

# OpenTheo

## Beatitudes (Part 1)



### **The Life and Teachings of Christ** - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg explores the Beatitudes found in Matthew chapter 5 and Luke chapter 6. He notes the similarities and differences between the two versions of the sermon and highlights the main differences in the Beatitudes. Gregg emphasizes that the Beatitudes are not about material poverty but rather a spiritual condition, and that they give the Church a different set of marching orders than those given to Israel. He also discusses the idea that being blessed does not necessarily mean being admired by others, but instead may involve persecution for righteousness' sake.

### **Transcript**

I'd like for you to turn to Matthew chapter 5, and once you've done that, put your finger or some other kind of marker in the page, and also locate Luke chapter 6. We have at both of these places the beginning of probably the most famous sermon of Jesus. I don't know if it's the most famous anymore. I would say throughout history the Sermon on the Mount has been the best-known sermon of Jesus, and the best-known sayings of Jesus come from this sermon.

Certainly there's a great number of things in this sermon that are known even among the unsaved. Many of them don't know where they learned them from or who it was that said it, but many things commonly said, even by unbelievers, come out of this sermon. It's an extremely famous sermon.

Nowadays, with the modern emphasis on eschatology and so forth, it may be, sadly, the case that all of the discourse has eclipsed the Sermon on the Mount in terms of familiarity. If that is so, it's a great tragedy, and it certainly reflects on the spiritual mood of our time. I don't know that it has.

I guess you'd have to take a poll of everybody and ask what statements of Jesus they're more familiar with. For example, I don't know if there's more people in the world now familiar with Jesus saying, there shall be wars and rumors of wars in diverse places, or whether they're familiar with him saying, turn the other cheek. If one strikes you on the right cheek, I think that all of the discourse has, in the minds of some, certainly gotten

more emphasis than the more practical teachings of Jesus found in the Sermon on the Mount.

Now, I had you turn to Luke 6 as well as Matthew 5, because we have what appears to be the same sermon in both places, but they're not the same exactly. Now, as we've been going through the Gospels and comparing them with one another, we're, of course, by now familiar with the phenomenon of differences in the way that the different Gospels relate the same information. Matthew, in particular, has not adhered to a strictly chronological arrangement of his material.

In fact, Matthew's Gospel seems to group deliberately the sayings of Jesus into five discourses. And each of these discourses would appear to be a sort of a conglomerate of many different things that Jesus said on different occasions. This is not in any sense a criticism of Matthew, it's simply a recognition of his method of grouping the material.

The first major discourse of Christ found in the Book of Matthew is the one that we now begin studying, the Sermon on the Mount. It's found in Matthew chapters 5 and 6 and 7. It's the longest of the discourses of Christ found in Matthew. There is also a major discourse of Christ found in chapter 10 of Matthew.

Another in chapter 13, which is all made up of parables of the kingdom. There is another discourse in chapter 18, a major discourse on relationships. And there is, of course, the Olivet Discourse in chapters 24 and 25 of Matthew.

These are the five major blocks of teaching that Matthew has arranged Jesus' teachings into. Now, in saying that Matthew has arranged it this way, we base that on the comparison of Matthew with the other Gospels. We have seen at another time that the Olivet Discourse, for example, which is found in Matthew chapters 24 and 25, is actually a composite of two different discourses found in different places in Luke.

One in Luke chapter 17 and one in Luke 21. And that's easy to demonstrate. We did so before, we won't take the time to do so now.

We'll have time to look at that again some other time. Likewise, the discourse in Matthew chapter 10, which is called the Missionary Discourse, where Jesus sent out the Twelve and gave instructions. Much of the things that he said in that discourse are found in another discourse in Luke chapter 10 when he sent out the Seventy.

But some of them are found in other parts of Luke or Mark's Gospel and seem to have been brought into the discourse in Matthew by Matthew in order to put things together that are on the same topic. And we can certainly see that to be true of a number of different things that Jesus said in different places. In the other Gospels, they're brought together topically in Matthew.

Now, I say that because when we compare Matthew 5 through 7, which is Matthew's

version of the Sermon on the Mount, with Luke chapter 6, we find much of the same kind of material. Beginning in Luke chapter 6, verse 20, we have a series of Beatitudes, which are statements that begin with the expression, Blessed, a pronouncement of a certain blessing or blessedness of a certain class of persons. Matthew 5 begins this way, and so does the discourse in Luke chapter 6. And there are many similarities, but some dissimilarities too.

We also find in the remainder of Luke chapter 6, virtually all of the material in the remainder of Luke chapter 6 is also found in Matthew's version of the Sermon on the Mount. It's parallel, in many cases word for word. And Luke chapter 6 ends with the parable of the house built on rock, as opposed to the house built on sand, which is exactly the way the Sermon on the Mount ends at the end of Matthew chapter 7. Now, what I'm saying is that the discourse found in Luke chapter 6 begins and ends in the same manner as the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew.

It also, all the material in between the beginning and the end in Luke chapter 6, is also parallel to material in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew. The differences, however, are as follows. The discourse in Luke is much shorter.

Obviously, it only occupies half a chapter, whereas in Matthew the discourse occupies three entire chapters. So the Luke passage is shorter. There is another thing that has been perceived as a problem.

I do not see it as a problem, but I might as well familiarize you with it. It says in verse 17 of Luke, Luke 6, 17, He came down with them and stood on a level place with a crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and from the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear him and be healed of their diseases, as well as those who were tormented with unclean spirits, and they were healed. And the whole multitude sought to touch him, for power went out from him and healed them all.

Then he lifted up his eyes toward his disciples and said, that is, he began the discourse. Now, if you will compare that with Matthew 5.1, it says, See, in the multitudes he went up on a mountain, and when he was seated his disciples came to him, and he opened his mouth and taught them, saying, and there is the discourse. Now, the principal difference between these two passages is that in Matthew it says that Jesus ascended a mountain and sat down with his disciples and taught this discourse, which is why it's called the Sermon on the Mount.

It says he went up a mountain. In Luke, however, we are told in verse 17, he came down from a mountain. He actually had gone up on a mountain in verse 12 of Luke 6. He went up there to pray all night on a mountain before selecting the twelve.

And now in Luke 6.17, he came down with them and stood on a level place with the crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people following and so forth. And so,

some have called this sermon in Luke chapter 6 the Sermon on the Plain. In fact, the King James Version actually says he came down to a plain.

And it seems obvious, at least to many observers, that a plain and a mountain are not the same kind of topographical features, and therefore we have different settings for these two discourses. And it is believed by many that Jesus gave similar discourses twice. That he gave two different discourses, one on a mountain and one on a plain.

Now, there is a ready solution to this problem, and that is, of course, Luke has already told us earlier in the chapter that Jesus had gone up onto a mountain. He only tells us in Luke 6.17 that Jesus came down the mountain to a level place. It doesn't say that he came all the way down to the bottom of the mountain.

Depending on the mountain, no one knows exactly which one it was. There may well have been, along the slope downward, there may have been a place where it leveled out for a bit before it continued its descent, which Jesus found as a convenient place to gather his disciples around him and speak. We can't rule this out.

In which case, the sermon would be both on a level place and on a mountain, and both passages could agree. Now, there doesn't seem to be very much at stake in determining this. That is to say, it doesn't make a whole heck of a lot of difference whether there were two sermons that were similar to each other or whether it was one sermon.

The main things at stake are simply this. On the one hand, if there are two separate sermons, then we have the phenomenon of Jesus saying almost verbatim the same words to the same group of people, his disciples, on two different occasions. Now, that's not always ill-advised.

Good teachers do repeat themselves, as you've noticed. And what year was Jerusalem destroyed? You see, you've heard me say it enough, you know the answer. But if I had never repeated it, you might have forgotten.

Repetition is an important part of teaching. And Jesus might have given the same discourse twice to his disciples just to make sure they didn't forget it. That is not impossible.

Although the discourses are so similar that it's, you know, it just strikes one. Maybe it doesn't strike you, but it's sort of a subjective thing. Some feel that it would be very strange for him to give such similar discourses, exactly so similar as they are, on two different occasions with the same audience.

But again, that may not be a strong objection. It may be something that is easily overcome. To suggest that the two are recording the same discourse, namely that Matthew and Luke are recording the same discourse of Christ, involves a few problems.

One would be, why is Luke's discourse so much shorter? Now, that's not a real serious problem because we've already seen that Matthew tends to take actual discourses of Jesus and add other sayings of Jesus, that Jesus spoke on other occasions about the same subject, and report them at the same time. And we could easily see Matthew chapters 5 through 7 as a sort of beefed up version of this discourse. And that is not to say that Matthew fabricated anything, but that he had a ready source of sayings of Jesus.

He was one of the twelve. He'd heard Jesus speak on hundreds of occasions. And he remembered many things Jesus said on similar subjects.

And in recording this particular discourse, he broadened it and expanded it by inclusion of additional things that Jesus said on similar subjects, and treated it as if it were all one discourse. And that is not unlike Matthew to do. In fact, it's quite agreeable with his general procedure.

One of the other problems, however, is in the comparison of the two sets of beatitudes. And that is what is our concern in this session, the two sets of beatitudes. In Matthew, there are eight beatitudes.

And by definition, a beatitude starts with the word blessed. Eight times in a row, Jesus says, Then he gives the category of people who are said to be blessed in Matthew 5. That is in verses 3 through 10. There is an eighth blessed in verse 11, but it's mainly a restatement of the previous one.

That is a ninth blessed, excuse me. There are eight distinct beatitudes in Matthew. In Luke, however, there are four beatitudes and four woes.

He says three things about blessed categories, and he says, excuse me, he says four things about them, and four things about categories of people who are to be pitied. Woe unto them. This we see, of course, in Luke 6, 20 through 26.

And I'd like to, first of all, read both sets of beatitudes, just so that you'll get a familiarity with what we're talking about here. Then I'd like to observe, first of all, the differences between them, and then go into their meaning individually, if we have, we certainly need to try to take the time to do that. I'd like to read, first of all, the beatitudes as they occur in Matthew 5, verses 3 through 10.

Jesus said, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Then he expands on that final one, in verse 11.

Blessed are you when men revile and persecute you. The main difference being here, he now says you, rather than they, or those. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for my sake.

Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. So, after the last beatitude about, blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, he personalizes it and says that means even you. When you're persecuted, you're blessed too, and you should rejoice, and be glad you're in the company of the prophets of God who were persecuted in like manner before you were.

Now, if you look over at the set of beatitudes in Luke 6, you'll see immediately as we read them, certain similarities and dissimilarities. A strange mixture of similarities and dissimilarities, actually. In Luke 6.20, it says, Then he lifted up his eyes toward his disciples and said, Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you and revile you, and cast out your name as evil for the son of man's sake.

Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for indeed your reward is great in heaven, for in like manner their fathers did to the prophets. But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe to you who are full, for you shall hunger.

Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the prophets. Now, excuse me, the false prophets.

That's a very important word in that statement. So did their fathers to the false prophets, they spoke well of them. Now, a set of observations initially to help us understand these.

I already made the first observation, mainly that there are eight statements in each case, but in Matthew they are all Beatitudes. In Luke half of them are Beatitudes and the other half are woes. Another observation is that in Luke, the four Beatitudes are the exact mirror opposites of the four woes.

The first Beatitude is, blessed are you poor. The first woe is, woe to you who are rich. The second Beatitude, blessed are you who hunger now.

The second woe is, woe to you who are full, for you shall hunger. The third Beatitude, blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. But the third woe, woe to you who

laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.

And finally, in verse 22, blessed are you when men hate you. But in verse 26, woe to you when all men speak well of you. So we can see that the woes are not just a haphazardly collected group of woes.

They are the exact opposite side of the coin of the group of Beatitudes that Luke has included. Now, which way did Jesus actually teach this? Well, again, if we say this is two different sermons, as some are content to say, which is a possibility, then we could say he did both. And that solves all the problems of differences.

Jesus could certainly stylize it a little differently in different times. The interesting thing, though, is how much the rest of the sermon is alike in Matthew and Luke, but the Beatitudes are where the main differences are seen. The other possibility is that Matthew, very probably, is, again, making his own collection of Beatitudes and even including some Beatitudes spoken on other occasions besides this sermon, but bringing them in because there are other instances where Jesus said similar things to what he actually said on the occasion of this sermon.

Now, a Beatitude is simply a statement of what it is that makes a man truly enviable. What makes a person enviable? Well, if you can answer that question, then you have discovered a system of values. In fact, if you can discover what it is that causes you to tend to be envious of others, you will be able to identify what your values are.

If you value, if you envy those who are wealthy, well, then that says something about the value you place upon wealth. If you value those who are healthy, who are popular, who are famous, then that would say a lot about your assessment that you make of the value of those things. A Beatitude, essentially, is a statement of values, a declaration of what is the highest good, what is the most enviable state.

Now, commentators point out that the word blessed here, which in the Greek is *makarios*, actually means happy, though while that is true, it has a broader meaning than that. If you consult something like the Amplified Bible, which tries to give every nuance of the given word, it would render at the beginning of each of these Beatitudes a great string of alternate renderings of this word *makarios*. Blessed, fortunate, enviable, or I think to be envied is the way they put it.

Happy, all these are given as alternate renderings. Some people would struggle a little with the word happy in these cases, because there are statements then like happier those who mourn, and happier those who weep and lose. It doesn't seem like the state of a person who is happy to be weeping or mourning.

And while the person might be a generally happy person, they would not appear to be happy at the moment that they're weeping. And therefore, enviable might perhaps catch

the thought a little more. The person who really has the blessing of God, even though he may not be realizing it in terms of his emotional happiness at the moment, he is nonetheless in an enviable condition.

He is a blessed person. When you read the Psalms, you encounter Beatitudes all the time. In fact, the very opening line of the book of Psalms is a Beatitude.

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly. That's a Beatitude. Blessed is that man.

Blessed is that kind of person. In the very second Psalm, Psalm 2, I think it's verse 12, it says blessed are those who put their trust in him. Another Beatitude.

And throughout the Psalms you have it. Blessed are those who fear the Lord. Blessed are those in whom the Lord is their, whose trust is the Lord.

Blessed are those whose strength is the Lord. And many others. In fact, there are many parallels to the Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount in this altar.

And when we go through these individually, I'd like to point this out, how many of the sayings of Jesus in this group of Beatitudes are actually just restatements of things that were said in the Psalms, which tells us that while Jesus' Beatitudes no doubt sounded radical to his hearers, they were not radical in any sense of being new. They were things God had said back in the Old Testament. But just like the church in our own time, the Jews in Jesus' time had plenty of light in the Scriptures that they weren't paying careful attention to because much tradition had been heaped on top of it.

And we know that the problem Jesus encountered was not that his teachings were in conflict with the Old Testament, but that his teachings were in conflict with the interpretations and traditions of the Pharisees and the scribes of the time. I think I could say that you will not find anything in the teachings of Jesus, that is, any of the moral or ethical teachings of Jesus, that do not have their precedence and their antecedent in the Old Testament. But he often had to correct wrong views on such things.

God's opinion about ethics has not changed. God doesn't change in that respect about what's right and wrong. He does sometimes give different orders to different people.

He gives the church a different set of marching orders than he gave to Israel, for example. But that doesn't mean that God has changed his mind about what things are good and what things are bad. Ethics are absolute.

Morals don't change. And therefore, it shouldn't surprise us that when Jesus sets out to lay out the ethical values of the kingdom of God, they are not at all in conflict with... In fact, they have all their precedence in the Old Testament itself. And I'll seek to show in a little while how this is the case in each instance.



But the man who is blessed of God is the man who fits these descriptions. Now, there's Beatitudes of Jesus elsewhere in his teachings that are not in this particular discourse. For example, we know that he said, when Thomas finally believed in his resurrection, he said, you have believed because you have seen.

But blessed are those who, having not seen, yet believe. That's a Beatitude, is it not? Blessed are those who, having not seen, yet believe. Jesus, when he talked about being like a master going away and leaving his servants in charge of things, he said, blessed is that servant who, when his master comes, shall find him so doing.

That, too, is a Beatitude. Blessed is the servant who is doing what he's supposed to be doing when his master comes. There's a number of ways in the New Testament that we have such Beatitudes expressed.

There's one occasion when a woman in the crowd said to Jesus, blessed is the woman that bore you, and blessed are the breasts that nourished you. And Jesus said, more blessed are those who hear the word of God and do it. And that is obviously another Beatitude.

Jesus said, in another place, if you know these things, happy are you or blessed are you if you do them. So there's a lot of times when Jesus' teaching was characterized by these short sayings, which were a statement of what is desirable, what is enviable, what is a blessing and what isn't a blessing. You know, that's something that we need to get straightened out right away.

Jesus gave this sermon immediately after the choice of the twelve apostles. These men were going to be the leaders and teachers of his church after he left. And one thing he had to get right from the beginning was he had to reorientate their system of values.

It should not be surprising if God's values are different than our values are, or than society's values. In fact, we should expect it to be so. In Isaiah, chapter 55, God said, my ways are not your ways, my thoughts are not your thoughts.

As high as the heaven is above the earth, so high are my ways above your ways and my thoughts above your thoughts. So it should follow, I think, obviously, that if God doesn't think the way we do, then in all likelihood he has things that he considers important that we don't. And things that we think are important, sometimes he doesn't agree in that assessment.

In fact, in one place, Jesus said in Luke 16, 15, in Luke 16, 15, Jesus said at the end of that verse, for what is highly esteemed, we could read valued, among men is an abomination in the sight of God. Now here, the thing that is highly valued by man is not only held in lesser value by God, but is negatively valued by God. It's an abomination to him.

Which tells us that when we, in our natural state, come to a point of conversion, to become Christians, that we probably are orientated all the wrong way. We probably are valuing those things that God hates, and we are devaluing the things that God thinks are important. There's a song by the Sweet Comfort Band on their first album, many years ago, they came out with, I don't remember the words to most of the song, but there's one line in there that I always thought was very powerful to me, different things move different people, but it was very meaningful to me.

The line is, that which I feared most, he's talking about the change from being converted from his former life, he says, that which I feared most is that which is most precious to me now. And that speaks well of the very essential and fundamental change that takes place when one becomes a Christian. Fundamentally, an unbeliever is self-centered.

A Christian has repented, that means they've had a change of mind, that means they don't think the same way they used to. And the fundamental difference, of course, is that the unbeliever lives for self. The believer lives for God and seeks to please God.

And that is a fundamental way of thinking, and that, of course, colors our view of everything worldly, of every experience that comes our way, of every state of life that God may put us in. Things that we may have feared may be the things that we value and treasure now. Things that we thought were all important before, now we see, as Paul did, the thing that was gained to me, I now count, he says, as dung and worthless, in Philippians chapter 3. He said, all those things that I could boast in before, all those things that seemed to be to my advantage, he said, I count them as refuse, I count them as dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.

So, that which was important before you're saved ceases to be after you're saved. If you haven't undergone any fundamental changes in this area, there's some question, not necessarily about your conversion so much, it's just about the process of discipleship that you've been through. There may even be a question about conversion in such a case, but I don't have any such questions about any of the people here, about questioning their conversion.

But in many cases, though we have been converted, we've never gone through the process of being disciplined. And that's what Jesus wanted to make sure his disciples didn't miss out on. They were his disciples, so he had to disciple them.

And when you disciple people, you disciple their attitudes, you disciple their values first. If you just begin by disciplining people and don't do that and don't do that, it's going to be hard. You're going to have to babysit them all the time, because they're going to have fundamental values that are still all wrong, and they'll be acting against their embraced values, because they're going to be doing what you tell them to do.

They'll do the right thing, but it won't be consistent with their whole system of outlook of

life. But if you reorientate them in the way of understanding what is desirable, what is undesirable, then, of course, the right actions will follow quite naturally. Once your heart is in the right place, everything else follows naturally.

It says in Proverbs 4.23, no, Proverbs 4, yeah, no, I think it's 4.18. It says, guard your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life. Once you've got your heart in the right place, the rest of the issues of your life will flow naturally from that, like the waters of a river from the spring. And so, to get their hearts in the right place first, to get their whole way of looking at things that are desirable and undesirable is the first order of business for Jesus.

And this is something that I think a lot of leaders in the church today have kind of caved in on, and they've sought to teach some kind of Christian morality, but they haven't really instilled the value system of Christ. I mean, it's very common, for example, now, for Christians to try to persuade the members of their congregation to, oh, witness for Christ, to give their money to missions, to take a stand against abortion and homosexuality and things like that, all of which are perhaps good things to do, but unless you establish the right value system with these people, those behaviors are not going to agree with their basic fundamental makeup. If they still love money, if they still don't know how to trust God, if they still are fearful and insecure about finances, you can twist their arm to give to missions.

But if you can get them to value missions above their own well-being, then they'll give naturally, you see. I have a relative in Santa Cruz who said he doesn't understand his church. He said it's full of really enthusiastic Christian people, active Christian people.

The pastor teaches really good sermons. He's kind of a socially active kind of pastor, so he gets them out there protesting abortion clinics and things like that. And he says these people are real go-getters and everything, but he says, I don't understand.

He says the parking lot's full of Mercedes and BMWs and Porsches, and he says these people are just as materialistic as anyone else in the world is. He said, I just don't understand what's going on. Well, I can't say that I know either because I've never heard his pastor teach, but I suspect that I know what's going on, and that is that the pastor's trying to get these people socially active and living out their faith, but he's never really addressed the basic problems of their wrong value systems.

Anybody, in my opinion, who drives a Porsche or a BMW has put a value on that kind of a car that is not very consistent with what the Bible teaches about such matters. They put a value on status. They put a value on waste.

They put a value on luxury. They put a value on things, all of which are contrary to the values of Christ. Now, notice I didn't say these people aren't Christians.

That's not a judgment for me to make, but such people do not exhibit values that are consistent with Christian teaching. And if you don't get to a person's values first, then you won't make a fundamental change in their life. Remember when Jesus told the disciples for the first time at Caesarea Philippi that he was going to go to the cross? Peter says, no, Lord, this can't happen.

This shouldn't be. We'll save you. And Jesus' answer to him was, get behind me, Satan.

You're an offense to me. He said, because you do not savor, read value, you don't savor the things of God. You savor the things of man.

You still think that avoiding pain, avoiding crucifixion, avoiding a cross is an all-important thing because that's how men think. But that's not how God thinks. Your values have yet to be transformed.

And this is what Jesus starts out with here, trying to do in some respects, trying to point out to the disciples that the enviable person is the man you would least expect, the one the world doesn't envy at all. In fact, in some respects, the one that the world disdains or pities is the one who is really the more fortunate inside of God in many cases because the things that are highly valued by men are an abomination to God. And it follows that the things that are highly valued by God are neglected or even hated by man or even feared by men in their natural value system they have.

Let's look for a moment at the Beatitudes in Luke. There are four of them, Luke 6, 20 through 23. We don't really need to comment probably on the woes since they're just the mirror opposites of each of the Beatitudes.

But it says, Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.

And blessed are you when men hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and cast out your name as evil for the son of man's sake. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for indeed your reward is great in heaven, for in like manner their fathers did to the prophets. Now, would that be the way we would naturally look at things? You look at a person who's poor, a person who's hungry, a person who's crying, a person who's hated by virtually everybody, friendless, homeless, meal-less.

These people don't seem to be the ones that the world envies. And yet Jesus singles these people out for a special blessing. Now, Jesus doesn't just say these kinds of things just to go against the grain and to be esoteric and without any kind of rational basis.

He gives a reason. There's a reason why such people should regard themselves as blessed. The blessed poor are those who have the kingdom of God, so that in spite of the fact that they don't have much in this life, they have that which is a pearl of great price and a treasure of inestimable worth, which the rich man who lacks the kingdom of God

does not possess and has much to be pitied for.

Jesus had much to say about that elsewhere. But he says it here in Luke 6.24, Woe to you who are rich, for you have your consolation. Later in Luke, chapter 16, there's a story of Lazarus, a poor man, and his rich neighbor, and they both died.

And the rich man found himself burning in flames and said, Please, Father Abraham, send Lazarus down here to dip his finger in water and cool my tongue. I'm tormented in these flames. And Abraham's response was, Son, in your lifetime you had all the good things of life.

And Lazarus had nothing. But now he's comforted, and you're where you are. It's interesting.

He doesn't say, You died in unbelief. You died a wicked man. All he said is, You had all the comforts you wanted.

You had your consolation. And you want it now, too? Let's be reasonable. You want to have your cake and eat it? There's a price tag on everything.

If you want the world, you can have it. Well, you probably can't have it, because the devil doesn't give it to everybody. But you can have that pursuit if you'd like it.

But there's a price tag on it. It'll cost you Jesus. On the other hand, if you want Jesus, you can have him.

But there's a price tag on that. It'll cost you the world. You've got to forsake the world.

You've got to hate your life in this world. It says in John chapter, I think it's in John chapter 8 or 12 or somewhere like that, Jesus made that statement. He that hates his life in this world will find it.

He that loves his life in this world will lose it. And so there's a sense in which the man who's poor but in the kingdom is a blessed man. Now, I want to make something clear.

Not every poor person is blessed. There are some poor people who live miserably and die miserably and go to hell and are miserable forever. The world's full of people like that.

Jesus is not denying that. He's not saying every man who's poor is ipso facto a blessed person just because he's poor. He says, blessed are you poor.

And the particular poor he's speaking to are the disciples. Now, he doesn't say they're blessed because they're poor. They happen to be poor.

And because they are poor, because they've forsaken everything to follow Jesus, the

world doesn't think of them as enviable. But Jesus says, though you are poor, I think this is the import of the statement, though you are poor, yet because you are my disciples, because you possess the kingdom of God, you are really the ones who are rich in the ways that matter. And therefore, you are the ones that men will someday envy.

And if they understood things as clearly as I do, they'd envy you now because you're in an enviable position to have Jesus even though you don't have the world. I don't think we should try to transform this kind of statement into a blanket statement about poverty, that poverty is now something that is to be desired, and that is something that the people who are in poverty are more fortunate than people who are not in poverty. Some, of course, could take the words of Jesus and try to make that from them.

But remember, that's the difference between Luke and Matthew. In Luke, it's blessed are you poor, blessed are you who eat, blessed are you who are hungry. In Matthew, it's more generic, blessed are the so-and-so, blessed are these, blessed are those.

But in Luke, he's speaking specifically to the disciples about their own circumstances. You are poor, but don't worry about it. You're rich.

You're really rich because yours is the kingdom of God. You're hungry now? Sure, they had to miss meals from time to time. So did Jesus in his ministry.

But they are blessed because they will be filled. He said, you're weeping now? Now, I don't know if his disciples were weeping at the moment. But they might be grieving.

They were separated, in some cases, from their homes, from their families. They might have been homesick. They might have even incurred the displeasure, maybe the alienation of some of their family members by following Jesus.

Jesus spoke at times as if that was the case. But he says, but you'll have your occasion to be rejoicing. You'll laugh in the future.

And he said, blessed are you when men hate you. Now, I don't know that the disciples were hated by very many at this point. Jesus was actually at one of his more popular crests at this point when he spoke this sermon.

But there were already Pharisees and Sadducees and Herodians and scribes who were plotting to kill Jesus. And obviously, they hated Jesus and they probably hated the disciples as well, if they knew them. By becoming followers of Jesus, they had invited the scorn and the hatred of at least some very powerful people in society.

And eventually, the whole nation was going to turn against Jesus and his disciples, at least briefly. And so, Jesus warns them about this. If men hate you, don't take it badly.

You're blessed. The prophets of old were treated the same way. You're simply in the

company of the best people.

And woe to you if the opposite is true of you. Woe to you if you're laughing now. The people who are laughing when they should be weeping will have their occasion to weep in the end when the tables have turned.

If you're full now, like the rich man in the story of Lazarus and the rich man, you'll have time to be empty and hunger and to crave, but you'll have no fulfillment. And if everyone speaks well of you now, he says, woe unto you. That's how the false prophets were treated.

Everyone liked them too. Paul put it this way in Galatians 1.10. He said, if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. You can't do both.

You can't serve two masters, Jesus said later in the Sermon on the Mount. You can't curry the favor of a world that hates Jesus and still follow Jesus. You can't serve God and be a man pleaser too.

And therefore, if everyone speaks well of you, it's simply a good indicator that you're not following Jesus very closely. If the world hates Jesus, but they don't hate you, what's wrong with you? The very things that cause them to hate Jesus should cause them to hate you if you're enough like him. If they don't hate you and they do hate Jesus, that's simply an insult to you.

It means that you don't have enough of Jesus in you. You don't look enough like Jesus. You don't act enough like Jesus.

For them to feel as comfortable around you as they would if Jesus were here. You should be as much like Jesus as you can be. And if you are, Paul said in 2 Timothy, all who will live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

And so if everyone speaks well of you, if you don't have anyone who's ever been alienated from you by your stand for Christ, you may not be taking much of a stand for Christ. Because the world is not going to love you. Some people will admire you.

There's always some decent folks who are probably on their way to becoming Christians themselves, if the truth were known, but who will not think evil of a good person. But there's plenty out there who will. And they'll be convicted by your presence and find you very offensive if you take a stand for righteousness.

Because a stand for righteousness generally means a stand against the way they're living. And a lot of people don't like that much. Now, let's look at Matthew's version.

One thing interesting about Matthew's version compared with Luke's is that in a couple of places, Luke's Beatitudes, two of them are just like the ones in Matthew. With minor

exceptions. I mean, Luke says, Blessed are you who weep now, you shall laugh.

Matthew has a Beatitude very much like that. In Matthew 5.4, Blessed are you those who mourn, they shall be comforted. It's not the exact same wording, but it seems very, very similar.

At least fundamentally, it's not any different thought. Likewise, the last Beatitude in both cases is the same. Blessed are you when you're persecuted for righteousness' sake.

Be glad in that day. Rejoice. Luke actually says, Leap for joy when that happens.

So there are two Beatitudes in Luke that are almost identical in thought to those in Matthew. But the other two in Luke bear some resemblance to a couple of Beatitudes in Matthew, but they have a slight difference. For example, the first Beatitude in Luke is, Blessed are you poor.

But the first Beatitude in Matthew is, Blessed are the poor in spirit. The second Beatitude in Luke is, Blessed are you who are hungry. But in Matthew 5.6, there's one, Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.

Now, the way Luke's version reads, you simply have people who are poor and hungry. And there's no reason to believe that he's talking anything other than about their outward circumstances. He's saying that blessedness is available, and it can be experienced, despite adverse outward conditions.

You may be hungry, you may be poor, but that does not prevent you from having the blessings of the kingdom of God. But in Matthew, the two Beatitudes that resemble those two in Luke are changed a bit, if they're not different Beatitudes altogether. It's possible, of course, Jesus made both statements on different occasions.

It's also possible that Matthew, because of his being an inspired apostle, was able to, by inspiration, interpret the essence of what Jesus was saying in those Beatitudes. Jesus may have actually said, Blessed are you poor, but Matthew, by the Holy Spirit, knew that what he meant was not simply people who don't have money, but people who are poor in spirit. A spiritual condition, not an economic condition.

Likewise, when Jesus said, Blessed are you who are hungry, it's not so much lacking food, but having a craving for righteousness. Again, a spiritual condition. Matthew tends to spiritualize those two Beatitudes, if indeed they are the same ones.

And we can't determine with certainty whether that's so, so we'll just talk with this degree of uncertainty. It doesn't matter. Because even if we allow that Jesus made all the separate statements in the way that they're found in Luke and the ones in Matthew, that's no problem.



They all are quite consistent with Jesus' teaching. But this is a difference to be observed. Matthew has, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for Luke's, Blessed are you poor.

Matthew has, Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for Luke's, Blessed are you who are hungry. Now, looking at Matthew, these eight Beatitudes, as I said, virtually all of them have Old Testament precedence. I'm not saying that all of them are direct quotes from the Old Testament, but some of them come very close to it.

In fact, none of them is an exact quote from the Old Testament, but several of them, almost all of them, have extremely close parallels, especially in the Psalms, but not excluded to the Psalms. The first of them, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. This resembles the latter part of the first Beatitude in Luke.

Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. I might as well point out now, if I have not done so before, the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God are simply interchangeable terms. Now, I say this, and I make this point, because that is not an understanding universally held among Christians.

Some Christians make a distinction between the meaning of one term and the other, that the kingdom of heaven has a certain range of meaning, and the kingdom of God has a different range of meaning, and that there are different words, different concepts. I insist that they are identical in meaning, and interchangeable. The data of Scripture that I base this on is as follows.

Matthew alone ever uses the term kingdom of heaven. No other biblical writer uses the expression kingdom of heaven. Matthew uses it frequently when quoting Jesus.

Mark, Luke, and John do not ever use the term. There are many times when Matthew uses the term.