

Bible Readings

Isaiah 55:1-13

Invitation to the Thirsty

55 "Come, all you who are thirsty,

come to the waters;

and you who have no money,

come, buy and eat!

Come, buy wine and milk

without money and without cost.

² Why spend money on what is not bread,
and your labor on what does not satisfy?

Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good,
and you will delight in the richest of fare.

³ Give ear and come to me;
listen, that you may live.

I will make an everlasting covenant with you,
my faithful love promised to David.

⁴ See, I have made him a witness to the peoples,
a ruler and commander of the peoples.

⁵ Surely you will summon nations you know not,
and nations you do not know will come running to you,
because of the LORD your God,
the Holy One of Israel,
for he has endowed you with splendour."

⁶ Seek the LORD while he may be found;
call on him while he is near.

⁷ Let the wicked forsake their ways
and the unrighteous their thoughts.

Let them turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on them,
and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

⁸ "For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways,"

declares the LORD.

⁹ "As the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

¹⁰ As the rain and the snow
come down from heaven,
and do not return to it
without watering the earth
and making it bud and flourish,
so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater,

¹¹ so is my word that goes out from my mouth:

It will not return to me empty,
but will accomplish what I desire
and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

¹² You will go out in joy
and be led forth in peace;
the mountains and hills
will burst into song before you,
and all the trees of the field
will clap their hands.

¹³ Instead of the thornbush will grow the juniper,
and instead of briars the myrtle will grow.

This will be for the LORD's renown,
for an everlasting sign,
that will endure forever."

Matthew 5:1-16

Introduction to the Sermon on the Mount

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

The Beatitudes

He said:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹¹ "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Salt and Light

¹³ "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

¹⁴ "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

True Righteousness (Isaiah 55:1-13 and Matthew 5:1-16)Intro

- We're continuing our series on **Matthew's Gospel**
- We'll be focusing on **Matthew chapter 5** - verses 1 to 16
- Let me pray first...

Intro/Context (Matthew 5:1-2)

- In our passage this morning
- **Jesus tells His followers what their lives should look like as Christians**
- He says His followers should live righteous lives
- So, what is righteousness?

[PowerPoint 1 - Righteousness]

- **Dictionary** says: **the quality of being morally right or justifiable**
- **In the Bible:** The **Greek Word used** for righteousness [*dikaiosune*] - describes a person who is **right with God** and therefore approved by God.
- **Last week we left Jesus preaching the Good News of the Kingdom of God and healing people**

- And **large crowds** from Galilee, Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and trans-Jordan **followed Him**
- Why did they **follow** Jesus?
- Because they couldn't get enough of His **teaching** and **miracles**
- So - v1 - **Jesus went up the hill** - not to **get away from the crowd**
- But to **teach them** - from an **elevated position**

[PowerPoint 2-Sermon on the Mount]

- The **teaching** Jesus is about to give - goes from **Matthew chapter 5 to chapter 7** - and is known as the **Sermon on the Mount**
- His **listeners** are not just His **12 disciples** -
- Because at the **end of this Sermon on the Mount** - in Matthew 7:28 - we read - **When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at His teaching...**
- In **verses 3 to 12** then - we have a **series of statements** beginning with the word **"Blessed"**.
- They are known as the **beatitudes** - which comes from Latin word *beati-tudo* which means **blessedness**.
- These beatitudes **describe** what true righteousness is.

What true righteousness is... (Matthew 5:3-12)

Looking at vv3-12 - these are the **standards of living** - in the Kingdom of God

- First up - **2 general observations** about these beatitudes

- **#1** - It would be useful to see each of the beatitudes that begins with "blessed" as beginning with the phrase *"You're blessed and approved by God if you" ...*
 - So, for example v6 would read – You are blessed and approved by God, if you hunger and thirst for righteousness, for you will be filled.
 - It's worth asking ourselves the question before we go any further
 - **Whose approval are we seeking?**
 - Our spouse's? Our family's? Our friends'? Our work mates'? Or God's?
 - And it's also worth asking ourselves this question
 - *"Do I above all, want to please God"?*
- **#2** - Each of the beatitudes has a condition and a reward

Now let's look at each beatitude

[PowerPoint 3-Beatitudes]

- V3 - Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven
 - Poor here - has nothing to do with money - it's not about how much I own - what stocks and shares I have
 - It doesn't mean being poor in the Holy Spirit either - like we have just a small amount of the Holy Spirit
 - Nor does it mean - poor in courage -

- **Poor in Spirit** - is a conscious awareness of our sin and rebellion against God - it means **having a contrite heart** - knowing that we have disobeyed God (Isaiah 57:15)
 - Being **poor in spirit** - is a **genuine honest assessment of ourselves before God** - as Paul says: **all have sinned and fall short of God's glory** (Romans 3:23)
 - We're basically saying - we **can't do life** without God and without Jesus
 - **Example** of this is the attitude of the **tax collector praying** in Luke 18:13 - "... **the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'**
 - Application: Can we join the tax collector and say - *God, have mercy on me, I'm a sinner?*
 - Those who admit to being poor in spirit - **are committed to God's Kingdom** - and their reward will be to receive the Kingdom of Heaven
 - This beatitude is the **first step in becoming a Christian** - seeing the need for Jesus to forgive our sins - that's **repentance**
- **V4 - Blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted**
 - This flows naturally from the 1st beatitude - of being poor in spirit
 - Mourning here - is **grieving over personal sin** - if I admit that I'm a sinner - then it follows that **I should be grieving over my sins**

- For example, when the disciple, **Peter**, saw the power of **Jesus** when Jesus produced a miraculous catch of fish in Luke 5 - **Peter realized Jesus' holiness** and his own sinfulness - and he **fell at Jesus' feet** and said "**Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man**" (Luke 5:8)
 - Mourning here - also means **grieving over the general sin around us** - saddened by the state of our **nation** and our **world** - like when **Jesus wept over Jerusalem** (Luke 19:41-44)
 - Application: Do we see our sins in that way? Do we grieve over our sin? Or do we see our sins as just inevitable?
 - Application: Do we grieve the sin around us?
 - This doesn't mean we go around miserable and morose - like a wet blanket - *I came across the story of little girl saying to her mum, that man must be a Christian he's got such a long sad face*
 - Neither does it mean that **we trivialise sin around us either**
 - A Christian sees themselves and the world realistically before God
 - The reward for grieving our sin - is **we will be comforted**
 - Ultimately, **we are comforted** of the grief of our sin in **knowing Jesus died for our sins to be forgiven** - and knowing we **have the promise of Heaven** - where there will be no more grief - only everlasting joy!
- V5 - Blessed are **the meek** for they **will inherit the earth**.

- We often misunderstand being meek - as being quiet and **easily imposed upon** - or **submissive** - a bit of a **pushover** - or a **door mat**.
- But the Greek word for meek here (praus) is **used to describe a horse that has been broken**. It refers to power that is under control. When Jesus was falsely accused and on trial - **at any stage he had the power to fix the situation with a miracle** - even on the cross He could have saved himself - but He was meek and **kept His power under control** and did the Father's will
- So, for us in our relationship with God - being meek means we **accept what is happening** in our lives as all part of God's plan - without disputing or resisting. We **rely on God's strength and power** - not our strength and power.
- And in our relationships with others - **being meek** means we **see the injuries that are inflicted on us** - as under **God's control**. No retaliation - **but yet we stand up for what is right**; and we wish no harm on them.
- One thing I've noticed in society lately - is that **when people have a different opinion to another** - it **quickly turns to hatred** (e.g., Margaret Court) - notice her response is to **respond with God's Word** - not to retaliate - and not to wish any ill harm - **that is meekness**

- Application: When we are wronged - are we inclined to retaliate and wish others harm? We must leave it to God. Be willing to leave our rights in God's hands. Let God's Word overcome evil.
- The reward for the meek is they will inherit the Earth
- Which is the **opposite to the way the world thinks**
- The catch cry of the world - is *do unto others as you would have done to you - but do it first - or do it to them before they do it to you!*
- The world says - **grab what you can before it's not there**
- The **meek will inherit the earth** is true now for the Christian - the truly meek person - **has learnt to be content**.
- Application - can we join the Apostle Paul and say "I have learned to be content in whatever the circumstances" ... (Phil 4:11-13)
- **The meek will inherit the earth is true** - also in the future - in the new heaven and earth - promised when Jesus returns
- V6 - Blessed are **those who hunger and thirst for righteousness**, for they **will be filled**
 - Another way of saying this would be *blessed are those who hunger and thirst to conform to the will of God*

- But I wonder if we sometimes have the thinking - I better not strive to be too much like God - in case people think I'm a religious fanatic.
 - Hungering and thirsting to conform to God's will is not a matter of desiring to be a little bit better than we were
 - It's a **super strong desire** - like we're really starving
 - Application - Are we really hungry and thirsty to conform to God's will?
 - Application - a person who really hungers or thirsts for righteousness - concentrates more and more time on wanting to know God's Word and God's will - and pleasing God. And fears disobeying God. They pray to God for ways to practice their righteousness.
 - They might pray - *O God make me as holy as a pardoned sinner can be.*
 - The reward - **they shall be filled**
 - There's a built-in cycle here - **the more righteousness a Christian tastes - the more he/she wants**
- V7 - Blessed are the **merciful** for they will be shown mercy -
 - We should not see this as we earn mercy from God by showing mercy - ultimately as Christians we are shown God's mercy in Him sending Jesus to die for our sins - & this is **free gift** - not something we earn.
 - What this verse is saying is as Christians - **as we show mercy in response to God's mercy** - we will in fact also be shown mercy

- For example, **King David showed mercy to Saul** on several occasions - even though Saul wanted to kill David - when **David had opportunities to kill Saul** - David showed mercy and spared him
- In turn - when David sinned on several notable occasions - **David was shown mercy.**
- Application - have we let opportunities to show others mercy go by?
What will we do next time?
- V8 - Blessed are the **pure in heart** for they will **see God** -
 - Our **hearts** can be a problem
 - Out of our hearts come evil thoughts – murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander (Matt 15:19)
 - Here the beatitude is saying - we **can't really see God** unless we become like him - **and have a pure heart**
 - Having a pure heart means asking ourselves questions like:
 - What do I think about when I relax? Do I have impure thoughts?
 - What's my language like? Is it harsh or vulgar?
 - What's my sense of humour like? Is it crude?
 - The Apostle Paul advises us in Phil 4:8: **whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.**

- Pure in heart means having **pure motives** - not holding grudges - being willing to forgive.
- It also means **having an undivided heart towards the Lord**. It's a person who is utterly sincere in their **devotion and commitment to the Lord**
- The **reward** for a pure heart - is to **see God** - and have **greater intimacy with Him**.
- Application - perhaps we need to examine our hearts this morning
 - Are we harbouring a grudge with someone - and **too bitter to deal with it** - we need to address it today
 - Have we refused to forgive someone - and **too proud to sort it out** - we need to forgive them today?
 - Are we sincerely devoted to the Lord - **or are we half-hearted?**
- The **reward** for being pure in heart is - seeing God in nature - seeing God in scripture - seeing God in the church family - and seeing God in our lives. As well as seeing God face to face one day.
- V9 - Blessed are the **peacemakers** for they will be called **children of God**
 - Notice it doesn't say peaceful - but peacemakers
 - We have a **ministry of making peace**
 - The chief peace maker is Jesus Himself - He brings **peace between God and humans** - and brings **peace in human relationships**

- To be peacemakers - we need to follow James' advice in James 1:19 - Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.
 - **The Reward** is being children of God - literally a son of God
 - In Hebrew culture to refer to someone as a son of God - is to say they have the character of God -
 - Application - For us to be a peacemaker - is to partake in the very character of God - and bring peace as God does.
- V10 - Blessed are the those who are persecuted because of righteousness for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven
 - As Christians we will face persecution - Jesus said we would (John 15:20)
 - And the Apostle Paul says in 2 Tim 3:12 - everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted
 - It might not be imprisonment or physical cruelty
 - It will be - **ridicule, rejection or injustice**
 - The reward for persecution is the same as 1st beatitude - **it's the Kingdom of Heaven**
 - Application: Are there times when we omitted to say we are a Christian - to avoid being ridiculed?

V11 and 12 expand on this last beatitude about persecution - Jesus applies it to the disciples listening - He **changes** from the third person "those/they" - to second person "you"

- He says being His disciples - means aligning ourselves with the believers throughout history
- The prophets in OT were persecuted for believing in God
- So, we will be too
- But the reward is great - in Heaven

In these beatitudes - Jesus has shown us what true righteousness is.

He then goes on to say that **true righteousness is being a witness for Jesus** - that's in **verses 13 to 16**.

True Righteousness is being a witness for Jesus (Matthew 5:13-16)

Jesus uses **2 metaphors** (a figure of speech that refers to one thing by mentioning another)

[PowerPoint 4-Salt and Light]

These 2 metaphors are **SALT** and **LIGHT**

His followers are to be like Salt and like lights

- Salt was a **precious** commodity - some Roman soldiers got paid with salt - Jesus is saying we are precious as His followers

- Salt was used in ancient world to preserve
- The idea is that in a fallen broken corrupt world - **Christians can preserve people and lead them into the Kingdom** - by telling people the Good News of Jesus - so they can believe and be preserved or saved
- Salt also adds **flavour** - Christians should season people's lives and **bring out the God flavours in people**
- Jesus also warns us not to lose our saltiness
- *Most salt in the ancient world derived from salt marshes or the like, rather than by evaporation of salt water, and therefore contained many impurities. The actual salt, being more soluble than the impurities, could be leached out, leaving a residue so dilute it was of little worth - and thrown out*
- How can we lose our saltiness? By **being foolish and unwise** - and refusing to show and tell people we are Christians. Use it or lose!
- Application - Are we seasoning people's lives? Do they know we are Christian? Do people know we are honest, humble, meek, pure in heart and peacemakers? Are people impressed how we handle trials and trust God? Are people impressed how we care for others? Are our lives something people would like to copy?
- 2nd metaphor - Christians are **lights** of the world
- Jesus is saying the world is that dark - that **it needs Christians to shine the light they have received from Jesus** - into the dark corners of this

dark world - and bring people out of their dark sinful lives and into Jesus' glorious light

- When shine the light of Jesus in people's lives in 2 main ways:
 - 1st - by **telling them why we believe in Jesus**
 - 2nd - by **showing the love of Jesus to them - a sacrificial love - that expects nothing in return**
- **This will not only bring glory to God**
- But it will be so obvious to people **we are Christian and different** - they can't help but be attracted to the light and life we have in Jesus

Conclusion/God's Helps

To Finish up then - these **beatitudes and the call to be salt and light** - may seem a tall order.

And it's true we can **never have the righteousness that Jesus has** - this side of Heaven

But that doesn't mean we shouldn't strive - and **hunger and thirst to be like Him**

[PowerPoint 5-Conclusion]

God has given us 3 things which will help in this hunger and thirst for righteousness

#1 - God has given us His powerful Word - as God says in Isaiah 55:11:

*My word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty,
but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.*

God's Word transforms people!

#2 God has given us Jesus - as 2 Cor 5:21 says:

*God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the
righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21)*

Because of Jesus - **God sees us as righteous!**

#3 God has given us the Holy Spirit

Jesus promised His disciples in John 14:26

But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name,
will **teach you all things** and will **remind you of everything I have said
to you.**

**So, friends, through God's Word, through God's Son and through the Holy
Spirit, let's continue to hunger and thirst for righteousness.**

Let's pray...