

Living Under God's Blessing: Matthew 5:5-12

Blessed are the meek What negative connotations come to mind today when we think of a “meek” person? In the Ancient Near East it was a prized characteristic and was about “strength under control”, and for the writers of the NT it was about confidence in God. **Paint some pictures of what meekness might look like for the Christian in different situations. What does it look like (and why) and what doesn't it look like? In what sense can a biblically meek person be free to be ill-treated but why does this need to be qualified?** [It's wrong for anyone to be treated unbiblically, immorally or illegally. However if we are in this situation we can be confident to stand against it not because “We deserve better!” but because God is always on the side of those who need justice. We can be confident in Him.] **What's the promise for those who live this way?** [When we realise that God is all sufficient and that we can trust Him we lack nothing, we have inherited the earth.]

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness To live in line with the beatitudes so far we need to be filled with God, His presence and power, His grace demonstrated in the gospel. The means by which we can be fuelled by God in this way is through hungering and thirsting for conformity to God / right-living for ourselves and others. **What does “hungering and thirsting” look like? Why do you think God tends to show up more in the lives of those who desire Him than those who don't?**

Blessed are the merciful As we encounter and receive God's grace we cannot help but show mercy and kindness to others. If our experience is real we cannot fail to treat others the way God has treated us. **Give some scenarios where we might need to show mercy to others (not treating others as they deserve)? What's the connection between the mercy we experience from God and the mercy we show others?** The promise is that if we live this way we will receive a greater experience of mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart In what ways might we have a divided heart? **What stops us being “all in” for Jesus? How motivating is the promise that we will see God?** [Note it's not about a literal seeing (although there could be an eschatological (at the end of time) sense in which this is true) but a knowing and experiencing in the here and now.] Psalm 24:3-4, 1 Kings 18:21.

Blessed are the peacemakers Not “blessed are the peace-keepers/-lovers, conflict avoiders...” Bringing reconciliation is fundamental to the gospel. **What does it mean to make every effort to strive for peace? What doesn't it mean?** Rom. 12:18, 14:19, Eph. 4:3, Heb. 12:14, 1 Peter 3:11. **What's the link between being confident in the gospel of grace (all that we have and are because of Jesus) and being able to be a peacemaker? What should we do if someone “shares”, “off loads” to us about people they have a problem with?** [We need to recognise how normalised it is to moan and complain without any real intention of doing anything to try and resolve the issue. This is very important for Christians especially in the life of the church. We should always be trying to help the other person to resolve the issue by dealing with it themselves or going to see someone who can help them. ‘A’ having a problem with ‘B’ but just moaning / offloading to ‘C’ is not acceptable.]

Blessed are those who are persecuted Note it's not “Blessed are those who are persecuted for being obnoxious.” But blessed are those who get a hard time for seeking to honour God. **What might it mean if we don't experience any “push back” or difficulty for living for Christ? Where might we expect to see it? Are Christians persecuted or merely marginalised?** [Do not allow this question to be a time vacuum. Try and make the point that the hard time we get at work because we can't wear a cross (or whatever) is not in the same league as those who face a labour camp for carrying a bible in the street.]

Rejoice and be glad for great is your reward... What is the reward that we can look forward to? Why is it really important to lift our eyes above the here and now? Heb. 10:34, 11:26, 12:2, 13:13-14. What might help us to do this?

Recognise the fact that our hope ultimately is not that we will be able to do all this stuff but that our hope, ultimately, is that Christ has done it for us. We are in Christ and so can know God's approval. That doesn't mean we ignore these requirements, but we can strive to do them with the joy that comes from knowing that we are labouring in the family business, working for our Father who loves and who rejoices in all our attempts to be obedient.