



BIBLE STUDY

2 KINGS 5:1-15

*Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, **2** and he began to teach them.*

The Beatitudes

He said:

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

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

5 *Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.*

6 *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.*

7 *Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.*

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

9 *Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.*

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

11 *“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and
falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.*

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The gospel of Matthew is the first gospel in the canon and is the one that most heavily relies on the Hebrew Scriptures.

Matthew is reliant on Mark being written first, as well as using other sources such as “Q” and “M” and therefore the authorship of this gospel is not definitive.

The text indicates a familiarity with the first Jewish Revolt (66-70 CE) and must then have been written after that time, but it is equally familiar with the story from the early period so it is believed to have been written likely in the final decade of the first century, most likely in the 80’s CE.

CULTURAL CONTEXT

The original readers/hearers of Matthew’s gospel are predominantly Jewish (more specifically Jewish leadership), and the author uses familiar texts from the Hebrew Scriptures to point to the messiahship of Jesus.

SITUATIONAL CONTEXT

The book of Matthew moves fairly quickly. Jesus has been born, escaped to Egypt from Herod, and the story then skips ahead to Jesus as an adult, coming to John for baptism and then is immediately taken out into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan. He returns from that experience to begin his public ministry calling his disciples and begins his teaching. This chapter includes the first specifics we hear about Jesus’ teachings. This is the first and longest of 5 discourses in Matthew.

STUDY

Read Matthew 5:1-11

The English word ‘blessed’ has two separate meanings in Hebrew that parallel two Greek words, which have two different meanings:

- The first is the Greek ‘eulogeō’ and the Hebrew ‘bĕrākâ’ translate into our English word ‘blessed’ used to denote asking God for a blessing. One example of this would be, *“O Lord, bless those who are in distress.”*
- The second Greek word, ‘makarios’ and its parallel Hebrew, ‘āšîr’ is the word used here in Matthew 5 translating to the English.
- ‘Bless-ed’ meaning that the person already possesses the blessing rather than asking for a blessing. One example of this would be the acknowledgement that we are already in a state of happiness because as children of God, we have already inherited the kingdom.

In V.3, what does it mean to be ‘poor in spirit’?

- Sad, struggling

Matthew is using the term ‘poor in spirit’ to reference Isaiah 66:2. In most cases, this is a reference to the humble and pious.

How might someone who is ‘poor in spirit’ understand their bless-edness?

- They seek God
- They are active in prayer
- They understand that the Kingdom of God is already theirs.

What do we ‘mourn’?

- Loss of a job, a home, or a loved one
- The suffering/oppression of others
- The lack of justice and mercy
- The evil in our world
- Our failure to love God and our neighbours

In V.4, how might someone who is mourning understand their bless-edness?

- Understanding that in suffering we grow
- Understanding that in our pain, our priorities are rearranged
- We rely totally on God when we grieve
- We are drawn into working toward justice for all
- We stand beside the oppressed
- We experience God's comfort in our mourning

Read Ecclesiastes 7:2-4. How might this inform Matthew 5:4?

Who are the meek?

- The poor
- The humble
- Those who accept God's guidance
- Those who are ethical in resolving disputes - not too bold nor too timid
- Those who are angry about injustices to others

What is the earth V.5 is referring to?

- The land given to Abraham
- The land of promise
- The land in general
- The inhabited earth
- The Kingdom

What is righteousness?

- Being in right relationship with God
- A gift from God
- A righteous person acts justly (according to God's justice)

What does it mean to 'hunger and thirst for righteousness'?

- Hunger and thirst are powerful, and food/water is necessary for life
- To constantly strive to be in right relationship with God

Read Isaiah 32:1,17-18. What does Isaiah liken righteousness to?

- Justice and peace

What is mercy?

- When you don't get the punishment you deserve
- Compassion

In what ways are the merciful bless-ed?

- Offering mercy breaks the cycles of anger, shame, bitterness, and 'unforgiveness' that bind us when we don't forgive
- They are freed from destructive forces that accompany anger and bitterness

In the Hebrew tradition, the 'heart' refers to the feelings, the mind, and the will. How can one be 'pure' in heart?

- No hidden motives
- Transparent
- No hidden agendas
- Being focused on justice, mercy, righteousness

Peace in the Bible refers to more than the absence of war/conflict. What are other examples of peace?

- Loving relationships
- Good health

How can we be peacemakers in our lives?

- Work to be merciful toward others
- Strive for justice for the oppressed
- Foster loving relationships in our family, neighbourhoods, communities

How can we be peacemakers in our country? In our world? Consider Lake Chad specifically.