

The Upside Down Kingdom

Matthew 5:1-5

Today we start looking at the Sermon on the Mount. It begins with the Beatitudes – which comes from the Latin word for *blessed*. But what does a blessed life look like?

Leaving the Crowd

Great crowds followed Jesus, but some heard his call for repentance and separated themselves from the crowd. You can't be a follower of Jesus and stay a member of the crowd.

Jesus told this sermon to people who had made the decision to repent and go to him. So this is not about what someone has to do to deserve God's grace, but what will mark the lives of those who have already received God's grace and entered the kingdom. But the values of his kingdom are often the opposite of those of the crowd.

Upside Down Blessing

What do you think of when you think of what it means to be blessed? A happy and successful life or family? But Jesus is not talking about how we feel about our lives but how God sees them. But knowing how God sees you has this power to transform how you see life. When you know God's love for you it can bring a deep sense of well-being.

The first Beatitude: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit.' To be poor in spirit is to know that you're spiritually powerless, to know that before God the bank account is empty. Such people are blessed because the kingdom of heaven is theirs: they are citizens of God's kingdom. God dwells with the humble and contrite. So the kingdom does not belong to the powerful but to the spiritually poor - who know that God has been unbelievably generous to them.

The second Beatitude: 'Blessed are those who mourn.' Jesus is referring to mourning over sin and brokenness. But are we too caught up in pursuing the good life to mourn sin? Jesus says those who do will be comforted. That is what he came to do.

The third Beatitude: 'Blessed are the meek.' When you know you are saved by grace alone, it should make you the humblest person in the room. Meekness is about how you respond when others criticise you. The battle against pride is lifelong. But the ultimate reward does not go to the pushy but the meek.

The One who Brings the Blessing

Jesus is the perfect example of each Beatitude. He is also the ultimate blessed one. When we are united with him by faith, what is true for him is true for us. In him, God the Father looks on us as his beloved children. In Jesus, God's smile is turned towards us. That is what it means to be blessed.

All this is possible because Jesus loved us and died for us. He has opened the gate into this land of blessing for us. In him we are poor, yet rich; broken, yet loved; humbled and yet exalted.