

Matthew050112-071011  
Bridge of Hope  
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## “The Messianic Exchange”

Matthew has turned our attention to the authoritative teaching of Jesus the Messiah. The Sermon on the Mount which covers chapters 5 through 7 walks us through the values, of His Messianic Community. In this discourse on discipleship, Jesus gives His followers the expectations He holds in terms of the type of character they should demonstrate in their lives. Matthew is teaching his readers about an exchange of ideas that need to take place as they move into the Messianic Community.

Before we get into our thoughts for today let's read again the first part of the Sermon on the Mount. It says in . . . .

**Matthew 5:1-12** (NKJV) *And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:*

*"Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.  
Blessed are those who mourn,  
For they shall be comforted.  
Blessed are the meek,  
For they shall inherit the earth.  
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
For they shall be filled.  
Blessed are the merciful,  
For they shall obtain mercy.  
Blessed are the pure in heart,  
For they shall see God.  
Blessed are the peacemakers,  
For they shall be called sons of God.  
Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake,  
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*"Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

The discourse begins in what is becoming a typical writing style for Matthew. Stated very strongly Matthew gives a manifesto of sorts on the values in the kingdom of heaven. Jesus does this through a form of teaching or literature that is constructed in such a way that it makes it easier to memorize and remember. We need to keep in mind that much of what is passed on is done through oral traditions so the ability to retain it in their memory was crucial.

Not only does Jesus use a form of communicating that is easy to remember, but He chooses one that carries the greatest amount of impact to those listening. This is partially because the learner could remember it and therefore think it about later. But more than that, it was a form

that brought other ingredients that helped the truth being shared to cut deeper into the heart where life decisions tend to get made.

Jesus is communicating through a medium that reaches both the mind and the heart bringing about life change as the disciple listens and applies the truth being shared. Later in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus will use a different form of comparison to help His newly formed Messianic Community discover the new idea of how they will live. Here in the first part of Matthew 5 Jesus uses the Beatitude form to communicate His life changing exchange.

Let's go ahead and start looking at the impact this form brings to the listener.

- **LIVING DIFFERENTLY**

1. Throughout the entire sermon Jesus calls His disciples to live differently from those who are around them.
  - He is calling them from a life that they have lived to a new life they are to live.
2. Jesus is telling His new disciples right at the very beginning that they would probably stand out from the people they have lived with, as they would follow Him.
  - He wasn't calling them to live the way they had always known; this new community had some different values.
  - Some have even said that they were the values God intended, but that His people were never able to achieve through the law.
3. Jesus was also letting them know they would not always be well accepted by those around them.
  - He was preparing them for the reality that His ways would bring a challenge to others who were watching them.
4. Lest they would be overwhelmed with discouragement, Jesus through the form of beatitude attaches a promise to each challenge in character.
  - He would provide the challenge to them with "Blessed are those who . . ." and then follow it with a promise by saying, "for theirs is" or "for they shall."
  - Jesus wanted His disciples to know that even though they would endure much, they would also experience a reward for the effort.
5. It is interesting that in creating the list for His beatitudes Jesus actually lifts up . . . .

- **THE MARGINAL**

1. Jesus was lifting up the people in the margins of society who were often discarded by the mainstream of Jewish culture.
2. Some of the things that Jesus challenged this group with that day went against the popular or normal way other teachers focused their attention.
3. He lifted up things that were often criticized or rejected by people and then He called His followers to exhibit such character in their lives.
4. Jesus valued things that others seemed to despise or ignore.
  - We might call them weak or losers in our world today, but Jesus doesn't see them this way at all.
5. Instead He commends them and makes strong promises for those who demonstrate such character in their lives.
6. It is as if Jesus is saying to His disciples that we are made up of the marginal and you know what that means, "It is going to be tough for you in this life at times because you are My disciple, but remember that there will come a point where you be taken care of."
7. It was kind of like saying it will be really hard, but not always.

- **BLESSED**

1. Each of the Beatitudes begins with the same word.
  - So it is obviously really important that we understand what that word means as it impacts every one of the statements attached to it.
2. Each statement begins with the word “blessed,” so what exactly does the word mean?
  - Like any time you try to translate something from one language to another there can be difficulties in getting language to match up.
  - And sometimes it takes a combination of words to get the full meaning.
  - Other times people simply have to choose a preferred usage because none of the choices seem to match perfectly.
  - Let’s see if we can help bring out the meaning of the word “blessed” as it appears in the Sermon on the Mount.
3. Happy – Some would say that the best word to capture the idea here in Matthew is the word happy.
  - And there is in fact good reason for such a thought.
  - Why? Because when we do what God asks of us and His character is seen in our life we are happy.
  - But the problem with the word happy is that it is rather subjective to a feeling a person may have.
  - It doesn’t seem as if the strong call to a new way of living would be tied to how a person feels.
  - In the context of the Beatitudes it would seem this is more of a declaration of how God feels rather than how we feel.
4. Blessed as it appears here would seem to be more about a positive judgment made by God on an individual.
  - It means to be approved or to find approval.
  - Thus, when God blesses us He is approving us.
  - “Blessed is not simply a nice wish from God; it is a pronouncement of what we actually are – approved. Blessedness indicates the smile of God or, as Max Lucado has so beautifully put it, “The Applause of Heaven.”<sup>1</sup>

- **THE STRENGTH OF REPETITION**

1. The strength in using this form of Beatitude is found in well-chosen words that are repeated.
2. Each time, giving direction and strength to the words that follow and to the person who strives to live them out in their life.
  - This repetitiveness gives importance to the word being used.
  - It overshadows everything as it brings it’s influence over the entire statement.
3. In this situation to be blessed or approved of God means more to us than anything else.
  - That is what Jesus said and what Matthew wants to convey to his readers.
4. Jesus, through this form of teaching in the Beatitudes, is saying that the most important thing as His disciple is to be approved of God.
  - It is to have God smile upon them.
  - This reality changes so many of our thoughts as we read through the first 12 verses of chapter 5.

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<sup>1</sup> R. Kent Hughes, The Sermon on the Mount: The Message of the Kingdom, pg 18

5. Through the strength of repetition Jesus is able to help His disciples understand that God can and does smile upon them, they can be blessed or approved when they live in the character set for them.
  - They just need to value what God values.
6. This thought moves to the last thing we need to understand about teaching through Beatitudes.

- **THE CONDITION**

1. The condition of promise is found in the character that follows the repeated word, "Blessed."
  - If you live in the blessing then you live out the character, they go together.
2. Those who demonstrate such character in their lives are blessed by God; they are approved of God.
3. It means that those who . . .
  - are "poor in spirit" or "mourn" or "meek" they are blessed of God.
  - are "hungry and thirsty for righteousness" have the approval of God.
  - "show mercy, are pure in heart, and are peacemakers," God smiles on them.
  - are "persecuted because of righteousness," they are blessed by God.
4. The condition sets the stage for the promise to come our way, when we live out such character in our lives then God is able to bless us with exactly what we need.

Conclusion: God's approval or blessing on our life is more important than the approval of anyone else. His approval is more important than that of friends, business acquaintances, or even our colleagues. Having His approval means the truth of these character traits can penetrate deep into our lives and change us.

We may not have been able to get it right before, but now because we have His approval through the Messianic exchange that comes when we believe Jesus is the Messiah, we can grow in the character traits that eluded us before. The values that God holds can grow in us because the Messiah helps us. We are blessed. We are approved.

The question for each disciple is, "Do we really want His approval or blessing more than anything else?" It isn't a question of do we want to be happy. One of the biggest problems in our culture is that we focus too much on the state of being happy. We lack in commitment because our commitment is based on a feeling that may or may not always be there. There is nothing wrong with wanting to be happy, but this is about much more than a feeling we get. It is about having the "Applause of Heaven" upon our lives. "Do we really want God's approval above all else?"

This week we need to make our prayer be like one that R. Kent Hughes offered,

*"Dear Lord,*

*I long for your smile upon my life. So please open my heart to the meaning of the Beatitudes.*

*I open myself to their light. Shine their rays into the deepest part of my life. Sear my soul. Heal me.*

*Build the character of the kingdom in me, so that you can call me blessed.*

*Amen.*<sup>2</sup>

We are asking you to pray each day something along these lines as you decide if you want what Jesus wants. To decide if you want His approval more than the approval of others. Decide if you want to learn and grow in the values and character offered in the Messianic Exchange.

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<sup>2</sup> R. Kent Hughes, [The Sermon on the Mount: The Message of the Kingdom](#), pg 18