

Jesus Teaches About Right Attitudes

Bible Background • Matthew 5:1–12

Printed Text • Matthew 5:1–12 | Devotional Reading • Isaiah 61:1–8

Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will: **EXAMINE** the irony of the Beatitudes; **DISCOVER** the reversal of the world's values that Jesus teaches; and **DECIDE** how to live out Christ's values as we pursue God's kingdom.

In Focus

Travis was in shock. His name was called as “employee of the year,” and Travis could not believe it. At his company, he simply tried to do his work and treat people well. His CEO read a statement, telling how Travis kept working hard after he returned from personal leave following the death of his son earlier that year. Travis had to attend court a few times during the criminal trial for his son's killer. He felt guilty about missing time, but tried his best to still look for the joy in each day and trust God while he mourned and worked.

Although Travis expected justice from the law, he did not have a lot of money for a powerful attorney. He wasn't sure if the things he told the state's attorney would actually help in the case. Yet he never seemed bitter when he was working or dealing with customers. He had been faithful at his company for twenty years and did so without a lot of fanfare—sometimes feeling overlooked. The CEO said Travis' commitment and spirit amid his hardship moved many in the company to reevaluate their own commitment and attitudes. The company decided to establish a scholarship in the name of Travis' son and award Travis “employee of the year” for his work in raising the company's consciousness during his darkest moments. Travis began to cry. God had seen him. God had seen how he endured. And in his lowest valley, he was blessed.

How do Jesus' words— that those most in need and persecuted are the ones who are blessed and to whom the kingdom of heaven belongs—impact how you see your life? Which of the Beatitudes rings in your spirit the loudest?

Keep in Mind

“Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted in the same way” (Matthew 5:12, NLT).

Words You Should Know

A. Blessed makarios (Gk.) — In the context of the Beatitudes the word means “happy.”

B. Mercy eleos (Gk.) — Forgiveness or compassion, kindness.

Say It Correctly

none

KJV

Matthew 5:1 And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him:
2 And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,
3 Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
4 Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.
5 Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.
6 Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.
7 Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.
8 Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.
9 Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.
10 Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
11 Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.
12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

NIV

Matthew 5:1 One day as he saw the crowds gathering, Jesus went up on the mountainside and sat down. His disciples gathered around him,
2 and he began to teach them.
3 “God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.
4 God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
5 God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth.
6 God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will be satisfied.
7 God blesses those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy.
8 God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God.
9 God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God.
10 God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.
11 “God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers.
12 Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted in the same way.

The People, Places, and Times

Mercy. God does not condone sin or ignore it; instead, He pours out mercy and compassion on the person who is constantly falling short. One who is merciful recognizes the state of an unbeliever and shows pity to the sinner, praying for and loving that individual, and doing what can be done to help. The merciful in the context of Jewish financial law recognized when there was lack and held off on demanding payment for a debt until the person was in a better position to repay.

What does mercy mean in our modern context?

Background

The book of Matthew is the first book we encounter when reading the New Testament. Named after its author, Matthew the tax collector, this book offers a collection of sayings Jesus uttered to small and large crowds during His ministry. We come to know Jesus as a teacher early on in this book in Matthew 5–7, best known as the Sermon on the Mount. After a crowd gathered around Jesus from neighboring cities, He climbed to a mountain top and began to speak to His disciples about societal ethics.

During this time, the Roman Empire was a hierarchal society with no middle class. A few powerful men and their families ruled. In effect, their reign influenced the values of society. As an advocate for the lower class, Jesus offered a new value system, which favored their daily experience. The word “blessed” beginning each statement spoken by Jesus in the Beatitudes signifies the ironies of life. While those in lower strata face negative circumstances daily, Jesus teaches them to not allow the negativity to affect their attitude. Instead, He instructs them on how to follow Him and grow in their relationship with Him through changing their attitudes. Jesus teaches His followers to reject the values of the world and embrace His values, thus altering their concepts of blessings and rewards. Blessings become less about material gain and social status and more about a stronger relationship in Jesus. God also promises “the kingdom of heaven” (vv. 3, 10). While our reward may be delayed, we can rejoice and be glad in the meantime knowing we are living according to the teachings of Jesus. An attitude check enables the followers of Jesus to have a new way of life.

How do you describe your attitude?

At-A-Glance

1. Reflecting on Our Attitudes (Matthew 5:1–9)
2. Ready for Others’ Actions (vv. 10–12)

In Depth

1. Reflecting on Our Attitudes (Matthew 5:1–9)

Jesus leaves the crowd, climbs the mountain, and takes a seat. The disciples follow Him, positioning themselves to hear the first of Jesus’ five lessons recorded in Matthew. The first seven statements Jesus makes focus on the development of human character traits. Each statement shows the paradox between what the world believes and what Jesus is teaching. Jesus offers the disciples instruction on a different and new way of living, which is more fulfilling and rewarding than the ways of society. What society had deemed as valuable does not equate to true value in the lessons of Jesus. Jesus calls the disciples to sacrifice a value system—rooted in self-centeredness and material possessions—for one that calls individuals into closer relationships with Jesus and their neighbor. The Teacher shows us our value does not depend on our material possessions when He promises the kingdom of heaven to those who are destitute (v. 3).

In this lesson, Jesus sets the foundation for the value system that must be embraced to gain access to the kingdom of heaven. Jesus is concerned about the position of our heart, not our position in society. This is why He highlights those who mourn, the meek, those who desire righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart and those who make peace. Jesus highlights the characteristics of a person whose attitude is not self-centered or pessimistic. Ultimately, He is describing the attitude and character of a follower.

Using these first seven statements about character traits, the disciples and readers can check their attitude. We cannot fully understand the value of the blessings associated with each character trait without checking our attitude. By taking on Jesus’ new value system, our worldview shifts and our actions change.

What are some ways God reminds you to check your attitude daily?

2. Ready for Others' Actions (vv. 10–12)

The final two statements Jesus makes to the disciples address a rather weighty subject: persecution. Deciding to apply Jesus' teaching to your life does not come without a cost. Sacrificing societal values and the dominant worldview makes one stand apart from the rest. Choosing to follow Jesus means committing to living your life in a way that does not always please other people. Jesus reminds us of the cost associated with taking on this new way of life (vv. 10–12). People may revile us, make negative comments, and persecute us simply because we choose to embody righteousness. Even with the right attitude, it can be difficult to endure these types of actions. However, our focus should not be on how people negatively treat us in this world. Instead we choose to live as Jesus instructs us, because this is how we grow in relationship with Him. Changing our attitudes helps our minds remain on the rewards we will receive in heaven. Yes, this reward is delayed and can be hard to wait for. We should not allow impatience to block our blessings. Thankfully, none of the blessings Jesus talks about is temporary, unlike material things can be. These blessings strengthen our relationship with God and prepare us to receive our reward in heaven.

How do you deal with God's delay in your life?

Search the Scriptures

1. Based on the teaching of Jesus, what are some ways in which Jesus is calling His followers to move from a self-centered worldview to a communal worldview (Matthew 5:1–12)?
2. What does "blessed" mean in the context of this passage?

Discuss the Meaning

1. How do we see God's blessings in the midst of suffering and persecution?
2. Are all Christians experiencing God's blessings? Why or why not?

Liberating Lesson

During the middle of the twentieth century, racism and injustice remained deeply woven into the social fabric of American society. People of color, in particular African Americans, suffered from systemic, race-based disenfranchisement. Following in the footsteps of ancestors who blazed the trail to freedom before them, activists of different ages sought to bring about change in the face of dire circumstances. Enacting positive change required a constant attitude check. One reason the Civil Rights Movement gained success was that its initiatives were focused on community and not individuals. A communal, positive perspective fueled the desire to fight for justice and equality. Also, that value system did not reflect the prominent value system in society. As Christians, we must apply the instruction of Jesus as we follow in the footsteps of our ancestors in the fight for justice. Current circumstances cannot shape our attitudes. Following Jesus requires change.

Application for Activation

In the passage, Jesus gives His followers instruction on how to experience happiness and wholeness amid less than desirable circumstances. While our circumstances may not change, our perspectives should as God's children. We cannot live a life reflective of Christ if we allow societal values to influence how we respond to unfortunate situations. Implementing the values in Matthew 5:1–12 is not easy.

1. Identify which Beatitude you struggle with the most and why.
2. Look for biblical examples of how this value is lived out.
3. For the next week, ask God to check your attitude and change your behavior.

Remember: A reward in heaven is promised, but we must first check our attitudes. The Beatitudes are instructions on how to faithfully respond with a new attitude.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

More Light on the Text

Matthew 5:1-12

¹ And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: ² And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

The narrative serves as an introduction to the passage. It sets the stage for what will follow in the rest of the Sermon on the Mount. Here we learn that Jesus would be teaching from a mountain. The “and” (Gk. *de*, DEH, which can also be translated “now,” “moreover,” or “but,” etc.) that begins this chapter is a conjunction and serves as a transition connecting what follows to the previous passage (4:25) and the earlier narrative. In Matthew 4 we read of Christ’s ministry of teaching, miracles, and healing throughout the regions of Palestine and Galilee. These events had attracted large crowds to Him.

When He saw the multitudes, He “went up into the mountain” (v. 1). The crowd was so great that Jesus needed a higher and broader space where He could address them. Verse 1 seems to suggest that there were two different types of people in the crowd. The first represented the larger group (mentioned in 4:25), who came from different regions around Jerusalem. The people that made up the second group were Jesus’ disciples, among whom were those Jesus had called earlier to follow Him (4:18-22).

The word translated “set” here is the Greek word *kathizo* (kah-THEED-zo) and means “to sit down, settle down, or sojourn.” Jesus sat as He taught the people, which was customary for teachers in the Jewish circles (see 13:2; 23:2; Luke 4:20-21). “And he opened his mouth, and taught them” is a familiar phrase often used to introduce an important teaching, as it is here and elsewhere in Scripture (see Psalm 78:1–2; Job 33:1–2; Acts 8:35). The phrase also demonstrates a conscious and deliberate decision on the part of the Teacher to teach, seizing the opportunity afforded Him by the surging crowd to set forth the fundamental ordinances of the kingdom.

To whom is Jesus speaking? Is He teaching the disciples, the crowd, or both? To whom does the pronoun in “taught them” refer? At first glance, one might assume that the immediate antecedent is “his disciples” in verse 1. However, at the conclusion of the sermon, one observes that “the people were astonished at his doctrine” (from 7:28), implying that these teachings were addressed to the entire crowd.

³ Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Verse 3 begins the second section consisting of “blessed” sayings, or more correctly, the Beatitudes (vv. 3–12). Each of the verses starts with the word “Blessed” (Gk. *makarios*, mah- KAH-ree-oce), which also means

“happy.” The word “beatitude” is derived from the Latin *beatus* (beh-AH-toos), the equivalent of *makarios*. Others prefer to title the passage *Macarisms* from the Greek. The sayings found here are reminiscent of the Old Testament form of writing found primarily in the poetical books, especially the Psalter (e.g., Psalms 1:1, 32:1–2; Proverbs 3:13; Daniel 12:12). Jesus makes references to the Psalms and other Old Testament Scriptures throughout this sermon.

Jesus begins by pronouncing blessings on or proclaiming God’s favor on the “poor in spirit.” As we have already noted, *makarios* may be translated as either “blessed” or “happy.” If the former is the case, it means that the poor in spirit are blessed because “theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” If the latter is the case, then those who are “poor in spirit” (here on earth by implication) will inherit the kingdom of heaven (God). In the parallel passage in Luke 6:20, it omits the phrase “in spirit.” There, the meaning is clear: it refers to those who are economically bankrupt on earth, deprived of earthly riches, and who will be rewarded in the kingdom of heaven. The Old Testament is full of references to the poor (Deuteronomy 15:11; Psalm 72:1–4; Amos 8:4). These passages address those who are poor in material goods and of lowly disposition, which accompanies such deprivation, rather than the poor in spirit. In these situations, God fights for the cause of the poor and delivers them (cf. 1 Samuel 2:8; Psalm 34:6; 35:10; Isaiah 41:17).

Although the “poor” in the Old Testament were usually the pious (Psalm 69:29–36; Isaiah 61:1), the phrase “poor in spirit” is not found in the Old Testament. Here in Matthew, it can be interpreted in different ways: (1) The phrase refers to those who cultivate the spirit of humility and self-abasement; (2) It describes those in a need, like the poor, whose poverty is an affliction of the spirit.

The phrase does not speak of those who are faint-hearted, as some would contend, but speaks of the humble in heart. Thus, it means the humble—those who acknowledge their unworthiness before God and absolute dependence on the Lord. Both the Old Testament and New Testament speak profoundly of the rewards, benefits, and blessings of being humble (Proverbs 16:19, 29:23; Isaiah 57:15; Matthew 18:4). Here the reward is that the kingdom of heaven belongs to them, they will partake in the reign of the Messiah and enjoy the blessings He brings. Christ is the perfect example of humility and its rewards, as Paul describes (Philippians 2:6–11).

⁴ Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

While the humble or “poor in spirit” will inherit the kingdom of heaven (v. 3), those who mourn will be comforted. Who are they? What makes them mourn? Jesus is likely referring to the godly remnant who weep and lament because of the suffering and humiliation of Israel at the hands of foreign nations, which is the consequence of both personal and corporate sin against the Lord. The Beatitude here in Matthew speaks of the deplorable condition of the world, both then and now. Like Simeon, they were “waiting for the consolation of Israel,” when there will be no more pain and sorrow (Luke 2:25). These first two Beatitudes are alluded to in Isaiah’s messianic blessings (Isaiah 61:1–3), which are fulfilled in Christ (Luke 4:16–19). Christ says that He has come to change mourning into joy and to bestow “the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness” (Isaiah 61:3). These blessings, as yet only partially realized, will be fully consummated at the return of the Messiah (Revelation 7:17).

⁵ Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

The next group to be rewarded are the “meek.” The word “meek” (Gk. *praus*, *praw*- OOS) is difficult to define. The nearest synonym is “gentleness.” *Praus* refers to mildness of disposition, or gentleness of spirit. Meekness toward God is that disposition of spirit in which we accept His dealings with us as good, and therefore submit without dispute or resistance. In the Old Testament, the meek are those who wholly rely on God rather than coercion in their own strength to redress injustice. It stems from trust in God’s goodness and control over the situation. A meek person is not occupied with self. As noted in 1 Peter 3:4, 14–15, meekness can signify absence of pretension but generally suggests gentleness and self-control (Matthew 11:29; James 3:13). This is a

work of the Holy Spirit, not of the human will (Galatians 5:23). It is a virtue to aspire to; but to the Greeks, it was a vice because of their inability to distinguish it from servitude. Jesus is the perfect example of meekness, and Matthew throws more light on this word when he uses the same word to describe the way Christ exercises His authority (gentle, 11:29; humble, 21:5). Meekness has to do with the way we relate to others, when we shun the arrogant and vicious ways of the strong. The meek, rather than the strong, aggressive, harsh, and tyrannical, will inherit the earth, Jesus asserts.

The verb “inherit” is often used in Scripture, especially in the Old Testament, in relation to the Promised Land (see Deuteronomy 16:20; Isaiah 57:13, 60:21). The promise here is alluded to by the psalmist in Psalm 37:11 (see also v. 9 and 29), although in the Old Testament texts, “the earth” refers to the land of Canaan to be possessed. “Earth” or “land” in this Beatitude has the broader meaning of “the realm of God’s Kingdom on earth.”

⁶ Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

The next group in the Beatitudes whom Matthew congratulates are those who hunger or long for righteousness. The language is reminiscent of Old Testament themes. The verbs “hunger” and “thirst” express a strong urge or desire, a craving for something good like food and water. Here, it expresses a desire to live rightly or to have a good relationship with the Lord. Eating and drinking is used metaphorically in the Old Testament to express the desire to have a relationship with God (Isaiah 55:1–3)—a desire that only God satisfies (Psalm 107:9). Those who “hunger and thirst” for righteousness are the people who yearn for a deeper, right relationship with the Lord. Yet an alternative definition of the term “righteousness” is expressed here in the Greek word *dikaiousune* (dee-kie-oh-SOO-nay), which means justification or equity and is from the word *dikaios* (dee-kie-oce), meaning just. It carries with it the idea of justice—dealing fairly or rightly and equitably with other—with social justice as the undertone (see Acts 17:31; Revelation 19:11). Therefore, this Beatitude addresses those who hunger and thirst not only for personal righteousness (i.e., living uprightly before the Lord) but who also strongly desire that justice be done everywhere and to all mankind. They yearn for the new kingdom where there is justice, equality, and holiness (2 Peter 3:13); they are not satisfied with the status quo. They desire both personal spiritual growth and change in society.

The reward for their yearning is that they will be “filled” or “satisfied.” Note that the verb “filled” (Gk. *chortazo*, *chor-TAD-zo*) is the same word used after Jesus fed the 5,000 (Matthew 14:20). They are blessed and (will be) happy because their desire and curiosity will (most likely) be fulfilled in the actualization of the kingdom.

⁷ Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

The simplest way to talk about the Beatitude in verse 7 is in terms of reaping and sowing. The phrase “You reap what you sow” goes back at least to Paul (Galatians 6:7) and maybe earlier, and could be used here in a positive sense. The word “mercy” or its Greek equivalent (*eleos*, *EH-leh-oce*) contains the idea of both forgiveness and compassion, or showing kindness. Both understandings of mercy (forgiveness and compassion) are common themes in Matthew’s Gospel (6:12–15, 12:7, 18:33–34). The reward for showing mercy is obtaining (i.e., also receiving) mercy, not necessarily from other people or from the immediate recipients, but from the Lord. The opposite is equally true: Those who do not show mercy will not be shown mercy (James 2:13). Mercy is part of God’s character and is not dependent upon our merciful acts; it is in God’s nature and a gift to sinful humanity.

⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

“The pure in heart” seems to address genuineness of faith and those who reflect truthfulness and purity of mind without duplicity. This Beatitude is a reflection of the Psalter (Psalm 24:3–6), which poses the question of who is able to ascend to the Temple and see the Lord. In his answer, the psalmist (most likely David) replies that it is “he that hath clean hands, and a pure heart” (from v. 4). From this psalm, it is apparent that only those who

relate to God and others with sincerity of mind—those who are internally clean (Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6) as opposed to merely the externally pious—will see God (James 4:8). The Beatitude speaks of those whose thoughts are pure and free from deceit as opposed to the hypocrites (6:1–18).

To see God is to experience His presence in an intimate way, to have a close relationship with Him. Moses had this experience with the Lord when God spoke “face to face” with him in the wilderness (Exodus 33:11)—an experience the psalmist also desired and in fact had (Psalm 63:1–2). Abram (Abraham) had such an intimate relationship with the Lord that God “talked with him” (Genesis 17:3). Isaiah also had this experience, which was terrifying and yet transforming (Isaiah 6:5). These were glimpses of the revelation of God’s presence, but the complete unveiling of this truth, promise, and blessing to the “pure in heart” is yet future.

⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

Among those who are blessed are the peacemakers, not the peaceful. Their reward is that they will be called the children of God. The Bible speaks continually of peace in both the Old and New Testaments (e.g., Exodus 14:14; 1 Kings 5:12; Psalm 4:8; Isaiah 52:7; Luke 24:36; Romans 12:18; 1 Corinthians 7:15; Hebrews 12:14; 1 Peter 3:11).

Isaiah prophesied that the Promised Son would be called “Prince of Peace” (9:6). Jesus is the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy and the supreme example of a peacemaker. He brings reconciliation between God and humanity and between people. The Greek word *eirenopoios* (eye-ray-no-poy-OCE), which is translated “peacemakers,” occurs only here in the New Testament, but the sentiment is found in other parts of the New Testament. The people Jesus blesses here are neither the peaceful, nor lovers of peace, nor those who only speak of peace, but rather those who work actively to make or bring about peace. With God as their example, they strive to make peace at all costs (sometimes sacrificing their own peace or even their lives) and with all persons, whether friends or foes (Matthew 5:45). By imitating the Lord in peacemaking, the peacemakers demonstrate that they are the true children of God. Hence, Jesus says that God will accept them as His own at the consummation of all things.

¹⁰ Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

The next group to receive God’s blessings are those who are persecuted for their righteousness or right deeds, probably referring to the peacemakers and those who fight for justice (v. 6). In a world that is full of hate and prejudice, the peacemakers and those who endeavor to live uprightly in the sight of God are never cherished or welcomed in society. Often, they are persecuted and receive the brunt of society’s anger and hatred.

Persecution or oppression is the mark of discipleship, as Jesus reminded His disciples (John 15:18–25). Encouraging the disciples at Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch to remain true to the faith, Paul and Barnabas remind them, “We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (from Acts 14:22; cf. 2 Timothy 3:12; 1 Peter 4:13–14).

The promise or blessing for the poor in spirit (v. 3) is the same as here. Indeed, this Beatitude tends to tie together all the other Beatitudes, for all the virtues therein can be summed up under the theme of righteousness or right living. Some interpreters believe that the phrase “for righteousness’ sake” refers to the Lord Jesus Christ, and that can be equally true (v. 11). However, it is not apparent that Jesus is referring to Himself here but to those who suffer because they choose to walk uprightly.

¹¹ Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. ¹² Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Verses 11 and 12 are an expansion of verse 10. They deal with the attitude people or believers ought to cultivate when they face persecution and oppression because of their faith in Christ. We notice here that Jesus changes from third-person pronouns to second-person plural pronouns, which indicates that at this point He is addressing a specific group in the audience.

Jesus lists three forms of oppression that the disciples (and all those who believe in Him) would suffer because of their faith and their relationship with the Lord Jesus: revilement, persecution, and slander. “Revile” (Gk. *oneidizo*, oh-nay-DEED-zo), means to defame, rail at, taunt, or reproach. It also means to ridicule somebody because of what that person does, how that person acts or behaves, how that person looks physically, or what that person believes. The second opposition is “persecution,” translated from the Greek *dioko* (dee-OH-ko). Persecution takes a variety of forms and covers a wide range of hostile actions. It would include harassment, molestation, and maltreatment in various forms. The third form of opposition the disciples will suffer is that people “shall say all manner of evil against [them] falsely” (i.e., slander or false and malicious accusation). In the parallel passage, Luke adds that they would be excluded and thought to be evil (Luke 6:22–23).

Jesus urges His disciples to rejoice with exceeding gladness even in the face of their tribulations. He gives two reasons why the disciples should have this reaction. The first is that they will be greatly rewarded for their faith, that their reward will be great in heaven. It should be noted that this reward is not a “rite of passage” into the kingdom; rather, it demonstrates that God is faithful and just to reward those who are faithful and endure to the end. The second reason the disciples can rejoice in tribulation is that they are in the same company with the Old Testament prophets before them who were likewise persecuted (cf. 2 Chronicles 24:21; Nehemiah 9:26; Acts 7:51–52; Hebrews 11:35–38). Jesus is implying that the disciples, who will share the same fate as the prophets of old are themselves prophets, persecuted in the same manner as their predecessors. Therefore, this calls for rejoicing, and the apostles understand and apply this later (Acts 5:41; cf. 2 Corinthians 4:17; 1 Peter 1:6–9).

This Beatitude does not imply that Christians or believers should seek persecution, nor does it permit them to retreat from it or exact revenge for it. Rather, it speaks of the Christian’s need for steadfast faith in the Lord under any and all circumstances. Disciples must follow the Lord with humility and singleness of heart and continuing reliance on and faithfulness to God irrespective of what may come their way, whether good or bad.

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

Living Among Wrongdoers
(Psalm 57)

TUESDAY

Perfect God's Love Among You
(1 John 4:7–21)

WEDNESDAY

Great Rewards to Come
(Luke 6:17–23)

THURSDAY

Apostles Chosen for Ministry
(Mark 3:7–12)

FRIDAY

Do Not Judge
(Luke 6:37–45)

SATURDAY

A Life Pleasing to God
(1 Thessalonians 4:1–12)

SUNDAY

Right Attitudes for Blessed Living
(Matthew 5:1–12)