if we grieve over our sins, and seek our comfort from Christ.

“BLESSED ARE THE MEEK”

Matthew 5:5

Intro: I have been pointing out to you each week how the Beatitudes of our Lord in Matthew 5 build upon each other. Think of them as the rungs, or steps, on a ladder. The bottom rung is, “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” The second rung is, “Blessed are they that mourn.” And the third rung which we will consider today is, “Blessed are the meek.” The first leads to the second, and the second leads to the third. And you have to get on the first before you can get to the second, and on the second before you can get to the third.

All of the Beatitudes, plus what the Lord had to say about our being “salt” and “light,” make up what He was teaching about what we should *be*, which is *Christian character*. It is not enough for us to act like we are “poor in spirit”; we must *be* “poor in spirit.” In the same way it is not enough that we pretend to “mourn”; we must truly mourn in the depths of our hearts. And we can say the same about meekness. People can pretend to be “meek,” and, at the same time, be very proud in their hearts. We all need to remember that the Lord told Samuel when he was looking for the son of Jesse whom he was to anoint as the next king of Israel. The Lord said this to Samuel when he was inclined to think that Eliab, one of David’s older brothers, must be the choice because he was talk and he was handsome:

The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart (1 Sam. 16:7b).

And Solomon, speaking by the Holy Spirit, said,

Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life (Prov.4:23).

We can’t hear words like this too often because it is so easy for all of us to pretend to be something other than what we are.

Let me remind you of the two rungs of the ladder we have considered so far.

To be “poor in spirit,” is to recognize our total spiritual poverty before God. It is because we are “poor in spirit” that we had to be saved by grace. The people of the world are always trying to build up their self-esteem, their self-worth, but our problem is that we have too much self-esteem. We think too highly of ourselves. Every person is “poor in spirit,” but the problem is that most people don’t know that they are. There is nothing about any of us that would attract the love of God, but

everything to cause God to turn away from us as unworthy of the least of His blessings. We as Christians are precious to God because of our relationship to His Son, but in ourselves we are still, as the Lord told the Laodiceans, “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Rev. 3:17b). What a happy day it is in any person’s life when he or she realizes that nothing about him or her that is pleasing and acceptable to God.

When we take that first step, and stand upon the first rung of spiritual poverty, then the next thing that we as Christians do is to mourn over our sins. We are ashamed of our sins, and deeply regret, often with tears, that we have ever done anything that is displeasing to God. But again, while seeing the sinfulness of our sins is a very agonizing experience for the Lord’s people, yet it is a happy sorrow. Why? Because it makes us look to the Lord for our comfort. Our Lord’s promise is, “for they shall be comforted.” And how are we comforted? We are comforted by coming back to Christ, by remembering the Cross, and that it was there that the Lord took upon Himself the penalty for all of our sins. But it seems that our awareness of our own spiritual poverty and our grief over our sins, grows, the longer we know the Lord, and the better we know Him.

Now where do we go from there? What is the next rung in this ladder of Christian character? It is, “Blessed are the meek.”

You don’t need me to tell you that these characteristics are not popular in the world. Modern psychology would tell us that we are all outstanding if we would only realize it. We would realize that there is nothing that we cannot do. We live in a terrible time in the history of our country, and yet we constantly are trying to built up our ego’s. And with all of the sinning that is constantly going on, we refuse to think of it as sin. We don’t fear God. Instead, we are constantly seeking our own glory. And how can anyone mourn for sin if he doesn’t believe that there is such a thing as sin?

But for a Christian who has seen his absolute poverty before God, and who truly mourns for his sin, the effect of the first two is *meekness*.

But here again we run into conflict with the world where meekness is considered to be weakness. And so this should lead us to ask,

I. WHAT IS MEEKNESS?

The dictionary defines a meek person as gentle. He is kind to others, and

patient when others are unkind or when they take advantage of him. A meek person is mild in his temperament. He is longsuffering.

Spurgeon, in a sermon that he preached on this Beatitude, made a distinction between this third Beatitude and the first two which I found helpful. He said this:

Note too, that this third beatitude is of a higher order than the other two. There is something positive in it, as to virtue. The first two are rather expressive of deficiency, but here there is a something supplied. A man is poor in spirit; that is, he feels that he lacks a thousand things that he ought to possess. The man mourns; that is, he laments over his state of spiritual poverty. But now there is something really given to him by the grace of God: –not a negative quality, but a positive proof of the work of the Holy Spirit within his sou, so that he has become meek (Vol. LIII, pp. 541-542).

And then Spurgeon added that the first two Beatitudes show us a believer's relationship to himself, but this third one has to do with our attitude and relationship to and with others. And that not only includes our attitude and relationship toward our circumstances, and toward people, *but also toward God—and, I might say, and should say, especially toward God!*

A meek person, we learn from the first two Beatitudes, is humble, and he is very conscious of his own failures and sins. This leads him to be less critical of other, patient under trial, and contented with the circumstances of his life. Is it any wonder that the Lord said, "Blessed are the meek." When you say that a person is meek, you have said much that is pleasing in the sight of the Lord.

II. CHRIST, THE SUPREME EXAMPLE OF MEEKNESS.

If we want to know what meekness is, there are many examples of meekness in the Bible. The Lord Himself commended Moses for His meekness. We have that testimony in Num. 12:3:

(Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.)

And this was said of Moses when he was being criticized by Aaron and Miriam, his brother and sister, because he had married an Ethiopian woman. There was undoubtedly some real justification for the criticism, but there is no indication of any retaliation on the part of Moses. Moses evidently took the criticism patiently. And when the Lord struck Miriam with leprosy because she had criticized her brother, Moses, at the request

of Aaron, prayed for Miriam, and the Lord healed her of her leprosy. That was on time when Moses showed his meekness.

— We see it also in the many times that the children of Israel rebelled against the Lord. It seems that Moses was always falling on his face and pleading with the Lord to spare and forgive the people.

Even the way in which Moses argued with the Lord when the Lord called him at the burning bush, claiming that he was not fit to lead Israel out of Egypt, the objections he raised were all evidences of the meekness that the Lord had worked in his heart during those year he spent in exile.

Or take Abraham. One example was the time when he divided the land with Lot, and gave Lot the first choice of where he wanted to be. Another was when, at the command of the Lord, he took Isaac his son out to offer him as a sacrifice to the Lord.

Joseph is another great example of meekness, suffering at the hands of his brothers, lied about by Potiphar's wife, and being forgotten by the butler for two years while he remained in prison.

— Think of the lives of Job, and of David, and of Daniel, and you have examples of meekness. Ruth is an excellent example of meekness. And Paul and Peter became examples of the meekness in the NT, along with many others.

But remember, that none of these people, nor any others we might mention from Scripture, or from church history, or even from the present day—none of them were by nature meek. No one is, *with one exception! And that exception is our Lord Jesus Christ. He alone, of all people, was meek by nature. Our Lord teaches us that God is meek. It is a manifestation of His grace.*

But let me remind you of what the Scriptures say about the meekness of our Lord.

The first passage is found right here in the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 11, verses 28-30:

— 28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.
We should not miss the emphasis that our Lord made. If we want to be like the Lord and learn of Him, we must begin with His meekness and the fact that He was lowly in heart.

A second passage, also in Matthew's Gospel, which is a fulfillment of a prophecy in Zechariah.

Our Lord sent two of His disciples to get a donkey for Him to ride on into Jerusalem. And Matthew tells us why this was done:

- 4 All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying,
5 Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass (Matt. 21:4-5).

The meekness of our Lord was evident from His birth to His death. Listen to the familiar account given to us by the Apostle Paul in Phil. 2:5-8:

- 5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:
6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:
7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:
8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Here we see the meekness of Christ in His birth, and in His death.

And then we have Peter's words in 1 Pet. 2 which speak of the meekness of our Lord:

- 21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:
22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:
23 Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:
24 Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed (1 Pet. 2:21-24).

What an amazing example of meekness! When the crowds reviled Him as He was hanging on the Cross, He did not revile them, nor threaten them, but committed Himself unto His Father in heaven, the Judge of all the

earth.

None of the examples that I have given you, is an example of weakness. And that is especially true of our Lord. A meek person is the strongest of all people.

Our Lord has given us an example of meekness in the last six verses of this fifth chapter of Matthew. (Read Matt. 5:43-48.)

Now to summarize,

III. WHAT ARE THE MAIN QUALITIES IN MEEKNESS?

We can see these in the life of our Lord. Thomas Watson, one of the godly Puritans, has pointed them out very clearly. And think of the examples I have given you from Scripture, and especially that of our Lord, as I mention what these are.

Meekness is manifested in our attitude toward God, and, secondly, in our attitude toward each other and all other people.

We manifest our meekness by our submission to God's will as He providentially deals with us from day to day. And we also manifest our meekness to God by our submission to His Word. And there is a very close relationship between these two. And both of these take a full measure of the grace of God because it is only by His grace that we can render such submission to Him.

To accept from God's hand His providential dealing with us, and to make sure that every detail of our lives is directed by the revealed Word of God. This is meekness in our relationship with God. How perfectly this was seen in the earthly life of our Lord.

Meekness toward men is just as difficult for us as meekness for God. In fact, it is impossible, again, without the grace of God. It is a part of "the fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 5:22-23). Watson said that it includes three things:

- 1) The bearing of injuries.
- 2) The forgiving of injuries.
- 3) Returning good for evil.

It is not natural for us to do any of these, but it is in the difficulties of every day life, and the problems we have with people, that what Watson

called “the divine beauty and sweetness” of meekness is to be seen, which confirms the reality of our faith, and is often used of God to draw others to Himself.

— May God work in our hearts that we may demonstrate in our daily live that meekness which please God and makes us a blessing to each other, and to all men.

But I have one point left.

IV. WHAT DID OUR LORD MEAN, “FOR THEY SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH”?

This statement has been interpreted in a number of ways, but the best way to explain it is by turning to Psalm 37, the place from which the Lord took this expression. And this gives us further light on what it means to be *meek*.

— The Psalm begins by mentioning the conflict between evil doers and the workers of iniquity, on the one hand, and those who trust in the Lord, on the other hand. And there is a danger that those who know the Lord will be inclined to trade blow for blow with the workers of iniquity. What those who know the Lord need to is to “trust in the Lord” (v. 3), “delight” themselves “in the Lord” (v. 4), “commit” their “way unto the Lord” (v. 5), and “rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him” (v. 7). And why are the people of God to behave in such a different way? See the answer in vv. 8-18.

I believe this statement means two things:

1) That the earth will eventually belong to the righteous. It will not come about by Christians becoming a political party. Nor will it come about by such tactics as bombing abortion clinics, nor even by blocking the entrance to such places. It will eventually belong to the people who are known for their meekness, those who truly belong to our Lord Jesus Christ, led by the One Who is the meekest of all, our blessed Lord. The kingdoms of this world will become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ.

— 2) On a lesser scale, I believe along with many others that this is a prediction that those in the world who are to be won to Christ, will be won not by great campaigns, nor by all of the methods of men which are used to get people to “decide for Christ.” But the power of the Gospel will be most strongly felt by the world when the people of God, proclaiming the

Gospel of Christ, demonstrate the reality of their faith, by manifesting in daily life, “the meekness and gentleness of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:1). So much of the work that is done today, supposedly in the Name of the Lord, is so contrary to the way the Lord worked, and the way the Lord lived, that it is hard for people to see any connection between the Christ of the Cross and the people who claim to be His followers.

The way of meekness is the way to the blessing of God, and it is by a “meek and quiet spirit” those spiritually blind can be made to see, and those who are hardened in sin can be made to be receptive to the Gospel. So let us go forth into the world each day in “the meekness and gentleness of Christ.” That is the way to victory and great blessing.

“HUNGERING AND THIRSTING AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS”

Matthew 5:6

Intro: We come today to the fourth of the Beatitudes in which our Lord was describing the character, or the characteristics of a child of God. And His use of the word “blessed” indicates, as we have seen on the last three Sundays, that the Christian is to be a happy person and that his life is to be a happy life. Everybody is interested in being happy, but the tragedy is that most people have no idea as to where true happiness is to be found, *and so they look for it in the wrong places*. People do not know, for example, that in denying the importance of character they are closing the door to any possibility of true and lasting happiness. Our Lord was saying in these Beatitudes that happiness is not the result of who we are, nor of where we are, nor of what we have. *It is the result of what we are!*

So while people try to build up their self-esteem, they show that they have never learned that it is those who learn that they are “poor in spirit” are on their way to finding happiness. And when we learn that we have nothing that commends us to God, but everything to draw His wrath because of our sinfulness, and we become deeply grieved over that, we are taking a further step toward lasting happiness. And that is because we also learn the way to have our sins forgiven and our hearts cleansed. It is not by anything that we can do for ourselves, but it is because Christ died for sinners. All who trust Him for the forgiveness of their sins are “comforted” because through the death of Christ we are made acceptable to God. Such an experience of salvation makes us “meek,” *humble, gentle*. We know that we do not deserve what Christ has done for us, that we really have nothing to boast about. We know that we are all indebted to God for all that He has done for us, and we want to live our lives in such a way as to show our gratitude to Him for the gift of salvation.

All of these characteristics will be growing in the heart of a true child of God. We see more clearly what we are apart from Christ. We regret more deeply the sins which we have committed. And we are increasingly humbled by the grace of God. But our joy is not just in learning that we are sinners in need of salvation, but that God has given us this knowledge that we might be saved, that we might be forgiven, and that we might learn that humility, not pride, leads to the inheritance of the earth.

The situation that our country faces in the Middle East at this time is an illustration of what a precarious position we are in as a nation. We are riddled through and through with sin as a nation. We think that we are

invincible. We are faced with a situation in Iraq that our leaders are saying that they can't really solve. And yet we may be moving toward one of the greatest mistakes our nation has ever made. With all of the troubles we face within our nation and the troubles on the international scene, our leaders seem totally blind to the fact that God has a hand in all of this. We talk about El Nino, but nobody seems to know that God is the One Who makes the rain to fall. Crime is out of hand. We as a nation are intent on doing what we want to do, and most people never stop to think about God and what is pleasing to Him. *So instead of finding happiness through God, and through His Son the Lord Jesus Christ, we are going deeper and deeper into that which is going to cause us as a nation more and more unhappiness!* We do not stop to realize that the great nations of the earth that have fallen, have all fallen because God has destroyed them because of their sin. *And the same thing can happen to us! God is a very patient God, but there comes a time when His patience is exhausted. It is very possible that we are right at the outer boundary of His patience.*

Perhaps the most disturbing fact about the situation today is that many who profess to be Christians have gotten careless about their lives, and are going along with our pleasure-mad society and world. As I have reminded you before, during World War II we heard a lot about 2 Chron. 7:14. It is a word which God gave to His servant Solomon after Solomon had prayed that wonderful prayer at the dedication of the Temple he had built. And the Lord was speaking of those times when He would bring judgments upon His people. This is what He said:

If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land (2 Chron. 7:14).

We are a nation that stands in desperate need of God, but we as a nation are doing everything to bring His judgment upon us. We may not like to talk about sin, but we are committing grievous sins against the Lord every day, and that path is marked all along with judgment after judgment. What people need is the teaching of the Beatitudes. Christian people need this, too. And those who profess to be Christians, but have never been changed in heart, need the Beatitudes also to wake them up. We need to humble ourselves before God. We need to realize that we are guilty before God. And we need to look to Him for His blessing which can only be ours when we are, and when we are doing, what pleases Him. Our country stands in great need of the Gospel! And if we won't listen to the Gospel, and the implications of the Gospel, our destruction may be nearer

than any of us realizes. Let us pay attention, close attention, to each one of these Beatitudes, and make sure that we are walking the path which leads to true happiness in God and in His Son.

But now let us look at our Beatitude for today: **“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled” (Matt. 5:6).**

Let me mention first of all that our Lord was speaking about:

I. TWO OF THE STRONGEST DESIRES WE HAVE (Matt. 5:6a).

These two desires are the desire for food, and the desire for water. When the Lord created Adam and Eve, He placed them in a Garden where they had plenty of food to eat, and plenty of water to drink. We read in the latter part of the book of Genesis that God brought a famine in the land, and that lack of food was the reason that Jacob and his family moved down to Egypt. When you read the story of the journey of the children of Israel from Egypt to Canaan, they were always worried about what they were going to eat, and where they could find water to drink. And we all know, or should know, how God provided for them.

One of the first things that we do every day when we get up, is to have breakfast. And then we look forward to lunch, and later to dinner, plus the snacks that we have during the day. And we are continually drinking water. We need food to satisfy our hunger, and we need water to satisfy our thirst. But this is all on the physical side.

Not until our spiritually blinded eyes are opened by the Lord do we realize that we also have even greater needs than the needs of our bodies. Those other needs are the needs of our souls. We are not just body; we are body and soul and spirit. We have physical needs, but we also have spiritual needs. And our spiritual needs are the greatest because the satisfaction of our spiritual needs will determine where we are going to spend eternity. Our Lord said,

36 For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

37 Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? (Mark 8:36-37).

Now this is what our Lord was talking about when He spoke of *hungering and thirsting after righteousness*. He was indicating that when a person

has the same kind of desire for righteousness that he does for food and drink, that is when he is going to find true happiness.

— When the Devil tempted the Lord to turn stones into bread after the Lord had gone without food for forty days and nights, this is how the Lord answered him:

It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God (Matt. 4:4).

Job hungered and thirsted for righteousness, and he indicated as much when he said,

Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food (Job 23:12).

Can you say that from the heart? How many people do you know who can say that? Job meant that if on a certain day he was in a time frame where he only had time to eat dinner, or to read his Bible (as we would say), he would choose to read his Bible.

David expressed it this way:

How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! (Psa. 119:103).

— Jeremiah likened the Word to food when he wrote:

Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts (Jer. 15:16).

But now let me ask and answer the question:

II. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO HUNGER AND THIRST AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS?

From all that I have said up to this point we can say that:

A. It means to hunger and thirst for the Bible.

— One of the first signs that a person has really been saved, is that he has a desire to know and understand the Scriptures. He wants to read it. He goes where others can teach him. He will memorize it. He likes to talk about it, and he reads books which help him to understand the Word. The Apostle Peter was speaking of hungering and thirsting after righteousness when he wrote this to Jewish Christians in the first century:

- 2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:
3 If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious (1 Pet. 2:2-3).

Let me state it this way: The Bible is our handbook on righteousness. It is there that we learn of our righteous God. The Bible shows us that what we need is righteousness, that by nature we are unrighteous. The Bible is a book which deals with history and prophecy, but it is more than a book on history and prophecy. It is a book which deals with many wonderful doctrines, but it is more than a Book on doctrine. The Bible is God's Book. It came from Him, and it tells us about Him. And it is in seeing God in history and in prophecy and in doctrine that the Bible comes to life. And it is always true that the more we know about the Bible, the more we want to know. The Bible sets before us the great doctrine of the righteousness of God. So to hunger and thirst for righteousness is to hunger for the knowledge of the Word that we may come to a greater understanding of God.

But there is a second thing that hungering and thirsting for righteousness means.

B. It means to hunger and thirst for Christ.

It is in reading the Bible and learning about the righteousness of God, that we also learn that we can only come to know this great and glorious God through His Son, Whom the Apostle John called, "Jesus Christ, the righteous" (1 John 2:1).

The Apostle Paul said this about Christ in 2 Cor. 5:21. Let me read it to you as it is given in the NKJ:

For He [God] made Him [Christ] Who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

This is justification when on the basis of Christ becoming sin for us, God declares us to be righteous in His sight. The Lord took our place on the Cross in order that we, who believe in Him, might be righteous before God.

And once we know the Lord, then we want to learn all that we can about Him. We marvel at the love of God in sending such a One as His Son to die for guilty, unworthy, defiled sinners such as we are. And a great part of learning how poor we are in spirit, is in learning about our precious

Savior. We begin to see Christ all through the Scriptures. We would love to have been with those two disciples on the road to Emmaus when it is said of the Lord,

— And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself (Luke 24:27).

The Bible tells us about God, the righteous God, but it also tells us about “Jesus Christ, the righteous [One].”

But there is one other point I need to make before I close. And it is this:

C. To hunger and thirst for righteousness is to have a strong desire to be like the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is why we have been saved. Any person can learn about Christ, and not want to be like Him, is not truly a Christian. And to be like Christ means not just to be like Him outwardly, but to be like Him inwardly, in the heart. What joy this brings! When we are conscious that the Lord has not only saved us from the penalty we were under, but that He is changing us from what we used to be, to become more and more like He is, there is no greater joy than that. That is true blessedness!

— The Beatitudes teach us what we are without Christ. Then by the grace of God we mourn before God because of our sins. And we start to become like the Lord in His meekness and lowliness and gentleness. But as this work goes on in our hearts by the grace of God, we find ourselves hungering and thirsting, greatly desiring to be more like the Lord every day that we live.

Finally, as with the other Beatitudes,

III. WE HAVE A PROMISE: “For they shall be filled.”

— I like the way it is translated in the NASB: “For they shall be satisfied.” If there is one word which does NOT describe most people, and even many Christians, it is the word “satisfied.” People generally are not only dissatisfied, but *very dissatisfied*. They are always looking to this or that for happiness, but while they may enjoy a certain thing for a while, a new home, a new car, a better job with more pay, yet nothing really satisfies the human soul but the Word of God, and God Himself, and our Lord, and the blessings of the Christian life, walking with the Lord, becoming like our Lord, through the power and blessing of the Holy Spirit. How tragic it

is that we don't really believe this.

Early in my ministry during my student days, I worked in Young Life with a friend whose name was George Sheffer. He was married and had two little children. But he became very sick, and the doctors told him that he did not have long to live. You can imagine how devastated he was when he got that news. He would be leaving his wife behind, and his children, even though he would soon be with the Lord. But it happened, as it sometimes does, that the original diagnosis was not correct, and after several weeks or months (I have forgotten now how long it was), George regained his health, finished school, and went on to a very fruitful ministry with young people. But one day I heard him speak to a group of young people after all of this had taken place, and he said this: "You never know that Jesus Christ alone is enough until you have everything but Jesus Christ taken away from you."

That is what our Lord was speaking about. "Jesus Christ, the righteous One," is enough. He along can bring true happiness, true satisfaction in our lives. And the more we hunger and thirst for Him, and to be like Him, the greater our satisfaction will be!

Concl: It is obvious that God alone can give us such a hunger and such a thirst for the Word, and for the God of the Word, and for the Lord Jesus Christ, and, finally, to become like the Lord Jesus Christ. But we all need to ask ourselves if our desire for the Word, and for God, and for Christ, and to become like Christ, is like a hungry and thirsty man? Do we look forward to reading the Word? Is it the high point of our day? Do we read the Word as Oswald Chambers used to say, "as a man looking for His Lord"? Do we pray for a great likeness of Christ in our lives? Oh, the joy that will be ours when we truly hunger and thirst after righteousness! May the Lord increase our desire for the Lord until it can only be described as hungering and thirsting!

BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL

Matthew 5:7

Intro: We come today to the fifth Beatitude: “Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy” (Matt. 5:7). Or, as with the other Beatitudes we could translate it, *Happy are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.*

Let us begin by defining mercy.

I. THE DEFINITION OF MERCY.

In order to define *mercy*, the best place to look is to the Members of the Godhead. Over and over again in the OT we are told that the Lord is “good,” and that “His mercy endureth for ever.” In Psalm 136 the eternal nature of God’s mercy is declared in each of the twenty-six verses.

The first time we are introduced to this statement is in 1 Chron. 16 and the Psalm which David composed to praise the Lord after they had succeeded in bringing the ark of the covenant back to Jerusalem. The Psalm covers verses 8 through 36 in 1 Chron. 16, but in the book of Psalms we find verses 8 through 22 in Psalm 105:1-15, verses 23 through 33 in Psalm 96:1-13, and verses 33 and 34 in Psalm 106:7-8. The particular verses in 1 Chron. 16 which give us this statement about the mercy of the Lord, are verses 34 and 41. Let me read those verses to you.

The first verse that I will read to you is a part of the Psalm, and it was sung by Asaph and his brethren at David’s direction. This is its most familiar form:

O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever (1 Chron. 16:34).

When they had finished singing the Psalm, then we are told about the men who were left with the ark of the covenant of the Lord to offer sacrifices to the Lord. There must have been quite a large group of men who, as the Scriptures tell us, “were expressed by name, to give thanks to the Lord, because His mercy endureth for ever” (1 Chron. 16:41b).

So we are told more than once in the OT that God’s mercy is to be one main reason for *giving thanks to the Lord!* And think of it: “His mercy endureth for ever!” The supply of God’s mercy can never be exhausted! In fact, Jeremiah had this to say about the mercy of God in Lam. 3:22-23:

22 It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed,

because his compassions fail not.

23 They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. Day after day, and generation after generation, the people of God have depended upon the mercies of the Lord, and the supply is just as great today as it ever has been.

But just what are we talking about when we speak of the mercy of the Lord? We are talking about His compassion. We are speaking about how He takes pity on us in our needs, meeting those needs, and working everything together for good.

Vine, in his Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, wrote that “it assumes need on the part of him who receives it, and resources adequate to meet the need on the part of him who shows it.” This is an excellent definition of mercy because it shows that God is the source of all mercy. We are the needy ones, and God alone has the resources which are adequate to meet our needs.

But let us remember that mercy, like grace, is undeserved.

Our Lord illustrated mercy, using the words “compassion” and “pity” in the parable He told of the king who had a servant who owed him ten thousand talents. The servant did not have the money to pay him, and so the king demanded that the servant, his wife, and his children, and all that he had be sold so that the king could get his money. Then we read this in Matt. 18:26-27:

26 The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

27 Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

I won't take up the rest of the story, but I give you this part to emphasize what *mercy* is. The servant did not deserve to be forgiven, but because of the king's compassion, he gave the servant what he needed, but did not deserve.

In our Scripture reading this morning we had another illustration of mercy. Let me re-read the account of the two blind men, and I want you to notice the basis of their appeal to the Lord. I am reading again from Matt. 20, beginning with verse 30:

30 And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David.

31 And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David.

32 And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I shall do unto you?

33 They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened.

34 So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him (Matt. 20:30-34).

What right did they have to ask for their sight? None at all. What did they plead? They pled for His mercy. And Matthew said that “Jesus had compassion on them.” *That is mercy!*

And let us remember that God has mercy upon all. Right here in Matthew 5 we have an excellent illustration of how generous God is with His mercy. Follow me as I read Matt. 5:43-48. (Read.)

That is mercy when we love our enemies, and when God sends the rain upon the just and the unjust. When Paul was preaching on Mars Hill in Athens, this is one of the things that he said, speaking of God:

Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things (Acts 17:25).

That is mercy.

Let me give you another illustration from Psalm 145:

8 The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy.

9 The LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works.

10 All thy works shall praise thee, O LORD; and thy saints shall bless thee.

11 They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power;

12 To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom.

13 Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.

14 The LORD upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down.

15 The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season.

16 Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing (Psa. 145:8-16).

But let us take our thoughts about the mercy of God a step farther:

II. THE MERCY OF GOD IN SALVATION.

One of the passages we have been learning in our Bible Memory groups is Eph. 2:1-3. It is a passage which speaks of what we all were and what we all did before we were saved. Let me refresh your memory on those verses:

- 1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;
- 2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:
- 3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others (Eph 2:1-3).

When you think of mercy, think of misery. And Paul could hardly have described a more miserable condition than what we have here in these verses in Ephesians 2. How did we ever get out of all of that? Paul tells us beginning with Eph. 2:4:

- 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,
- 5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)
- 6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:
- 7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:4-7).

Did you and I deserve to be saved? Absolutely not! What did we deserve? We deserved to be cast forever out of the presence of the Lord? Then why were we saved? Because God is “rich in mercy,” and because He loved us, and exercised His grace toward us.

Titus 3:5-7 tells us the same thing:

- 5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

6 Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;

7 That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

— Psalm 117, the shortest Psalm in the book of Psalms, exalts the merciful kindness of God. In just two short verses this is what we have:

1 O praise the LORD, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people.

2 For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the LORD endureth for ever. Praise ye the LORD (Psa. 117:1-2).

So in salvation we have become the recipients of the mercy of God, and the grace of God, and the love of God, and the kindness of God, and the faithfulness of God. *And there is not one bit of it that we deserve.*

This leads me to my third point which comes out of our text.

III. CHANNELS OF GOD'S MERCY.

— We as the people of God have received God's mercy in salvation, and we are the recipients of God's mercy over and over again every day that we live. When the Lord Jesus said, "Blessed are the merciful," He was not speaking of those acts of mercy that we often see even in people who do not know the Lord, but He was speaking of His people, people who have experienced in their souls the mercy of God. We, in daily life, are to be instruments, channels, through whom the mercy of God reaches others. That is why we are told to love our enemies, and to pray for them who spitefully use us. That is why we are told to forgive those who have sinned against us. How can we do otherwise when God has forgiven us of so much?

Listen to what Paul told the Colossian believers to do. I am reading from Col. 3:12-17:

12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;

13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

— 14 And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him (Col. 3:12-17).

Did you notice that expression, “bowels of mercies”? The NKJ translates that, “put on tender mercies.” The NASB renders it, “put on a heart of compassion.” The NIV has it, “clothe yourselves with compassion.” What it means is that since we have received the mercy of God in salvation, we are to show that mercy to others in our relationships with them, whether we are dealing with Christians, or people who are not Christians. And it means that we as husbands and wives are to show mercy to each other. Parents show mercy to their children, and children to their parents. It does not mean that we overlook wrongs, but it does mean that we manifest the compassion toward others that the Lord is always manifesting toward us. And wherever we can, we do what we can to help people through the miseries which come upon us all in this life, and the greatest help we can give anyone is to tell them about our merciful Savior Who saves sinners from their sins.

Now, as in all of the Beatitudes we have had up to today, I have the privilege of passing on to you

IV. THE LORD'S PROMISE.

You can see it there in your Bible: “For they shall obtain mercy.”

The term, “the merciful,” is a title for those of us who know the Lord. We have experienced God's mercy in salvation. But we also have Christ living in our hearts, and He is the One Who makes us merciful and the One Who enables us to be merciful to others. And our Lord's promise to us is that as we become instruments of mercy to others for our Lord's glory, we find that in special ways God's mercies continue to come our way as we need God's mercies from day to day.

This is OT truth as well as NT truth. In Psa. 18:25a we read, “With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful...” And in Prov. 11:17 we read that “the merciful man doth good to his own soul: but he that is cruel troubleth his own flesh.” And in the same chapter, verse 25, we read,

”The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.”

But undoubtedly the highest example of receiving mercy was stated by our Lord when He will gather the nations before Himself, separating the sheep from the goats. And He will say to the sheep on His right hand the following which we find in Matt. 25:31-40:

31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:

32 And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:

33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

35 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

Whenever you and I manifest the mercy of God in order to please God, the Lord accepts this as if we were doing it directly for Him. And the Lord even said this:

And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward (Matt. 10:42).

Concl: We are living in an increasingly violent society where people know little or nothing about mercy, especially the amazing mercy of God. Those of us who know Him how great His mercy is. May God enable us

to show the mercy of God to others, not for our glory, but for the Lord's glory. The life of a Christian is to be so different from those who are walking according to the course of this world. And often, when they see the evidence of God's mercy, this is what the Lord may be pleased to us to cause them to ask us a reason of the hope that is in us. And then we can tell them about our Savior. Let us never forget this Beatitude: "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."

“BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART”

Matthew 5:8

Intro: When the Lord spoke of “the pure in heart,” He was commending a life of *holiness* to His disciples. But He was commending such a life, not as an option, but as that which is expected of all who are truly saved. Remember that with the Beatitudes we are building upon a foundation, or climbing the rungs of a ladder, leading ultimately to the joy expressed in verse 12 of our chapter, as well as the ministry indicated by verse 16. So verse 8 is really *a call to be holy. And holiness is the result of what we have in the first five Beatitudes.*

Right after we are saved, and often God, in preparing to save us, begins to show us how poor we are spiritually. We are in reality spiritually bankrupt! This is not an easy lesson to learn, and there is a sense in which we are always learning it in deeper and greater ways.

Then, by the work of the Holy Spirit we deplore our sins. This, too, is life-long. We know that we are forgiven, but we mourn because of the way we have grieved the Lord by our sins. And this is what we call repentance. This feeling of grief over the sins we have committed does not leave us. It becomes more intense the more we grow in the Lord. We are forgiven, and God forgets them, but we continue to remember them so that we will hate them and do everything possible in the future not to repeat them. The result of this is we begin to become meek. We are greatly humbled that God would love us sinners though we are.

Having seen our need, the Holy Spirit turns our hearts to the Word. We “hunger and thirst after righteousness.” The Holy Spirit begins to teach us about Christ, and we learn that it is God’s purpose in saving us to make us like His Son. And as the Holy Spirit continues His work in us, we begin to see that the mercy God has bestowed upon us in saving us, begins to change our attitude toward others. We show mercy. We look upon people as our Lord did, with compassion. We are less inclined to be hard and critical, and more inclined to be merciful and loving.

But our Beatitude for today shows us that this purity which we seek, this holiness of life, is not just a matter of outward behavior, but that to be true purity, it must come from the heart. We are learning that sin comes from the heart, but we are also beginning to learn that purity must come from our hearts. We have no argument with what our Lord said about being defiled by what comes out of our hearts. Do you remember His words? You have read them this past week if you are reading by our schedule! Listen to what the Lord said when His disciples were being criticized by the scribes and Pharisees because they did not ceremonially wash their hands before they ate. Here are our Lord’s words found in Mark 7:20-23:

20 And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man.

21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,

22 Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness:

23 All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

And so, if our outward behavior is to be pure, our hearts need to be pure, and the only one who can make our hearts pure, is the Lord. “Blessed are the pure in heart.” Or, *happy are those who have pure hearts*. Sin does not produce happiness. Oh, even the Bible speaks of “the pleasures of sin.” But listen to what it has to say in Heb. 11:24-26:

24 By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;

25 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

26 Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.

But the pleasures are so brief and so unsatisfying, and the results are so lengthy and so miserable, that to have the pleasures of sin for such a brief time, is not worth it. *The only way that we can have purity of life is to have purity of heart, and only God can give us pure hearts.*

So when the Lord was speaking about “the pure in heart,” He was speaking of His people and to His people. This, like the other Beatitudes, is His word to us!

But let us examine the words.

I. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THE WORD “PURE”?

The first time the word “pure” is used in the Bible, is in describing the gold that was to cover the ark of the covenant. The verse I am referring to is Ex. 25:11. This is what it says:

And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, within and without shalt thou overlay it, and shalt make upon it a crown of gold round about.

Now I am sure that any of you could tell me that “pure gold” is *only gold*. There is nothing else mixed in it. It was *all gold*.

In the same way when we speak of a *pure heart*, we mean that there is nothing impure in it. There is nothing that would displease the Lord. A pure heart is a holy heart. As we heard in our Scripture reading, the Lord said to all of His people, to all of us who belong to Him, and He said it in

both the OT and the NT, “Be ye holy; for I am holy.” Such a statement leaves no room for sin. In fact, that verse means, “*Be ye perfectly holy, just as I the Lord your God am perfectly holy.*” How holy is the Lord? He is perfectly holy! We would all agree, I am sure, that God is “glorious in holiness,” as Ex. 15:11 tells us. There is no mixture of sin and holiness in God; He is all holiness.

Are you as I to be as perfect as He is? Is such possible for us? Look at the last verse of Matthew 5. Matt. 5:48 says, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” And so some Christians say that it is possible for us in this life to be sinlessly perfect. Is that what we are talking about?

When the Apostle John was a very old man, he wrote the three epistles which bear his name in the NT: 1, 2, and 3 John. He was well into his eighties, and maybe even in his nineties. And he said this: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8). Now if anyone could have reached perfection in his life, I feel sure that it would have been the Apostle John. But by his own testimony, he was not perfect.

Let me give you another example.

King Solomon in the OT was a very godly man. His writings have been a great help to the people of God for about 3,000 years. In his book of Proverbs, he asked this question:

Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?
(Prov. 20:9).

Evidently he wasn't ready to say that about himself, and his question implies that no one else could say it either.

Let me ask you a question: As you read through your Bible, except for our Lord Jesus Christ, do you know of a single person in all of Scripture who became sinless, perfectly sinless? I don't, and I feel sure that you don't either.

Well, what did the Lord mean then, “Blessed are the pure in heart”?

I believe He meant two things. First, He was telling us that perfect happiness comes with perfect holiness. “Blessed are the pure in heart.” So the holier we become, the happier we will be.

Second, He meant that this is the goal of our salvation, to be holy like He is. And we know that we are not going to be like Him until we see Him. The Apostle John told us that also: “We shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2). So, as with all of the other Beatitudes they

— speak of growing in a realization of our spiritual needs, and of our grief for sins, and in meekness, and in our hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and in showing mercy, so until we see the Lord, we need to be pressing on toward the mark, as Paul told the Philippians. And as the writer of the book of Hebrews said,

Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord (Heb. 12:14):

Purity of heart and life is our goal. As long as we live we are to be pursuing it. This is sanctification. This is what it means to be growing “in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” By definition, purity of heart means two things:

- 1) Personal holiness.
- 2) A godly influence on others.

Perfect holiness will not be ours in this life. Ask the person who has known the Lord the longest, and, if he or she is honest, he or she will tell you that they are not perfect yet, but they will be when they see the Lord.

But let us look at a second word:

II. WHAT DID THE APOSTLE PAUL MEAN BY THE WORD “HEART”?

— “Blessed are the pure in heart.” What did he mean by the “heart”? Well, just as our beating hearts are really center of our physical life, so this word is used in Scripture to speak of our inner man. It speaks of our soul. Paul was indicating that there are two parts to our being when he said,

For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day (2 Cor. 4:16).

We are not body, but we are body, soul, and spirit. Our bodies get older and older, and finally we die. But for the person who knows the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, “the inward man is renewed day by day,” and so is getting stronger and stronger.

What you and I are in our hearts, is what we are. A hypocrite is a person who pretends to be something outwardly that is different from what he is in his heart. So to be “pure in heart” is to be genuinely pure. It doesn’t mean that you are perfectly pure, but that purity, holiness, is the dominant characteristics of your heart. We may be able to fool each other, but we can’t fool the Lord.

— Recently in a message I referred to what the Lord told Samuel when Samuel was impressed with Jesse’s oldest son, and felt that because he was tall and handsome, he must be the next king of Israel. Here is what we read in 1 Sam. 16:7:

But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.

Let us remember this, and deal immediately with any hypocrisy that we discover in our own hearts. Thomas Watson said that a pure heart is a suspicious heart. The hypocrite suspects others and has charitable thoughts of himself. The sincere Christian has charitable thought of others and suspects himself (*The Beatitudes*, p. 182).

It should continually be our prayer, as it was with David,

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:

24 And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting (Psa. 139:23-24).

But again, as we come to the final point, we have:

III. THE PROMISE: “For they shall see God.”

What an amazing promise this is! “For they shall see God”! We are told in John 1:18:

No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

This is a very strong statement, and it means that no one has ever seen God. Thus, every appearance of God in the OT has to be an appearance of Christ before He came in the flesh. “The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.”

But the promise of this Beatitude is that “the pure in heart...shall see God.” It is an absolute promise. I am one who believes that when we get to heaven we are going to see all Three Persons of the Godhead: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. “They shall see God.” And perhaps this expression means that we will see all Three Persons. The verb “see” means *to gaze upon Him*. When we do, we will be ‘lost in wonder, love, and praise.’

And one of the wonderful aspects of this truth is that when this happens, for us at the Rapture, then God’s purpose in our salvation will be complete because then “we shall be like Him.” And as the Apostle Paul told the Corinthian believers,

And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly (1 Cor. 15:49).

But perhaps there is another idea here which has to do with the present. And that has to do with the way we see the God in the Word. This is not

physical sight, but, as we often say, with the eye of faith. We see Him as He is revealed in Christ. We see Him in the revelation of His glorious attributes. We see Him in His ways which are also revealed in Scripture. God is revealed in the Word of God which is a revelation of Him. We see God in the way He answers prayer, and in His providential dealings in our lives. And the more godly we become, the more we see God in His Word and in “His wonderful works to the children of men.”

The Lord Jesus did not mean that some will see God, and others in His family will not see Him. We may differ in our purity of heart, but that is a term which describes all of the people of God.

How we should be looking forward to that day when our faith becomes sight, and we are permitted to gaze upon our heavenly Father, and enjoy a fellowship with Him then, and with each other, which we have never experienced here on earth.

Concl: King David, in Psalm 24 asked a couple of questions which have real bearing upon this Beatitude. Perhaps you will remember his words:

3 Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place?

4 He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.

5 He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

6 This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob (Psa. 24:3-6).

Notice that “clean hands” are outward; “a pure heart” is inward. Lifting up the soul to vanity and pride, is inward; swearing deceitfully is outward.

We have the same inward-outward, or outward-inward combination in Psa. 19:14:

Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer. “The words of my mouth” are outward; “the meditation of my heart” is inward.”

Purity of heart includes both. As I have said, the outward without the inward, is hypocrisy.

When David sinned so grievously against the Lord in committing adultery with Bathsheba, and then having her husband, one of David’s faithful men killed, as a part of his confession to the Lord in Psalm 51, he made this confession:

Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom (Psa. 51:6).

And then he said a few verses later:

Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me (Psa. 51:10).

Finally, he recognized this:

16 For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering.

17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise (Psa. 51:16-17).

If we know the Lord, we want to please Him. I can't imagine anyone being truly saved with no desire to please God. But the question is, how pleasing are we to the Lord? Are we really trusting Him day by day? Do we judge sin before it gets started? Are we careful about what is going on in our hearts, the resentments we may hold, the desires we may have which are clearly sinful in God's sight? David's experience ought to be a warning to all of us. While he did not go into detail as far as his inner life was concerned, he clearly admitted that the truth of God, and his own personal faithfulness to the Lord, were not what he was concerned about in his heart. When our hearts are not right with the Lord, it will always follow that we will have trouble in our behavior. We may be able to conceal a needy heart for a while, but eventually others will know that we have not really been walking with the Lord.

May the Lord not let us forget this Beatitude, nor any of the others that has led us up to it. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." It is pureness of heart that leads to Christ-likeness in our lives, and causes us to long for that day when we will be pure in heart in a perfect way, so that we will never again displease the Lord.

There may be some here this morning who do not know the Lord, and yet you are struggling with sin in your life. The One you need is Christ, to cleanse your heart from the defilement and guilt of your sin. Only then can you ever hope to have a pure heart so that you can live a pure life. Come to Him today. Put your trust in Him. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." If you want to talk about your relationship with the Lord, let me know after the service.

“BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS”

Matthew 5:9

— **Intro:** This is the seventh Beatitude which our Lord taught to His disciples as He met with them “on the mount.” It describes both that which is to be their character as well as their ministry. In a way this parable belongs to what our Lord said a few verses later when He spoke of His disciples first as “salt,” and then as “the light of the world.” In all three of these terms we are dealing with both character and ministry. That is, they describe what we are to be and what we are to do in this sinful world in which we live. But it is important for all of us to understand that the only way we can best function as “peacemakers,” and as “salt” and “light” is if we have passed through the various experiences which are indicated by the first six Beatitudes.

I have been pointing out to you how one Beatitude leads to another, but we all need to understand that we don’t leave the first behind when we pass on to the second. It is true that one leads to another, but we continue to grow as Christians all through our lives as the Lord leads us deeper and deeper into each one of those six Beatitudes.

— For example, a babe in Christ can realize his own depravity, his own spiritual bankruptcy, that which our Lord called, “the poor in spirit.” But as he grows in grace, he is going to understand this more and more, and his life will be affected to a much greater degree by the realization of his need, the longer he knows the Lord. I remember how my own Dad was moved to tears publicly more than once when, after he had known the Lord for many years, he was moved more deeply than ever before thinking of how gracious God had been in saving him. The first president of the Multnomah School of the Bible, as it was called in those days, was Dr. B. B. Sutcliffe. I never knew him personally, but I heard him speak on more than one occasion, and it was always with great blessing for me. But I heard Dr. Mitchell say on more than one occasion, that in the last years of Dr. Sutcliffe’s life, he told Dr. Mitchell that he had never seen himself before as the great sinner that he was. Dr. Sutcliffe was a very godly man, and was greatly used in the teaching of the Word, but as he grew in his knowledge of the Lord throughout his life, the contrast between what he was by nature, and what the Lord was, was so great that he was amazed that the Lord would ever have saved him.

— I am sure that many of you could say the same thing. And I will have to say that I understand more now about what Dr. Sutcliffe felt in his heart,

and why my Dad was often moved to tears, than I ever have in the past. It was toward the end of his life that the Apostle Paul wrote “that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief” (1 Tim. 1:15). That statement reveals how the Apostle himself had grown in grace and in his own understanding of the truth.

So, as we grow in our knowledge of the Lord, we also grow in our knowledge of ourselves, and the result is very, very humbling for all of us. And as we think back over our lives, we marvel that His grace was extended to us, and we grieve over those times that we have sinned against the Lord.

Now let us consider the question,

I. WHAT IS A “PEACEMAKER”?

The Beatitudes form a kind of a spiritual biography for each one of us as God takes us as we were when we were first saved, and gradually works in us to make us like the Lord Jesus. Alexander Maclaren, a man who was himself deeply taught by the Lord, expressed what I have been trying to say in these words, speaking of the Lord:

His peacemakers are created by having passed through all the previous experiences which the preceding verses bring out. They have learned the poverty of their own spirits. They have wept tears, if not real and literal, yet those which are far more agonizing – tears of spirit and conscience – when they have thought of their own demerits and foulnesses. They have bowed in humble submission to the will of God, and even to that will as expressed by the antagonisms of man. They have yearned after the possession of a fuller and nobler righteousness than they have attained. They have learned to judge others with a gentle judgment because they know how much they themselves need it, and to extend to others a helping hand because they are aware of their own impotence and need of succor. They have been led through all these, often painful, experiences into a purity of heart which has been blessed by some measure of vision of God; and, having thus been equipped and prepared, they are fit to go out into the world and say, in the presence of all its tempests, ‘Peace! be still.’ Something of the miracle-working of the Master whom they serve will be shed upon those who serve Him (Vol. 4, pp. 163, 164).

And so I trust that you can see that our ministry as “peacemakers” is the result of experiencing day by day the development of a godly character

which is described in the first six Beatitudes. *There is a very real sense in which God's purpose in our growth is to make us "peacemakers."* This is very clear in the Beatitudes. It was our Lord's purpose for His disciples that they be "peacemakers," but it would take all that the Lord had said in the first six Beatitudes to produce that result in the lives of the disciples.

Charles Simeon said in a message he gave on this subject that a "peacemaker" seeks to preserve peace where it is, and to restore peace where it is not. See Vol. 11, pp. 71, 72. But we can also add that a "peacemaker" seeks to bring peace into lives where peace has never been experienced before. If you look up this word in a Greek lexicon, or dictionary, you will find that the word describes a person who not only makes peace but a person who does so because he or she is peace-loving.

We all know that peace is not a characteristic of this world in which we live. In fact, just the opposite is the case. Our world is characterized by just the opposite of peace – turmoil, unrest, confusion, disunity, contention, and the like. And so we are not talking about the kind of peace that supposedly exists now between the United Nations and the country of Iraq. We know that nothing has actually changed in that explosive situation. Peace which is the result of the threat of military action, is not peace. Peace is a personal matter. Peace has to do with the heart. True peace is a work of God. The world, as Jeremiah said so long ago, says, "Peace, peace; when there is no peace" (Jer. 6:14; 8:11). And the prophet Isaiah was directed by the Holy Spirit to tell us that "there is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked" (Isa. 48:22; 57:21). So we look at the world today and we see that there is an overwhelming assignment waiting for us in the world, which means, in the hearts of the people of the world.

Breaking down the need that we see in the world, we are very aware that there is a great need for peace in the homes of America. Divorces are very common. Children are often raised with little or no discipline, and so disobedience to parents is very common. And this extends to disobedience to teachers and authority of all kinds. People are freer to do what they want to do, and yet they are not happy, and they are not peaceful. The problems in our homes are overwhelming, and are getting worse all of the time.

But it is not only the people of the world that are in need of peace. We see the same need among those of us who claim to be the people of God. And undoubtedly this is why there are so few among us who can really be called "peacemakers." The Word of God is not ministered in many

churches today as it used to be taught, and so there is a lack of the peace which the Psalmist spoke of when he wrote the words we find in Psalm 119:165,

Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.

And if peace were not a continuing need among the Lord's people, the Apostle Paul would not have begun most of his epistles with a prayer for grace and peace for the people of God.

So this should cause us to ask,

II. WHAT ARE WE TO DO AS "PEACEMAKERS"?

A. We are to be a peace loving people.

It is not possible for us to be very effective in ministering peace to others if we are not enjoying the peace of God in our own hearts and lives. This quietness of heart which we call peace comes to us from God in many ways. One of the first ways is by prayer. Listen to what Paul wrote to the church at Philippi:

6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:6-7).

We as Christians have our trials just like everybody else has trials in this world. But we have a God to whom we can turn, and He has promised to give us peace. It is a sin for us to worry about anything, and yet it is natural for us to do so. But when we come in prayer to God, "with thanksgiving," we can claim the promise of Phil. 4:7. (Re-read.)

Another factor in our peace was given to us by the Lord through the prophet Isaiah when he wrote what we have in Isa. 26:3-4:

3 Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.

4 Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength:

When trials come our way, or we have trouble with people, or our prayers are not being answered, it is easy for us to get greatly disturbed. But when we fix our minds upon the Lord, remembering His greatness, His love, His faithfulness, and His glorious power, knowing that everything is under His control, then we have "perfect peace." God keeps us in a deep and abiding

peace when we are thinking of Him and trusting Him.

There are many verses which speak of peace. I just have time to give you one more.

You know, it is impossible for us to have peace in our hearts if things are not right between us and our fellow-believers. And remember that this applies to members of our own families, as well as believers in our church, and even to people who do not know the Lord. The Apostle Paul was speaking especially about our relationship to each other as believers when he wrote these words:

- 1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,
- 2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;
- 3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:1-3).

It is the Lord's peace which binds us together in the precious and unique fellowship that we have in Christ, and so we are to preserve that by showing humility and longsuffering and being patient with each other because of the love we have for one another.

Much more could be said on this subject, but I encourage you to pay attention to those passages of Scripture which speak of peace in the lives of believers, and then look to the Lord for the grace to be willing to do what He wants us to do, and then to do it.

But there is something else that we are to do as "peacemakers."

B. We are to tell people how to have peace with God.

People who want peace rarely think that their greatest need is for peace with God. As the Bible says, "God is not in all his thoughts" (Psa. 10:4). And so it also tells us that for such people "the way of peace have they not known" (Rom. 3:17).

Our text is the only place in the NT where this noun, "peacemakers," is used. But the verb form of this noun appears in Col. 1:20 where we read what the Apostle Paul said about our Lord and what He did to make peace.

Listen to his words which you will find in Col. 1:20-22:

- 20 And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether

they be things in earth, or things in heaven.

21 And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled

22 In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight:

When the Apostle Paul said that the Lord “made peace through the blood of His Cross,” he was speaking about peace with God! All people by birth are alienated from God, and enemies of God, because of sin. And so the Bible makes it very clear that our first and greatest need for peace as human beings is to have peace with God. There can be no real peace for people until they are reconciled to God. Salvation from sin brings peace with God. This is what the Apostle Paul was speaking about when he wrote the words we find in Rom. 5:1:

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

These verses tell us that the real Peacemaker is our Lord Jesus Christ, and that our task as peacemakers is to tell people about how we need to be saved from our sins, and how we can be saved from our sins through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. So it is inconceivable that we would be able to call ourselves “peacemakers” if we were not faithful in making known to people everywhere the truth of the Gospel of the grace of God.

So, as peacemakers it is our task to tell others about Christ. And it must be our prayer that the Lord would touch the hearts of those to whom we speak about Christ, that they would hear what we have to say, and turn to Christ for salvation. And this peace is a peace that we can never lose because it is not based upon what we do for God, but upon what God has done for us through the sacrifice of His Son.

You see, we are peacemakers, not because we make peace for people, but because we are to tell them Who the Peacemaker is! We tell people that their basic need is for peace with God concerning their sins. This is the true and only sure foundation for real and eternal peace. We need “peace with God,” but peace with God is only possible through Jesus Christ and the sacrifice He made for sinners when He died on the Cross. People don’t need humanistic psychology to tell them how to find peace; they need to be told about the Christ of the Gospel. And just as there is salvation in none other but Christ, so there is no true peace for human hearts until there is first of all peace with God. If we are not telling people about the Lord Jesus Christ and His work on the Cross, we are failing in our

work as “peacemakers.”

Finally, on this subject, let me say that

C. Peace must always have the greatest priority with us.

I am not saying “peace at any price,” because there can be no compromise with the truth; there can be no giving in to sin. But I am thinking of a verse like Rom. 12:18: “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.” And the Apostle Paul gave this after quite a list of exhortations which you can read in Romans 12, and this was the climax of what he had to say. Two other verses are Heb. 12:14-15:

14 Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;

“Peacemakers” “follow peace with all men.” And here it is put on the same basis as holiness. In fact, it is holiness to pursue peace. “Peacemakers” are the Lord’s people who seek peace because it is holy to do so. In all of our relationships, our goal is peace, whether with believers or unbelievers, but peace that is consistent with the holiness of God.

Now, as with all of the previous Beatitudes, we come to:

III. THE PROMISE.

And this is it: “For they shall be called the children of God.” The Greek has it, “For they shall be called sons of God.”

The next three verses do not seem to indicate that this is what the world will call the “peacemakers.” Maclaren said, “They are a great deal more likely to have stones and rotten eggs flung at them than to be pelted with bouquets of scented roses of popular approval” (Vol. 4, p. 169). But this is what God calls “peacemakers.” It is so unusual for a person to be a peacemaker, that one cannot truly be a peacemaker unless he, or she, is in reality a son of God, a true member of God’s family!

But I believe that this will also be the conclusion reached by other children of God, and even by those non-Christians in whose heart the Lord is working to bring them to Himself. It is our lives which manifest with convincing power that we belong to the Lord.

Concl: Perhaps you remember what our Lord said about the love that we as His people are to show for one another. You will find these words in John 13:34-35:

34 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

Note the words of that last verse: “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”

Most of you know me well enough to know that I would never say anything to minimize the importance of doctrine. Doctrine is foundational for all that we believe, and to teach us how we are to live. *But according to this passage in John, and according to the Beatitude that we have been considering today, it is not our doctrine which is the most influential instrument that God uses to awaken people to what it means to be a Christian. It is our desire for peace, and the way we work for peace, and it is the love that we have for each other. Our lives show the reality of what we believe, and are used by God to open the hearts of people to the message that we bring to them.*

May God make us real “peacemakers” that we may be His instruments for bringing people to the Prince of peace, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.