

Matthew 5:1-10. Christ Begins His Sermon on the Mount by Pronouncing the Beatitudes.

by Favell Lee Mortimer

Jesus teaches us that true happiness is found in God's presence and likeness, and that we become happy by becoming holy like Him.

Scripture: Psalm 16:11, Psalm 17:15, Matthew 5:1-8, Acts 15:9

Topics: "Christian Virtues", "Heart Purity"

Description

Favell Lee Mortimer preaches on the Beatitudes, emphasizing that true happiness and blessings come from God's presence and likeness, not from earthly possessions or status. He explains that to be happy, one must strive for holiness and receive graces such as humility, meekness, mercy, and love of peace-making through prayer and faith. Mortimer highlights the importance of true Christian virtues like meekness, mercy, and peacemaking, showing that these qualities stem from a heart transformed by God's grace. He shares a story of reconciliation between ministers as an example of how Christians should strive to make peace and unite hearts. Lastly, he discusses the purity of heart, explaining that faith in Christ purifies the heart and leads to a desire for holiness, reassuring penitent sinners of God's comforting promise.

Transcript

The blessed Savior had been just engaged in healing the bodies of men, when he ascended the mountain to preach words that might save their souls. He opened his mouth to speak with a loud voice to the vast multitude. What heavenly words proceeded from those gracious lips! He began with pronouncing blessings; for he came to bless and to save. These eight blessings are called the beatitudes. They are very instructive, because they teach us whom Christ counts happy or blessed.

We all naturally desire happiness, but we fall into this great mistake--we think that we must have earthly good in order to be happy. Do not the people of this world show by their conduct, that if they were to speak the language of their hearts, they would say, "Blessed are those who have houses and lands--Blessed are those who enjoy health and long life--Blessed are those who are held in honor and reputation among men?" But God speaks very differently. He assures us that happiness is only to be found in his presence, and in likeness to himself. The Psalmist declares, "In your presence is fullness of joy;" and again, "I shall behold your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in your likeness." In order to become

happy we must become holy like Him.

God will bestow upon us, in answer to our prayers, all the graces mentioned in these beatitudes--humility, penitence, meekness, spiritual desires, mercy, purity, love of peace-making, and joy in persecution. None but real Christians possess these dispositions. Unconverted people may sometimes appear to be meek. It is no doubt true that there are some people more meek by nature than others. But how different is natural meekness from that of the true Christian! He is meek, not because he does not feel an insult, not because he is afraid of showing resentment, not because he sees it is most to his interest to endure in silence; but--because he traces the hand of God in every injury man is permitted to inflict, because he knows that he deserves worse treatment than he receives, and because his Savior suffered far more for his sake. These are some of the motives which lie at the root of the Christian's meekness. When David was cursed by Shimei, he meekly replied, "Let him curse," because the Lord has said unto him, "Curse David." He felt that the Lord had appointed the chastisement, and he did not desire to resist it. This was the meekness, not of nature, but of grace.

Some people are more merciful or kind-hearted by nature than others; but none exercise true mercy except those who have themselves received it from God. These are the only people who show mercy to the souls of men.

There are some also who naturally delight more than others in making peace; but the right motive must ever be lacking, where true religion is absent. How beautiful is the character of a Christian peacemaker! We might all do something in preventing quarrels, and in healing them. The children of Satan delight in seeing people divided, and often by their malicious tales create differences between friends--but the children of God delight in seeing hearts fondly attached to each other; and often by their kind efforts reunite the cord of love when it has been broken. Two celebrated ministers, Robert Hall and Charles Simeon, had quarreled; they refused to speak to each other; when John Owen, another eminent minister, adopted the following plan to reconcile them, after several others had been tried in vain. He wrote and left at the house of each these lines--

How rare that task a prosperous issue finds,

Which seeks to reconcile discordant minds!

How many scruples rise at passion's touch!

This yields too little, and that asks too much;

Each wishes each with others' eyes to see--

And many sinners can't make two agree.

What mediation then, the Savior showed,

Who singly reconciled us all to God!

It is said that upon receiving the lines, each minister left his residence to seek the other, and that they met in the street, where a perfect reconciliation took place.

This is an instance of the manner in which the true Christian makes peace between his brethren, and of the success with which God blesses his efforts.

Let us now turn to another of the beatitudes. "Blessed are the pure in heart--for they shall see God." All who know anything of their own hearts, must acknowledge that they are not by nature pure. We learn from the scriptures that the heart is purified by faith. (Acts 15:9.) When a man believes in Christ, his heart no longer delights in sin, but desires to be holy like God. Lest, however, any penitent sinner should be cast down by reading this verse, let me mention a little circumstance for his comfort.

When the Esquimaux, in North America, first obtained the Gospel of Matthew in their own language, they perused the sacred treasure with the greatest attention. One day the missionary found a poor lad weeping bitterly. He inquired the cause of his grief. The youth replied by pointing to the passage in the eighth verse of this chapter. "Look there," said he, "it is only the pure in heart who shall see God; and I am not pure, so I can never see him." "But stop," said the missionary, (placing his finger on the fourth verse,) "read again, Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

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