



CITIZENS OF THE KINGDOM

THE BEATITUDES
PART ONE



THE BEATITUDES

I. On Goodness

“The Sermon on the Mount remains the greatest moral document of all time.”

-Jaroslav Pelikan

Ancient moral philosopher, Aristotle argued, essentially, that: “A thing is 'good' when it fulfills the purpose for which it was created.”

In a similar way, living a “good life” means becoming the sort of people we were created to be, and doing the things we were made to do.

II. The Kingdom Context

“Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people”

- Matthew 4:23

“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

- Matthew 4:17

The Kingdom is “Already” and “Not Yet.” It is present in and through Jesus, but will not be fully consummated until Jesus’ return.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE BEATITUDES

First: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is *the kingdom of heaven*”

Last: “Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is *the kingdom of heaven.*”

When a writer repeats a statement at the beginning and end of a section of writing, this is a common literary feature in ancient writing called an *inclusio* – a set of “bookends.” This signals what the focus of the passage is. In the case of the beatitudes, it is: “the kingdom of heaven.”

III. The Meaning of "Blessed"

“Beatitude” comes from a Latin word “*beatus*”, which was used to translate the Greek word *makarios*.

Makarios is sometimes translated “happy” or “fortunate”, which isn’t a bad rendering of the word. “Blessed” certainly does carry a sense of happiness with it, but is different from the way that we in the modern world often view the word happy.

“To be blessed, fundamentally, is to be approved of by God....Those who are blessed will generally be profoundly happy; but blessedness can’t be reduced to happiness”

–D.A. Carson



“If the approval of God means more to us than the approval of loved ones, no matter how cherished, or of colleagues, no matter how influential, then the beatitudes will speak to us very personally and deeply.” – Carson

IV. Implications

1. In the Beatitudes, Jesus invites us to see, to perceive life from a totally different view; from God's view. This is a picture of what Citizen's of God's kingdom begin to embody as we embrace Jesus' leadership.
2. Being formed as Citizens of this kind of Kingdom is ultimately making us like this King – King Jesus. And that will actually take his life in us – restoring, renewing.
3. In embracing Jesus' vision of the Kingdom, we are freed from the hideous pressure of trying to “create” and then “fulfill” our own sense of purpose. We can find fullness in becoming, by grace, what God has made us to be.



DISCUSSION & REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Open Up: Have you ever experienced culture shock of any kind? Describe what it was like.

Read Matthew 4:23-5:12.

1. If you were to make a list of the type of people who we typically consider “blessed” in our culture, what would it include?
2. How does that differ from what Jesus says here? Does the list of the “blessed” encourage you? Why?
3. What is the connection between 4:23-25 and 5:1-12? Why might that be significant?
4. Based on the character traits of those listed as “blessed” by Jesus, would “citizens of the kingdom” be admired in our world? Why or why not?
5. How do the Beatitudes relate to being “salt” and “light” (vv.13-16)? How might embodying these “norms of the kingdom” be part of the witness of the church to the world?

Prayer: In your group, take some time to simply thank Jesus for giving us these “norms” that help us better see with God’s perspective. Ask for God to be at work in you and our community, in any ways he wants to deepen us as a people over this season. Pray also for any particular needs of your group and of our city or neighborhood.