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The Portrait of a Believer; Matthew 5:1-12

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Introduction – There are eight Christian virtues listed in vv3-10, with vv11-12 really being an expansion of v10. These Christian virtues are commonly called The Beattitudes. In fact, I have that title for this section of the Sermon on the Mount printed in bold type in my Bible. As I'm sure you are aware, those bold type titles found throughout some versions are not Scripture but rather summary points that the translation boards provide in various Bible translations. Sometimes those summary statements can be misleading to a more accurate reading of Scripture, and unfortunately, I believe that is the case with our text today. The Beattitudes have often been defined as attitudes that should be in the believer. The issue is that when we say these things should be in the believer, there's a bit of wiggle-room or the idea of option enters our minds. We tend to reason that if we're doing ok in one or two of these, we should be fine.

However as we read the actual Scripture of vv3-12, Jesus does not present these virtues as options with wiggle room but rather as characteristics of believers. It's not that these attitudes should be present in our lives, it's that these attitudes are present in the lives of believers to one degree or other. Of course none of us are perfect examples of these, but with some degree or respect, these are the virtues that believers demonstrate in our lives. We're all in a process of growing in our faith, so there is room for improvement always, but nonetheless Jesus is providing a portrait of true faith in these verses.

Only believers belong to the kingdom of heaven. Only believers will inherit the new earth. Only believers are sons and daughters of God, and so on. Indeed that is why Jesus opens the Sermon on the Mount with this description. The main point of the sermon is to distinguish true faith from a false, misleading faith. As we study these together we should be asking which virtues do we need to be giving attention in our lives as followers of Christ. We should also be aware that the absence of these virtues is an indication that we probably have a false faith and need to truly surrender our lives to Jesus.

I. Poor in Spirit

- a. What does it mean to be poor in spirit? We know that Jesus is not referring to poverty or the absence of material goods or wealth. He is not saying all true believers are poor; He is saying all true believers are poor in spirit.
- b. Also, this is not referring to a low self-esteem or a negative demeanor. He's not saying believers are like the Winnie the Pooh character Eeyore. Poor in spirit means to recognize our state of spiritual need. Our spirits are poor. They are horribly lacking in love to God. They are blinded in sin and darkness. Poor in spirit is to understand that we are spiritually bankrupt. To realize that our main problem in life and the main reason we are separated from God is that as sinners, we are in a state of spiritual death and blindness – we are poor in spirit.
- c. Remember the Pharisee and tax collector of Luke 18. The Pharisee had a false faith. He prayed to God and listed all the ways he was better than other men. The tax collector wouldn't even look up to heaven but cried, "God, be merciful to me a sinner." And Jesus said, the tax collector went home justified – right with God. Why? Because he knew he was poor in spirit.
- d. Notice why the poor in spirit are the ones who know true, abiding happiness – for theirs and theirs alone is the kingdom of heaven. Believers and only believers possess an immovable fullness of life because they know they possess an immovable home in heaven. The pathway to the door of heaven is poor in spirit.
- e. Now that's the exact opposite of the world and of false faith. The world says I'm fine, nothing is wrong with me. I just need to live out who I am. False faith says I've done enough good things to be right with God. I'm rich toward God.
- f. Jesus said, "I didn't come for those who don't need a physician. I came for those who know they need one."
- g. Poor in spirit means we realize we are incapable of making ourselves right with God.

II. Those who Mourn

- a. What we're going to find is that these virtues build on each other. Jesus is not talking about mourning for any reason. There are many

instances in life that may cause us to weep or mourn. Heartache, sickness, disappointments, the loss of a loved one. There are many reasons why we may mourn.

- b. But this mourning comes from being poor in spirit. In other words, not only do we realize we are sinners and incapable of making ourselves right with God, but we grieve and mourn over our sin.
- c. This is a godly sorrow because we begin to understand how deeply we have offended our Creator. We begin to realize that God who has given us life and breath and health and good things, we have repaid the goodness and blessings of God with a selfish desire to please only ourselves and have rejected and refused and denied the praise and glory due to His holy name. We realize our rebellion, our sinful words and thoughts and actions are what put our gracious Savior on the tree, the anguish and humiliation and suffering of Calvary was due to our sin. We've marred the glory of God and we've crucified the Son of glory.
- d. I should have been crucified. I should have suffered and died. I should have hung on the cross in disgrace, but Jesus, God's Son, took my place.
- e. Hendriksen writes, "Godly sorrow turns the soul to God. God, in turn, grants comfort to those who seek their help from Him."
- f. There is no greater comfort in this life than to know our wicked, vile, heinous, offensive sins toward God have been forgiven and wiped clean from our slate in Jesus!
- g. Psalm 126.
- h. Now that's not the way the world and false faith find true happiness. How can mourning produce happiness? Because they who mourn over their sin, they and only they shall be comforted by the forgiveness of sin and reconciliation with God.

III. The Meek

- a. This doesn't mean weakness or spinelessness. In fact, as people of faith, we will often be called upon to be bold and courageous in our faith and firm in our convictions and in the Word of God.
- b. Meekness follows poor in spirit and mourning. Once we realize our spiritual condition and mourn our sin, we then come to God with complete and utter reliance and dependence upon Him. Meekness is

understanding we have no self-justification or self-sufficiency before God. Everything we need for salvation and life and faith is a gift of God.

- c. Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to the cross I cling. That's meekness.
 - d. The world says you pull yourself up by your bootstraps and go get your piece of the pie. False faith says I deserve God's favor in return for all the good I've done. God owes it to me to do me good.
 - e. True faith realizes that the only thing we contribute to our salvation is our sin which made it so necessary. Meekness admits God has given us life and salvation by His sheer grace and mercy.
 - f. Meekness is the opposite of spiritual pride towards God and towards others. Meekness knows we're no better than anyone else. We're all sinners in need of God's grace.
 - g. They and only they shall inherit the earth. Which means they have a certain, sure place in the new heavens and the new earth.
 - h. What we've observed so far is that confession and repentance of sin and realization of our undeserving state and incapacity to make ourselves right with God has placed us before God in a humble position of thankful reception. God in turn responds with forgiveness and reconciliation and redemption and justification.
 - i. The unrighteous has come to grips with his wretched state of unrighteousness and has come to God, and God, through Christ, has made the unrighteous, righteous.
- IV. Those who Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness
- a. Once we've been made right with God, our chief desire is to live for God. To hunger and thirst for righteousness. To live rightly toward God and toward others. To love God and love neighbor.
 - b. This represents a pursuit. When you are hungry and thirsty, you are on a quest to find food and drink. When you have been made alive in Christ, you set out on a quest for Christ.
 - c. Nothing in this world will satisfy your soul, but Christ will. They and they alone shall be satisfied.
 - d. Paul summed it up this way – to live is Christ, to die is gain.