

OpenTheo

Beatitudes (Part 2)



The Life and Teachings of Christ - Steve Gregg

In a discussion led by Steve Gregg, Scriptures from Luke and James are examined in the context of the Beatitudes. Gregg contrasts the Kingdom of Heaven with the Kingdom of God and affirms the importance of having a broken spirit and being a receptor for God. He emphasizes the need for humility and seeing oneself as a beggar entirely reliant on God, and that seeking a pure heart and being merciful are crucial for obtaining God's mercy. In conclusion, Gregg states that obtaining the earth and inheriting the Kingdom of God is not about being aggressive, pushy, or well-armed, but about releasing and giving up personal rights.

Transcript

And Luke or Mark or both will quote the same statement of Jesus, but substitute Kingdom of Heaven with Kingdom of God. That is to say, as you look at the parallel statements in the three Gospels, Mark and Luke will have Jesus saying Kingdom of God, and in the exact same spot, Matthew will have him saying Kingdom of Heaven. Now Matthew sometimes uses the term Kingdom of God as well, but when he does, it's clear that he uses Kingdom of God and Kingdom of Heaven interchangeably.

Let me give you an example. In Matthew chapter 19, the story of the rich young ruler, verses 23 and 24, after the rich young ruler leaves and refuses to do what Jesus told him to do, which was sell everything and give to the poor and then come follow him. In Matthew 19, 23, it says, Jesus said to his disciples, assuredly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God. Now, the opening words of verse 24, again I say to you, suggests he's about ready to say exactly the same thing he just said. He's going to say it again, say the same thing twice.

The interesting thing is that in verse 23, he uses the expression Kingdom of Heaven, and in verse 24, the term Kingdom of God, obviously using the terms as interchangeables. Now, one of the other places we can see that is in the very first beatitude. The first

beatitude in Matthew, speaking of the poor and spirit, theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

The first beatitude in Luke, theirs is the Kingdom of God. Same thing. We don't have time right now to explore the marvelous teaching of Scripture on the Kingdom of God.

That, of course, comes up frequently enough, especially in the teachings of Jesus. It's the main theme of his entire ministry was the Kingdom of God. We will have plenty of opportunities to expand on that, but this is not one of them.

I would point this out, though, that in Matthew chapter 5, each of the beatitudes is followed by a reason for the blessedness. Blessed is this kind of person because of this. The person who is poor and spirit is blessed because he has the Kingdom of Heaven, and there's a wide range of because's in these beatitudes.

Those who mourn are blessed because they're going to be comforted. The meek are blessed because they're going to inherit the earth, and so forth. But the last of them, verse 10, Matthew 5, 10, blessed are those who are persecuted for righteous sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

The very same thing is in the first beatitude. The first and last beatitudes in Matthew have the same promise affixed, which is probably just a way of saying that he's come full circle and that he's trying to make a statement, a totality statement in these eight statements. He's not speaking about eight different classes of people.

He's talking about the same people who have these eight characteristics. His disciples are to seek to have these characteristics, and the principal blessing that they have for it is that they have the Kingdom. They are citizens of God's Kingdom.

There's a whole bunch of subsidiary blessings or lesser blessings associated with that, maybe not so lesser, but related, including inheriting the earth, being satisfied, obtaining mercy, being called sons of God, seeing God. These are the things that are additional promises made to those who are in this blessed class. And again, I want to make clear, these eight statements of blessedness are not statements about eight different classes of people, as if there's one group of people who are poor in spirit, another group who are mourners, and another group yet who are meek, but that the disciples of Jesus fit all these descriptive things.

And this is just eight ways of unpacking a description of the character of the believer and of the blessedness of being in the Kingdom of God. And we'll find that going through the Sermon on the Mount, it's sort of a Kingdom of God manifesto, as it becomes clear as we study it. Well, let's take a look at these individually.

The first says, blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Now, what does the expression poor in spirit mean? If we had the expression poor in money, we would understand this to be a person who had very little money, and therefore you

would think that the term poor in spirit would mean somebody who had very little spirit or very little of maybe spiritual things. And yet that wouldn't make much sense.

We would expect him to say, blessed are the rich in spirit. After all, those who are physically poor are said elsewhere to be spiritually rich. Let me show you a couple places where the Bible makes that clear.

In Revelation 2 and verse 9, Revelation 2.9, Jesus is dictating a letter to the church in Smyrna, and he says, I know your works, tribulation and poverty. He's speaking about their physical poverty, but he says, but you are rich. In other words, though you have poverty as an outward circumstance, yet you are rich in the ways that matter.

He says to the last church in chapter 3, the Laodicean Church, he says, you say you're rich, but you don't know that you're poor and miserable. Well, look at James, which is a, James is actually a book that quotes the Sermon on the Mount about 20 times in five chapters. But in James chapter 2, James is talking about the way that the church was treating the poor, and he rebukes them because they had not, they've been treating the poor a little bit like the world does, rather than the way Jesus' teachings would incline one to.

And he says in particular, well, look at this, verse 4, you have shown partiality among yourselves and become judges of evil thoughts. Listen, my beloved brethren, verse 5, has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he promised to those who love him? Now notice, those who are poor in terms of the world's goods, God has chosen them to be rich in other respects, in a spiritual respect, and rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom. Where'd James get that idea that the poor are heirs of the kingdom? No doubt from Luke's version of the Beatitude.

Blessed are you poor, yours is the kingdom. It's one of the 20 times in the short book of James that there is a clear echo of the Sermon on the Mount. James says, hasn't God said that the poor are blessed, that they're chosen of God to be inheritors of his kingdom? Yes, he did in the first Beatitude in Luke.

But what I'm saying is, one would expect therefore, in Matthew's first Beatitude, to say something, if he was going to correspond with blessed are the poor in physical circumstances, he should say something like, blessed are the rich in spirit. They could be poor physically, but rich in faith, or rich in spiritual things, but Matthew doesn't have it that way. Matthew has it, blessed are the poor in spirit.

Now, how do we justify that? It would help if we had a verbal equivalent somewhere else in the Bible to help us understand what is meant by poor in spirit, and we do not. We don't have anywhere in the Bible the exact expression poor in spirit elsewhere, but we have something very close to it. In a couple of passages in Isaiah, and a couple in the Psalms, for example, if you would look at Isaiah chapter 66 in verse 2, this is very

possibly one of the cross-references that Jesus would have intended for his hearers to make in their minds, to this expression poor in spirit, because he says, God says in Isaiah 66 in verse 2, for all those things my hand is made, and all those things exist, says the Lord, but to this one will I look.

To him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at my word. Now, the person described is poor and of a contrite spirit. The word contrite is a word, an old English word, from the Hebrew, the Hebrew word means crushed small.

Some translations say a wounded spirit, not in this place, but the same word is translated in Psalms a couple of times as wounded spirit in some translations, but the idea here is that the person who's got a crushed or contrite spirit is likened to a person who's poor, but look now over at Isaiah 57 15. Isaiah 57 and verse 15 says, for thus says the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, whose name is holy. I dwell in the high and holy place with him who has a contrite or and humble spirit to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

Now, one thing you'll notice in the two passages in Isaiah we looked at, both of them mentioned the contrite spirit. Also, both of them link the idea of a contrite spirit with another characteristic. In the case of Isaiah 66 2, it's the one who is of a poor and contrite spirit.

In Isaiah 57 15, the contrite spirit is linked with humility, the person is of a humble spirit and a contrite heart. Therefore, it is possible that the poor and contrite spirit or the poor in spirit is a reference to humility. The person who's got a humble and contrite spirit is the same person who's got the poor and contrite spirit and very possibly gives some of the wording to Jesus in his choice of the expression, the poor in spirit, the one who's got a contrite and humble spirit.

Look at a couple of the Psalms where this would be also seen to be apparently the case. In Psalm 51 17, Psalm 51 17, it says the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart. These, O God, you will not despise.

Now, here the contriteness is compared with a broken spirit. So, being contrite is likened in Isaiah 66 2 with being poor. In Isaiah 57 15 with being humble and here with being broken, having a broken heart, a broken spirit.

Likewise, one other Psalm, Psalm 34 and verse 18, it says the Lord is near to those who have a broken heart and saves such as have a contrite spirit. Again, a contrite spirit, the poor in spirit, the brokenhearted, the humble. These are terms that are all linked together very closely in the way the Old Testament speaks of contrition.

And in all likelihood, it is the case that Jesus, when he speaks of the poor in spirit, is talking about the same parties that Isaiah and the psalmist speak of as being poor and of

a contrite spirit or humble and of a contrite spirit, of a broken heart and a contrite spirit. In favor of this idea is the fact that Jesus in his statement in Matthew 5:3 uses the Greek word for poor, which literally means beggars. There are other words for poor in the Greek language and in the New Testament.

In this particular case, the word that is used is the word that literally means beggars. So, he says blessed are the beggars in spirit. Beggars in spirit.

Well, what is a beggar in spirit? We know what a beggar is in terms of finances. A person has no money, he's begging for money. He's asking others to give it to him.

A beggar in spirit is a person who asks, or let's put it this way, he's a totally a receptor. He's not a giver. He has nothing to give.

A person does not beg unless he's reduced to extremity and has absolutely nothing, not only not anything to give, but nothing to live on himself. He is reduced to extreme need. He sees himself as having nothing to contribute, only as one who is the recipient of mercy, the mercy and generosity of another.

To say that somebody is a beggar in spirit would suggest that they are the opposite in their attitude to say what the Pharisees were. You remember the story Jesus told of the two men who prayed together at the temple? One was a Pharisee and the other was a publican and the Pharisee said, God I thank you. I'm not like other men.

I tithe of everything I have. I fast twice a week. I keep your whole law.

I'm sure glad I'm not like this other man, this publican here. And Jesus said the publican was too ashamed even to lift his face to God and he just beat his breast and said, God be merciful to me, a sinner. And Jesus said that latter man went down to his house justified rather than the other.

Justified? That's being saved. That's coming into the kingdom of God. Those who have the kingdom, those who are blessed because theirs is the kingdom of heaven, are those who do not boast of what they have to give to God, but see themselves as having nothing to give to God and only beggars at the throne of God for his mercy.

Beggars in terms of spiritual things. The Pharisees were puffed up and they were proud of themselves. They were performers.

They were God's favorites in their opinion. They had so much to offer. They were so righteous, so spiritual and they knew it and felt it.

But the people that were coming into the kingdom were not, for the most part, people of the Pharisee class. They're people who were tax collectors. They were people who were prostitutes and otherwise notorious sinners.

These are the ones Jesus often took flak for associating with because these were coming into the kingdom because they were in poverty spiritually and they knew it. They didn't pretend to have something that God should congratulate them for or that God should be indebted to them for. It's very easy for a person who is better than someone else, whether it's in terms of righteousness or in terms of natural endowments or some other thing, to feel that God is particularly privileged to have them on his team.

And that's just the opposite spirit of what Jesus is talking about here. The person who says, I don't know how God would ever have me on his side. I've got nothing to offer him.

In other words, a person with low self-esteem is a blessed person. I realize that's the opposite of what the world and what much in the church, the church that's saying the same thing the world is, about the subject says. But self-esteem, the Bible says a lot about it.

Everything it says is the opposite of what the world says about it and the opposite of what most Christians say about it, too, because most Christians get their talk from the world instead of from the Bible. You'll never find a word in the Bible that suggests people need to improve their self-esteem, but there's a great deal of matter in the Bible saying how much we need to reduce our self-esteem, how much we need to not think so highly of ourselves, how much we ought to think of ourselves as worms and as nothing. Paul says he was nothing.

Job said, I loathe myself. I abhor myself. That's when he got healed, when it came to that point.

It is the person who thinks little of himself and highly of God that receives the blessing of the kingdom. As long as people are still trying to congratulate themselves, trying to feel good about themselves, trying to measure up to some standard and saying, when I can measure up to this, then I'll be able to really do a lot of good things for God and God will be proud of me and I'll be proud of myself and everyone will respect me and there's reason for me to be respected. When there's reason for me to be respected, then I can be spiritually okay.

Now, you're spiritually okay when you realize that you're not spiritually okay. That's the only time you're spiritually okay. He that humbles himself will be exalted, the Bible says, but the one who exalts himself will be humiliated, humbled by God because God wants you to think lowly of yourself because that's the right way to think, because that's the truth.

You don't have anything to offer God. All you have to offer him is what he puts in you and that's a great deal, but it has nothing to do with you. It's all him.

In fact, he won't even receive from you anything that he has not himself given you first.

That's what the whole problem with Nadab and Abihu was when they offered the strange fire before the Lord. God set the fire to the altar and said, you use that fire that I have provided to burn incense and worship me and they took other fire of human origin and worship God that way and he burned them up and they died before the Lord because God will not receive worship that comes from man.

It has to be inspired by his own spirit. That's why we're continually told to pray in the Holy Spirit and to worship God in the Spirit and so forth because man doesn't have anything to offer God. Man is just a recipient and as long as man starts, you know, keeps trying to bolster his ego and his self-esteem and try to tell himself he really has some value, that person is working against himself.

What Christianity has always taught throughout history is that the person who sees himself as the lowest, the person who sees himself as the least, the person who sees himself as having no rights, the person who sees himself as a beggar merely before God and totally a recipient, not one who has anything to offer, that person has reached the place that Christianity has called us to and it's only people at that point or approaching that point that really become Christians in the true sense of the word. Others appear to become Christians or churches full of people who have never come to this place but one of the things that's very obvious about the church today is the church is full of people trying to still stroke themselves, trying to still bolster their self-esteem, trying to still feel good about themselves. That's what the world says you need to do but the world is not informed from the Scripture and if the church would be informed by the Scripture a little more than it is, the church would say the same thing that church has been saying for centuries and not the same thing that secular humanist psychologists are saying and by the way some of you know already that self-esteem and self-love that all came in with an atheistic psychologist Abraham Maslow.

It did not come from the Bible and it cannot be supported from the Bible. I heard a song on the radio, I was over at 7-eleven and I had never heard this song before I hope to never hear it again, it wasn't even a pleasant song to listen to but I was shocked by its words. Maybe it's a popular song or maybe it's a relatively unknown song, I'm that naive I don't know.

Yeah you may have heard it, it's a woman singing I don't know who it is and she says the line that repeats is something like the greatest love in the world is to love yourself. You ever heard that one? I was amazed to hear someone say such a lame and inane stupid thing as that and something that is the greatest love in the world is to love yourself? Well then every baby from birth loves supremely because he loves no one but himself. It's a funny thing, Jesus said the greatest love is that you lay down yourself, lay down your life for your friend, just the opposite but you can see the world and the church are on, well the world is on a different course than the kingdom of God.

Sad to say so is the church on a different course from the kingdom of God for the most part these days, at least what parades itself and calls itself the church. The true kingdom consists of people who are beggars, who do not see themselves as having spiritual value but see themselves as, as much of the old hymns reflected the normal position of the church, that we were worthless when he purchased us. Many times the self-esteem advocates tell us well you must be worth something look how much God paid for you.

The Bible doesn't say God paid that because you're worth something, he paid that for you in spite of the fact that you weren't worth anything, that's called grace. If you were worth something he paid that for you that's not grace, that's just giving you what you deserve. The grace of God is that when you were worthless he treated you as if you had some worth but not so they'd go to your head and start stroking yourself and flattering yourself and commending yourself, look how much I'm worth, look what God paid for me, I must be wonderful.

No, we do have a treasure but lest we think too highly of ourselves Paul says we have this treasure in clay pots, earthen vessels, there's no value in the pot. The treasure is the value but it's not us, we're the pot, he's the treasure. And he says we have this treasure in earthen vessels so that the excellency of the, boy I wish I could finish that quote, it's in 2nd Corinthians, let me give you this because I, 2nd Corinthians 4 7, we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.

So God has has desired that no flesh should glory in his sight so he picks the foolish things and the weak things to confound the wise and the strong. He picks clay pots to put his treasures in, not gold pots because gold pots might draw too much attention themselves, they might think themselves have value in themselves. God picks clay pots, those that know themselves have no value so that he can put his value and his treasure in them and make use of them.

I realize that goes against the grain of about 90% of what you read in modern Christian books but it goes, what I'm Christians have always understood the Bible to say for the first 2,000 years of Christian history and if we get away from the modern psychologists, some of whom call themselves Christians but they still give pagan psychology, we'd get back into what Christianity was all about when Jesus first established it. It's being a poverty stricken beggar in terms of spiritual value. That's when you see yourself as having nothing to offer, only a recipient, a necessary recipient of God's mercy.

That's the man who goes down to his house justified, theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Let's go to the next one, blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted. Now you might say, well, okay, once you mourn and you're comforted, I guess you're back to about normal but wouldn't have been more blessing not to have to mourn in the first place.

Interestingly, the Bible speaks frequently as if it's more desirable to suffer and experience God's consolation than to never suffer and never experience his consolation. God as a comforter is something that Paul also in 2nd Corinthians emphasizes at the outset. 2nd Corinthians 1 verses 3 through 5, 2nd Corinthians 1, 3 through 5, Paul says, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation or our comfort also abounds through Christ. While you're in 2nd Corinthians, I want to show you another passage in the same book, 2nd Corinthians 7 and verse 10, well verse 9 and 10 or even verses 8 through 10. 2nd Corinthians 7, 8 through 10, for even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not regret it, though I did regret it, for I perceived that the same epistle made you sorry, though only for a while.

Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing, for godly sorrow produces repentance to salvation, not to be regretted. But the sorrow of the world produces death.

Now Paul says there's a sorrow that is not to be regretted or avoided, that sorrow that we feel under conviction, that leads us to repentance. That is a godly sorrow. And if you have that sorrow, don't regret it.

Don't try to avoid it. You know, there's hardly anything that the world naturally tries to avoid more than sorrow. Isn't that true? I mean, isn't that why people go out and get drunk? Isn't that why people try to numb their senses with sensuous behavior or with possessions or with entertainment, you know, and they just kind of vegetate in front of a video screen or video games or something to try to lose touch with the sad world, you know, that's more of a burden for them to bear than they can stand.

People do almost anything to avoid sorrow, but Paul says there are some kinds of sorrow that are not to be avoided. There are some kinds of sorrow that are godly, or as Jesus puts it, that are blessed. Blessed are those who mourn.

You know, Christians differ from non-Christians in this principal respect, namely that they have repented. They have repentant hearts. They, too, sometimes sin, just like worldly people do.

The difference is, the worldly people sin as a vocation. They make a career of it. They make a habit of it.

They sin without regrets and without repentance. The Christian sins less, hopefully, because he's chosen to follow God. He will not be as likely to sin as the person who

hasn't made such a choice, but even having made that choice, Christians sometimes, sadly, do sin.

But one thing that's very different about a Christian who sins and the non-Christian who sins is that the Christian cannot sin without regret, cannot sin without repenting afterwards, cannot sin without feeling sorry. You cannot enjoy sin if you are regenerate. This is what repentance means.

Repentance, metanoia, means change of mind. The Bible speaks of the fundamental thing about one of the foundations of Christianity is repentance from your dead works. You've changed your mind about sin.

And while it doesn't mean that you never sin, it means you'll never sin and agree with it again. You'll never think sin is okay again. You'll experience sorrow.

The person who has the benefit of feeling bad about his sins is a fortunate person, because there are many people out there who sin and they're on the road to hell and they don't feel bad. And that very sorrow is the roadblock that God puts up to keep you from continuing that direction. The conviction and the sorrow of your sin.

You're blessed to have it. And if you sorrow over your sins, you will be comforted. You'll be comforted, because you'll be forgiven.

Now mourning, of course, I don't know that Christians have to have an emotional experience of repentance. Mourning suggests it. But I think that, I think the idea is that one must have a profound sorrow.

A person cannot live in a world of rebellion against God and be on God's side without sorrow. Job lived, not Job, but Lot lived in Sodom. And it tells us in 2nd Peter chapter 2 that Lot vexed his righteous soul day after day by their unlawful deeds in Sodom.

It vexed him. It bothered him. It didn't bother him enough to get out of Sodom.

He should have done that, but he wasn't altogether uncompromised himself. But the point is that he grieved over sin. And godly people must.

Blessed is the man who can. The person who sins or sees sin and beholds sin and feels nothing is in a very dangerous spiritual situation. Because if you can't feel grief over sin, how can you possibly ever stop sinning? How can you ever even be motivated to stop sinning? You know, some Christians, their choice of entertainment leaves much to be desired.

There are Christians who find no problem watching lurid, explicitly sexual, immoral, blasphemous television programming or movies. And you know, if you raise questions about whether that's the right way for a Christian to occupy his time, his attention, it's

not uncommon for people to say, well, you know, these, you know, when I see that, when I hear those blasphemies, when I hear the Lord's name taken in vain and so forth in these movies, I don't let it affect me. It doesn't affect you.

Then you're in terrible condition if it doesn't affect you. It should affect you profoundly. It should grieve you.

It should offend you. It should be abhorrent to you. If you can sit before the tube and watch adulterous affairs take place and say, it doesn't have any effect on me, then you're writing your own death warrant.

You're basically saying, I am numb to spiritual things. I am insensitive to sin. I am beyond conviction.

I am beyond the state of feeling repulsion for sin, which every, and revulsion for sin, which every Christian should feel. Blessed is the man who's not in that terrible state. And many people calling themselves Christians are.

But those who mourn will be comforted. By the way, this brings up a very important point because many people go to counselors, even Christians go to counselors, seeking just that, comfort. They're agitated.

They're anxious. They're worried. They're depressed.

They want comfort. Many times, what the best thing someone can do for them is tell them the bad news. Tell them about their sin.

There is sin in their life. If you are anxious, you're disobeying God. He told you not to be anxious.

If you're depressed, you're disobeying God. He told you not to be depressed. He told you to rejoice.

Why aren't you doing it? He told you not to be anxious. But in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, to make your requests made known to God, and the peace of God will keep your hearts. If you have, if you've done that, you'll have the peace of God.

If you don't have the peace of God, it's because you're not doing what God said to do. That's sin. And for you to repent of that and to mourn over that is the route to actual deliverance and comfort from the problem.

But so many times, again, the Christian counselors pick up the same ideas as the non-Christian counselors. Coddle the person. Be sensitive to the person.

Don't say anything to offend the person. Tell them it's somebody else's fault. It has

something to do with the way they were raised.

It has something to do with society. It has something to do with their parents or their schooling or something like that. No, it doesn't have anything to do with that.

Unless we're using some textbook other than the Bible to tell us such things. Why not go to Jesus? Let me ask you something. If you could walk into a room for counseling and you had a choice.

There's a bunch of desks sitting there. At one desk is Carl Jung. Another desk is Sigmund Freud.

Another desk, you've got Carl Rogers. Another desk, you've got Abraham Maslow. And let's say you've got Arthur Janov with his primal scream.

And then another desk, you've got Jesus Christ. Which of these guys would you want to go to for counsel? Well, obviously, it's an absurd question because everybody makes the same answer. Of course you go to Jesus Christ.

Well, then why don't people go to Jesus Christ now? Especially Christians. Why do they go to Freud and Jung and Maslow for advice when Jesus Christ addressed all the same issues they did, only Jesus spoke the truth and those men spoke in darkness? And if they speak not according to this word, there's no light in them, the Bible says. Christians have rebelled and defected from the kingdom of God, from the truth of God, and gone after a strange God, the gods of the heathen.

And they've gone after the religious solutions of the heathen, but they don't know they have. And this is something that we need to realize. They do not find comfort.

I know Christians who've gone to Christian counselors week after week and week. Their lives don't improve. They don't get comforted.

You know why? Because those counselors never tell them their problem. Your problem is your sinning. Your problem is your self-pity.

Your problem is your refusal to believe God. Your problem is your refusal to own your sin and repent of it and mourn over it and get free. And if you do mourn, you'll be comforted, Jesus said.

But if you're simply coddled, you can live with your problem and just continually seek comfort that will be elusive to you. And I can give you a long list of people I know personally who are on that treadmill. They don't receive comfort, maybe momentary, after a counseling session.

Of course, the anxiety comes back when they see the bill, but which shows that this is not a ministry. I mean, I mean, if someone's charging money for it, it's not a ministry, it's

a business. But anyway, you can tell where my pet peeves are.

Let's go on to the next one. Blessing of the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Now that is an irony, really, because the earth, there's a lot of people who want to inherit the earth.

Adolf Hitler wanted to, the communists have wanted to. Long before that, people like Alexander the Great and Napoleon and many others have wanted to inherit the earth. And many times it seems like these guys might succeed.

There are those who believe today that the communists are going to get back into power in Russia and eventually take over the world again, or that some other anti-Christian system is going to do that. But Jesus said the opposite is true. It's not those people who will inherit the earth.

You know, the conventional wisdom would tell you that the earth will be conquered and obtained and possessed and inherited by those who are the most aggressive, the most militant, the most well-armed, the most pushy. And Jesus says, no, surprise, that's not the guys who are going to inherit the earth. The earth is going to be inherited by the meek.

And the word meek is, some translations say gentle, which is another good translation of it. But the literal meaning of the word is, the best way to understand the word meek is to say what it's the opposite of. It's the opposite of self-assertive.

The self-assertive usually assert themselves because they want to gain something for themselves, and the kingdom of God has values that are all flip-flop from that. You gain by losing. You gain by giving up.

You rise to the top by putting yourself at the bottom. You find your life by losing it. You find greatness by being a servant.

You win the world. You obtain the world. You inherit the earth by not pushing, by being meek, by turning the other cheek.

Jesus expands on these things later in the sermon somewhat more. But how can this be? People say, but if you're just a doormat, if you don't assert yourself, if you don't stand up for your rights, well, you'll just be walked all over. You'll never inherit anything but a face full of mud because people will be walking over your face.

Well, maybe. However, that doesn't take God into account very well. There is a scripture about Jesus in Isaiah chapter 11 of Messianic prophecy.

Isaiah 11 verse 4 says this about Jesus. With righteousness he shall judge the poor and decide with equity for the meek of the earth. People say, if you don't stand up for

yourself, no one else is going to do it.

Wrong. If you don't stand up for yourself, Jesus will stand up for you. Which would you rather have? You or him for your defense? Which would you rather have fighting for or pushing for you? Laying hold of your inheritance for you or him? You can afford to be meek.

You can afford to be non-self-assertive because Jesus takes the side of the meek. He judges with equity on behalf of the meek. And he is going to inherit the earth.

And the ones he's going to share it with are those who like him are gentle and meek and humble. And therefore it's not by pushing for your way. It's by releasing, giving up your rights that you really win.

And that's what Jesus says. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. They should be filled.

You know, everybody hungers and thirsts for something. Everybody's got some primal craving, some highest value that they pursue. For most people, of course, it's security or significance or maybe it's just an unbroken string of sensual pleasures.

Perhaps it's some particular level of respect or status. Maybe it's some level of affluence or standard of living that they think this is the thing that will make them happy. This is what they want.

They'll be satisfied when they obtain it. And as so many wrecked lives have shown, people sometimes do obtain those things and find out they're not satisfied. Once you reach that goal, there's another goal out there.

This is what Jesus refers to elsewhere in Matthew 13 as the deceptiveness of riches. The cares of this world, the deceptiveness of riches. It deceives you.

You get the impression if you just get this, if you just reach this one plateau, you obtain this particular goal, then you'll be satisfied. But satisfaction is elusive without God. And the ones who will be satisfied, the only ones who will, are the ones who crave righteousness, the ones who hunger and thirst for righteousness.

You hunger and thirst for something in this world. Everyone does. But if your desire, if your appetite is for the things of God, then you're blessed because God will grant you those things and you'll be satisfied.

You know, satisfaction or contentment. The world judges that contentment comes by causing your circumstances to reach the level of your desires. And basically that's what contentment or satisfaction is.

You've got your desires at a certain level and if your circumstances are at the same level

as your desires, you're content. So what if your desires are at this level and your circumstances are at a lower level? Then you're not content. You're discontented.

Now there's two ways to resolve that, to find satisfaction or contentment. The world's way is to seek to bring my circumstances up to the level of my desires. And if I can do it, I believe I'll have satisfaction.

But Jesus says no, there's another way. You can reduce your desires to the level of your circumstances and be content with such things you have. You can say my hunger is just to be right with God and I have that already.

Therefore I can be content with that. As long as my desires don't exceed what God wants me to have, I'll never have unfulfilled desires. As long as I can limit my desires to the level of what God has in his providence given me in my circumstances, then I will be a satisfied person.

And only those who have chosen to seek the kingdom of God in his righteousness and hunger after righteousness are guaranteed satisfaction because they will be given what they desire. They may not be given much more in this world. That's okay.

They don't crave anything more. What they're hungry for, they obtain. And only such people as obtain what they're hungry for, or to put another way, who are hungry for the very thing that they obtain, are satisfied.

And so to be filled or satisfied, as some translations put it, is the blessing of those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Now there's much to say on this, most of which I don't have time to say.

Suffice it to say that mercy is seen in two ways in the Bible. It's exhibited in two ways. One is with respect to how you react toward human misery, and the other is in respect to how you react toward human guilt.

Are you a merciful person? Well, if you see human misery, mercy will compel you to do something about it, to relieve it, to do something to help the poor, to relieve the afflicted, to minister to the hurting and the sick. That's what mercy does. Jesus was moved with compassion to heal the sick and so forth, because that's what mercy is.

It's compassion. And therefore, mercy motivates you with respect to your dealings with the people who are in misery, but also with those who have guilt, because mercy forgives. And lack of mercy doesn't forgive.

That's the principal difference between mercy and unmercy. Now Jesus said that the merciful person will obtain mercy. He didn't say from whom, but I think from other passages of Scripture we can deduce he means from God.

God will show mercy to the merciful and only to them. James takes this statement and rephrases it, same statement though. He says he shall have judgment without mercy, who is shown no mercy.

That's in James, what, James chapter 2, I think it is. Let me grab it if I have time here. I'm really racing against the clock now, but I want to give you this here.

It's James 2, 13. For judgment is without mercy to the one who is shown no mercy. Same thing Jesus said.

Bless her, the merciful, they shall obtain mercy. James says the same thing, only in the negative. The person who is shown no mercy will not obtain any mercy.

Jesus put it this way in Matthew chapter 6, verses 14 and 15. Matthew 6, 14 and 15. If you don't forgive men their trespasses, excuse me, if you do forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you.

But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive you your trespasses. This statement is echoed two other times in Jesus' teaching. It's something Jesus said repeatedly.

He said it also in Mark 11, I think it's 25 and 26. You don't have time to turn there right now. It's essentially the same statement, but a different occasion.

And he said it in a lengthy way in Matthew chapter 18 when he gave a parable about a forgiven servant who wouldn't forgive his fellow servant and was punished for it. And God, Jesus said, that's what my Father did to you. If you don't forgive, you won't be forgiven either.

There are a number of places that Jesus says this. It's stated by James. It's stated even in the Old Testament that the one who shows mercy will obtain mercy.

Psalms 41, for example. Psalm 41, verses 1 through 4, actually have a beatitude of the same type. Almost the same, not exactly the same words, but certainly the same concept.

And it's even stated in a beatitude form. In Psalm 41, 1 through 4, blessed is he, that's a beatitude, blessed is he who considers the poor. The Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.

The Lord will preserve him and keep him alive and he will be blessed on the earth. You will not deliver him to the will of his enemies. The Lord will strengthen him on his bed of illness and will sustain him on his sickbed.

I said, Lord, be merciful to me. I want God to be merciful to me. Well, God will be merciful to the one who is merciful.

He who has pity on the poor, that person will have God's pity. That person who is merciful in his dealings with others, both in terms of practical help to those who are in need and in terms of forgiving those who offend you and those who have guilt, you want the same kind of treatment from God? You better make sure that's what you do, because only those who are disposed toward mercy are even on the list of people that God is going to show any mercy to, says the Bible, says Jesus many times. I don't know why it's omitted so much from preaching, but it's certainly not omitted from frequent reference in the Bible.

Next beatitude, Matthew 5, 8, blessed are the pure in heart, they shall see God. Frustrating that I don't have time to go into all the precedents for this. The principal precedent seems to be Matthew 24, 3 through 5. Did I say Matthew? Psalm 24, 3 through 5. I don't know why I said Matthew.

This apparently is where Jesus gets his language for this beatitude, though there are a number of other places in the Bible that the thought is conveyed. In Psalm 24, 3, it says, who may ascend to the hill of the Lord, who may stand in his holy place. He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol nor sworn deceitful, he shall receive blessing.

That's a blessed man. He shall receive blessing from the Lord and righteousness from the God of his salvation. The person who has a pure heart shall be blessed.

Jesus said, blessed are the pure in heart. The psalmist says that person will ascend to the hill of the Lord, that person will stand in his holy place, that person will look upon God. Jesus said the same thing.

Blessed are the pure in heart, they shall see God. The pure in heart, the word pure means undiluted. It means your heart is holy in one direction.

It's not, you don't have mixed motives. You don't want God and something else. You just want God.

Like David in Psalm 27, 4 said, one thing have I desired of the Lord and that will I seek after, that I might dwell in the house of the Lord and behold the beauty of the Lord and inquire in his temple. That one thing, that single-minded, that pure and undividedness of heart, those people alone will see God. God doesn't just go showing himself to everybody who's half-hearted about it.

It's a great privilege to see God and he only gives it to those who will seek him with their whole heart. That's what Jeremiah said in Jeremiah 29, 13. You shall seek me and you shall find me when you shall search for me with your whole heart.

That's what pure in heart means. No mixed motives, no dilution, no pollution of other agendas. Just to know God, just to be with God, just to please God.

If that's where your heart's at, then you'll see God. It's guaranteed. There are two other beatitudes.

Unfortunately, I'm gonna have to take them in the next Life of Christ session because we've run out of time. To have covered six is an astonishment in one session, but we'll cover the last two along with some of the rest of the material before us in our next Life of Christ session. Are there any questions about any...