

REST, RENEWAL, AND GRACE: “YOU GOT IT ALL BACKWARDS”

Introduction. I’ve gone through multiple series of tests over multiple years but no cause for my anemia has been found. Last summer, a CT scan showed a growth on my pancreas. An MRI gave a more detailed view and it turned out that I had a large aneurism on my splenic artery that lays on top of the pancreas. It is now filled with coils and no longer a concern. How grateful I am for that deeper look!

Scripture tells us to examine ourselves. God’s word is described as being alive and active, penetrating to even to **dividing soul and spirit**, and judging the **thoughts and attitudes of the heart**. Spiritually, a deeper look helps keep us healthy.

A look at the beatitudes fits well with the series “Rest, Renewal and Grace” for all the blessings of the beatitudes are connected to the health of our character. In fact, **“God’s Blessings are Connected to Our Character”** (thesis)

The beatitudes will examine our character by looking at two sets of character traits. We are looking to find “spiritual aneurisms” that we might be healed. I will be the technician that runs the scan. We need the Great Physician to diagnose us through the Holy Spirit.

FIRST, PRAY.

Context of the Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount

Jesus has been baptized by John, tested by the Devil, has called his first disciples, is preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and is demonstrating the presence of God’s kingdom by healing the sick and casting out demons. The kingdom is at hand.

The Kingdom of Heaven refers to God’s sovereign reign or rule – the future reign of God has entered history now, internally, through Jesus and the present Holy Spirit

The Sermon on the Mount describes those who are citizens of the kingdom. Jesus’ theme is that **he has come not to abolish the law but to fulfill it.**

The beatitudes are a series of **8 paradoxes** (reason for title “You Got It All Backwards”) In each case, the judgment of God is **“Blessed”** (not Woe) with a blessing attached; All **traits are about our inner character** as citizens of God’s kingdom The traits are **interconnected**, all are needed, and **only those with the traits** receive the blessing.

INWARD SERIES OF TESTS: Traits with Inward Orientation (4)

OUTWARD SERIES OF TESTS: Traits with Outward Orientation (4)

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INWARD TEST 1: Matthew 5:3

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

- Desired Trait – Poor = Utterly Destitute in Spirit (why would we desire that?)
Reason: our point of reference is the holy and righteous God vs. fallen man.
We bring absolutely nothing to God; prerequisite to responding to the gospel
Question: Does this describe you? Do we recognize our helplessness?
- Problems: that undermine being poor in spirit
Flesh = Old nature – self-centered, opposed to God, pride;
World = status and seeking created things over creator;
Elephant in the Room = Poor in Spirit vs. Luke's "Poor" (considered same)
Deception of wealth. \$68K and above top 10% in the world. Jesus warned:
Matthew 6:24 No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. BEWARE! Look at where your treasure is (heart is there)
(Rich Young Ruler went away sad yet Jesus had compassion on him)
- Blessing: The Kingdom is theirs *alone* and is theirs beginning now – presently:
Ephesians 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places

INWARD TEST 2: Matthew 5:4

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. "happy are the unhappy"

- Desired Trait – are mourning as in a loud lament for the dead (Jesus – Lazarus);
Includes deep sorrow for our own sins, not just confession but contrition because of the destructiveness of sin (separates from God & man, enslaves, destroys);
Includes all grief and sorrow and tribulation.
- Problems: What undermines mourning? Taking sin too lightly: "Sin more safely because grace abounds"; "reasons that God can't cast into hell because saved";
"loves preaching, churches, Christians but lives unholily" – **truly a struggle**.
Grieving with worldly grief of mourning because of being found out:
2 Corinthians 7:10 For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.
- Blessing: Only those who mourn their sin receive comfort – forgiven and cleansed; fellowship with God and one another; we know God's comfort now when we mourn and will much more so in eternity!

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INWARD TEST 3: Matthew 5:5

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

- Desired Trait – “those of a gentle spirit”. It is a genuine inward virtue that is expressed outwardly toward others. Being poor in spirit and mourning sin leads to meekness, such that to be anything other than meekness would be hypocrisy.
- Problems: Challenged by pride - self is exalted in old nature; wars vs. Spirit; Covetousness desires what belongs to others.
Still a struggle, for we can agree and speak of our lowly status, but don't want others pointing it out! **Struggle: confess your sins to one another** (yikes)
- Blessing: A meek person is genuinely amazed that God and man can think well of him! To inherit the earth is the restoration of the original charge to Adam and Eve and points to us being co-heirs with Christ! Best commentary is Ps. 37

Psalm 37:8-11,34

Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil. For the evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait for the Lord shall inherit the land. In just a little while, the wicked will be no more; though you look carefully at his place, he will not be there. But the meek shall inherit the land and delight themselves in abundant peace. Wait for the Lord and keep his way, and he will exalt you to inherit the land; you will look on when the wicked are cut off.

Revelation 11:15b “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.” (Handel's Messiah)

INWARD TEST 4: Matthew 5:6

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

- Desired Trait – Not enough to mourn past sins; hunger for future righteousness. Hunger and thirst designate strong spiritual desire and need.
Righteousness 3 aspects
 1. Legal is justification, which is a right relationship with God
 2. Moral is righteousness of character and conduct that pleases God. It is contrasted with the righteousness of the Pharisees in 5:20
 3. Social is concerned with seeking liberation from oppression, civil rights, justice in courts of law, integrity in business, and honor in the home and family

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- Problems: We can be very selective, picking and choosing our righteousness. Is God content if we are only content with being justified but live contrary? We can become moralists and have lists of dos and don'ts – Pharisees; We can become social activists and not care about other aspects; Easy to look to our own standards, what is right in our own eyes, ignore Word. WE NEED GOD'S WORK IN OUR HEARTS TO CHANGE US.
- Blessing: "Shall be filled" is future to the hungering, but it is not distant. Though righteousness will be God's declaration at the judgment, we are partakers of righteousness in the present. The term "filled" was commonly used when fattening cattle. It is only when you hunger and thirst that you will be satisfied

Isaiah 55:1–2 Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.

These first 4 traits are summed well by this parable that Jesus told:

Luke 18:9-14

He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt:

"Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus:

'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.'

But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!'

I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

The blessings of the Kingdom, of God's Comfort, of Inheriting the Earth, and being satisfied with righteousness are only possible by the Gospel.

The law directs us to the gospel to be justified;

The gospel then directs us to the law to be sanctified;

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OUTWARD TEST 1: Matthew 5:7

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

- Desired Trait – Mercy starts with God showing his mercy to us. He is at work then to make us merciful, then blesses us for showing mercy.
Mercy differs from Grace; mercy deals with results of sin – pain, misery, distress; Grace deals with sin and guilt itself. Mercy extends relief; Grace extends pardon.
- Problems: We cannot receive mercy unless we repent and we cannot claim to receive mercy if we are unmerciful towards the sins of others.
Note the connection with meekness. The meek acknowledge to others that we are sinners. The merciful have compassion on others for they are sinners too.
Matthew 6:14–15 For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.
- Blessing: God has first shown us mercy and works to make us like him. We continue to receive God's mercy when we too are merciful. If we are like the wicked servant in the parable, we should expect no mercy.

OUTWARD TEST 2: Matthew 5:8

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

- Desired Trait – singleness of heart, honest with no hidden motive, clean without impurity. This is a heart that is justified and sanctified by God. Because God is pure, there is an affinity with the pure in heart
- Problems: The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? There is the danger of a divided heart.
Hypocrisy danger by seeking appearance – like a whitewashed tomb
Again, we are driven to the gospel to accomplish what we cannot, for Jesus broke the power of sin when he rose from the dead and frees us
- Blessing: Seeing God is a future reality when we are in God's presence; however now we see with eyes of faith. We have seen his glory in the incarnate Son.
Psalms 24:3–4
Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully.

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OUTWARD TEST 3: Matthew 5:9

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

- Desired Trait – The starting point is first, being at peace with God. Then we can seek genuine peace at all levels. Peacemaking is a divine work. God undertook it in removing the division between Jew and Gentile, making one out of two, making peace (Eph. 2:15). It is showing kindness and mercy.
- Problems: Danger of compromise either of truth or grace. In Jeremiah’s day, the false prophets promised peace when there was no peace. We don’t deal well with controversy; we can easily avoid those who differ from us; yet God would have us seek reconciliation to one another and, through evangelism, to Him. Still, Jesus comes with a sword – conflict is inevitable due to Christ’s coming, but we don’t seek to create it.
- Blessing: “Sons of God” is a title of high stature, different from the picture of children of God. Until relatively recent times, a son followed his father in the same work. We are to be sons (men and women) in that same sense. Like Jesus, we are doing the Father’s work.
Luke 6:35 But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil.

OUTWARD TEST 4: Matthew 5:10

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (this is a double beatitude)

Matthew 5:11-12

Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

- Desired Trait – The sense of this (perfect passive tense) is the idea of permission – they “allowed” themselves to be persecuted – they stayed true. Like the apostles who rejoiced that they were worthy of suffering for Christ, they are faithful.

Problems: In the history of the church, there were some who sought after persecution and even martyrdom. We should not seek it, nor should we fear it. In our country, we have had relative ease and do not listen to the counsel of

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scripture that tells us the persecutions and suffering should be expected. Yet, throughout the world, the persecuted church is the norm.

2 Timothy 3:12

Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,

- Blessing: Great joy is associated with suffering. Death cannot take away our lives, but denying Christ and falling away would, even if it spared our earthly lives. The result of enduring persecution is to receive the highest honor in heaven (Heb. 11)

1 Peter 4:13–14

But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.

Summary passage: The Importance of Getting the Lord’s perspective on our lives

Rev. 3:15-20 “I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.

Conclusion.

Beatitudes are more of a circle than a string.

- The character traits reflect how we come to faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior
- **“God’s Blessings are Connected to Our Character”**
God works by grace to give us a Christlike character
- Still in continuous need of the gospel – every day of our lives
- I used the beatitudes like the law – standards we should strive for,
They point us to the gospel and the work of God’s Spirit to transform us
- Share and Contrast Gospel with self-help gospel

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Sermon moves from this primary relationship to God to our relation to the world - salt and light

Benediction: Rom. 12:1-2