Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Only Way to Happiness
Scripture: Matthew 5:1-2
Code: 90-188

We are going to begin a study in the Word of God tonight in Matthew chapter 5 and I want to talk to you on the subject of the key to happiness, the only way to happiness, Matthew chapter 5. As we come to Matthew 5, we come to familiar passage of Scripture called the Beatitudes. You will notice starting in verse 3 the word "blessed" is used right on down through verse 11. These are the Beatitudes. These are the pronunciations of blessing.

And I want to begin tonight by just giving you a bit of an overview and then starting next Lord's day we'll look more carefully at each of these Beatitudes. But we need to get the picture of all of it as it lays out before us. And to start with, to acknowledge the fact that Jesus is committed to providing true happiness. That really is the issue here. The Lord Jesus Christ has come into the world to provide to men and women real happiness, lasting happiness.

Sadly, however, not everyone knows that and certainly not everyone believes that. Not even everyone in His kingdom has enjoyed the reality of that provision of happiness, but happiness is His concern. It is God's concern, it is Christ's concern.

And that becomes very evident from the fact that here we have in Matthew chapter 5 the first recorded sermon of Jesus in the New Testament, the first sermon that we have on record and it is a sermon that begins with the issue of happiness. Why do I say that? Because the word "blessed" means that. There are nine blesseds starting in verse 3 and running on down through the opening verses of this great chapter. The word "blessed" really can be translated and often is in Scripture by the word "happy." And I want to introduce this to you in the broadest possible terms looking at it from several different vantage points.

Let's start setting the stage a little bit by looking at the biblical context. What are we talking about when we talk about blessedness? The Greek word is makariosand it's a familiar word, it's an adjective. As I said, it appears nine times here in the introduction to the Sermon on the Mount that we know as the Beatitude...the Beatitudes. But it also appears in its form in one form or another, a cognate form, at least fifty times in the New Testament. And the best that can be said about the word "blessed" is it describes the happy condition of the soul, the contented condition of the soul. It is perhaps similar to the word makarin Greek which means happy. It also can be translated blissful. And that's exactly what the word is intended to convey.

In five of the passages where this word is used in the New Testament it is translated by the English word "happy." So the translators understood that it was related to that word, and that concept.

Homer in ancient Greek writing used the word to describe a wealthy man who was satisfied with all that he had. Plato used it to describe a prosperous man. Both Homer and Hesiod, another Greek writer. spoke of the Greek gods as being blessed in themselves, that is they were in a state of perfect contentment. They were happy with their condition. Unaffected, he said, by the world of men who were subject to poverty and weakness and death.

So, we're talking here about contentment. We're talking here about satisfaction. We're talking here about what we tend to call happiness, inward happiness, a condition of bliss which is neither the result of external circumstances nor is it the result of some outside influence subject to change. Most people in the world experience a little bit of happiness when they have internal emotions that are positive, or when they have external circumstances that for the moment are positive, but both of those things are whimsical. The basic New Testament meaning that we're looking at is a continual constant state of happiness, a state of bliss, a state of blessedness, a state of well being in which a person finds satisfaction and fulfillment.

Now the word is also indicative of character. It is connected to believers, and we want to make that very clear at the very beginning. It is used to describe those who are believers. It is not used to describe anywhere in Scripture those who are not believers. So a permanent state of happiness, true bliss and contentment, satisfaction and fulfillment belongs only to those who know God. In fact, going even beyond that, it is a word used to describe God Himself. Psalm 68:35 says, "Blessed be God." Psalm 72:18, "Blessed be the Lord God." Psalm 119:12, "Blessed art Thou, O Lord." In 1 Timothy 1:11 Paul talks about the glorious gospel of the blessed God, and then at the end of that epistle, chapter 6 verse 15, he calls God the blessed and only sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, referring, of course, to God in the form of Jesus Christ. So God is by nature happy, contentful, filled, satisfied, blissful and blessed. And those who belong to God share in that same bliss. It is a word then used of God, used of Christ...listen carefully...to describe the divine nature. And since we as believers, according to 2 Peter 1 verse 4, are partakers of the divine nature, we then can be said to also be blessed. We are blessed because we possess the life of God by His grace granted to us in Christ. We share in the bliss of God. We share in the joy and satisfaction, fulfillment and happiness that God Himself experiences.

No one can know true happiness if he is not a partaker of the divine nature. So all that we're going to learn here in this portion of Scripture is for Christians. It is for those who believe in the Lord God. It is for those who have come to God through faith in Jesus Christ. It is for those who have come to the cross to obtain forgiveness for sin and to receive the gift not only of righteousness imputed, but the gift of a new nature, the divine nature and can thereby enter in to true and divine happiness. Once a

person comes to know God through Christ, then comes this happiness.

So, to begin with, looking at it in the broadest possible context, Jesus is talking about inward character. He's not talking about something connected to a momentary emotion or an external event subject to change. He's talking about something that is characteristic of people who belong to God.

Now all of this given at a very crucial time by our Lord as He initiates the dawning of the New Covenant age, the new age. This is a very important point, of course, in redemptive history as the Messiah comes to...to introduce the New Covenant, to provide the New Covenant sacrifice in His death and resurrection. True blessedness then is consonant with the provision of this New Covenant.

The Old Testament, for example, is the book of Adam and his story, starting in Genesis. Adam was the first king in history, according to Genesis 1:28, he was given rule over all the creation. He, however, failed as a king and plunged the entire race into a sea of sin and depravity. And the Old Testament begins, as it were, with sin and ends with a curse. The Old Testament ends with these words, Malachi 4:6, "But I come and smite the earth with a curse." The book about Adam ends with a curse. The New Testament is a book about the new Adam, Jesus Christ and it begins with a blessing and that blessing is connected to the New Covenant. The New Testament opens with an amazing, thrilling contrast as we meet a new King, a King who will not fail in the realm of His rule. And all is different and the message is blessedness.

The first Adam was tested in a beautiful garden and failed. The last Adam was tested in a dangerous desert and triumphed. The first Adam was a thief and he was cast out of paradise. The last Adam turned to a thief on the cross and said, "Today you will be with Me in paradise." The book of the generations of Adam ends with a curse, but the book of the generations of Jesus Christ, which is how Matthew begins, ends with a promise, Revelation 22:3, "There shall be no more curse." The Old Testament gave the law to show man his misery. The New Testament gives the life of Christ to show man true happiness.

So, Matthew presents the King who reverses the tragedy of Adam's fall and makes us subjects of His glorious Kingdom. Revelation 1:5 and 6 puts it this way, "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood and has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father."

So, the New Testament is all about blessedness. It's all about happiness. It's all about fulfillment and satisfaction. It is for only the people of the King, however. This happiness is reserved for those who are partakers of the divine nature, who share the very happiness of God. That's the general biblical context of the word "blessing."

Let me talk about the context in the book of Matthew itself. Matthew is about the arrival of the King. As the New Testament opens, Matthew focuses on Christ the King having come. And real happiness

is the King's concern. He is come to bring happiness. He is come to bring happiness to the subjects of His Kingdom, to those over whom He reigns. That is His purpose, to bring them happiness.

I have to say, however, at this point that even in the midst of this happiness there is a paradoxical picture of misery. All the qualities that make up real happy life do involve some pain, do involve some misery, as we'll see when we move through the study. To most people, though, this might not make any sense. I suppose the world assumes that true happiness means the absence of misery and the absence of pain, whereas believers understand that true happiness is found in the midst of pain, in the midst of misery.

Everything changed when Jesus brought His kind of happiness. As one writer said, "It is though Jesus crept into life's large display window and changed all the price tags." All the "Happiness is..." books don't read like this, nor did they in the world of Jesus' day. Happiness is the successful man. Happiness is the wealthy person. Happiness is the person in love. Happiness is the go-getter, the one who can push everyone out of his way and get what he wants, when he wants, where he wants it. Happiness is acquiring.

But this is not Jesus' plan. This is not Jesus' pattern. This is not the kind of happiness that belongs to the divine nature. He doesn't say "happy are the rich" here. He doesn't say "happy are the famous." He doesn't say "happy are the noble." He doesn't say "happy are the successful." He says "Happy are the poor in spirit, happy are those who mourn, happy are the meek or humble, happy are the hungry and thirsty, happy are the merciful, happy are the pure in heart, happy are the peacemakers, happy are those who are persecuted, happy are those who are insulted." It's a paradoxical thing to look at this kind of happiness. If you're looking for the same kind that the world designed, it's not here...it's not here. The tree of happiness that grows in the cursed earth is nothing like the happiness that God offers us in Christ.

Solomon is certainly a classic illustration of that, if not the most classic. His parentage was the royal line of David and nobody could have been more noble than that. He was the son of a king who had the right to rule. His palace literally was the paragon of the earth in the city of God. His wealth immeasurable with treasures so vast that silver was as common as rocks. His pleasure was fabulous food, stables, horses, buildings, servants, vineyards, fish ponds, gardens, to say nothing of an almost endless string of women. His intelligence was unequalled in the world of men. He was the wisest of all men.

But did he find in it happiness? No, he found in it emptiness. Read the musings of Solomon in the book of Ecclesiastes, and all appeared empty and useless. All is vanity, he said over and over again. And that's because of a New Testament truth. A man's life consists not in the abundance of things which he possesses. That's not the key to happiness. Another New Testament teaching is that she that lives in pleasure is dead while she lives. Pleasure isn't the path to happiness. Possessions

aren't the path to happiness. It's ridiculous to spend your whole life trying to make yourself happy on things that are all going to end up on the junk heap. Happiness is never found in the cursed earth and it's never really ultimately and finally found in the evil system. Why? Because physical things do not touch the soul. You cannot fill a spiritual need with a physical substance. Anyone that has a deep longing for true happiness is unsatisfied with any material thing, things which cannot quiet the heart. Things which cannot bring peace to the heart in a storm cannot provide any true lasting happiness. You cannot pour oil on a wounded spirit. When Saul was sore distressed, you remember, all the jewels of his crown couldn't comfort him for a moment. King Belshazzar, according to the book of Daniel, was carousing and drinking and living it up. He drank wine, it says, in the golden vessels of the temple, but when the figure of a man's hand appeared and wrote, "Mene, mene, tekel upharsin," on the wall, you'd been weighed in the balances and found wanting, it says his face changed. His wine went sour, his food was rotten in his stomach cause there was no real happiness in his soul.

One of the Puritan saints by the name of Thomas Watson said, "Things of this world will no more keep out trouble of spirit than a piece of paper will stop a bullet. Worldy delights are winged, they may be compared to a flock of birds in the garden that stay a little while but when you come near to them they take their flight. So riches make themselves wings, they fly away as an eagle, Proverbs 23:5 says. They're like the meteor that blazes but spends and annihilates itself. They're like a castle made of snow, lying under the torrid beams of the sun," end quote. External things do not bring permanent comfort to the soul.

Ecclesiastes 5:13, listen to what Solomon said, "Riches are kept for the hurt of their owners." They're a fuel for pride, fuel for lust. They are snare in a trap. They choke out the Word of God. They tear our souls as thorns tear our clothes. But riches don't bring true happiness.

And what God is saying to us through the very words of Jesus in this passage is that you cannot find real happiness in the ways of the world, in what they possess or in their philosophy. You cannot seek the living among the dead. Happiness is not here in this world. The world can't bring it. It can't offer it. It can't provide it. It is spiritual in nature. It belongs in essence to the nature of God and is only enjoyed by those who share His nature.

Jesus came as the King to present this tremendous truth. He came to introduce the principles of His kingdom which were inward and spiritual. The problem with that was, as we've seen in our often studies of the New Testament, the Jews were looking for a political kingdom. They were looking for a material kingdom. They were really attracted to Him when He created food for them. They were very much attracted to Him when He healed their diseases and cast demons out of them, when He increased the state of their physical well being, their earthly condition. But when He began to drill into their hearts and talk about the fact that they were sinful and alienated from the life of God and needed to receive the blessedness that God gives to those who share His nature by recognizing their sins

and repenting before Him, they took issue with that. In fact, in the Sermon on the Mount here, Jesus' great sermon that runs from chapter 5 through the end of chapter 7, not one reference is made to a social issue, not one reference is made to political aspects of the kingdom. The Jews were so concerned about that, Jesus was not. The stress is on being, not on doing, it's on being. The stress of the Sermon on the Mount is what a man is and not what a man does, or what a man has, or what a man achieves. And that was true all the way through the King's ministry. They were all wanting to hear about what a man can have and what he can become and what he can possess. And Jesus only wanted to talk about what he is. That's why He said, "My Kingdom is not of this world."

So, the position of the blessed is the most exalted position in which you share the very nature of God and participate in His blessedness, but it is absolutely antithetical to anything in this world. Absolutely nothing in this world fits into that category. This is a material, earthly passing world and His is a spiritual, eternal Kingdom.

Now the religious scene sort of exacerbated the issue because Jesus was confronting a society of religionists who thought that they were okay on the inside. "Fine, Jesus wants to talk about the inside, we're okay on the inside." They had come to the conviction that they were living life as God wanted them to live it and that things were okay with them.

Now the religious life of Israel was quite diverse. I suppose you could divide it into a myriad of different groups. It's amazing to see that happening today. Back in 1948 when Israel became a nation, the great vision of David Ben-Gurion and other architects of the modern state of Israel was there would be this one great glorious unified people and that they would all come there and every Jew on the face of the earth would find a home in Israel and they would come from everywhere. They would come from Russia. They would come from western Europe and eastern Europe. They would come from South America. They would come from the Americas over here in the western hemisphere. They would come from all over the globe to that place and they would all live in harmony and joy with their arms wrapped around the same great love of their nation, the same great national and ethnic devotion.

And the fact of the matter is, here we are in 1998 and there are factions beyond counting and they're at each other's throat and the whole nation is in chaos. And that's somewhat like it was even in the time of Jesus. There was chaos among the Jewish people because they were splintered into so many groups. The most commonly known groups were the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Essenes and the Zealots.

The Pharisees who believed that happiness was found in tradition and legalism. The Sadducees who believed that happiness was found in liberalism and philosophy. The Essenes who believed that happiness was found in self-denial and separation from the world, they were monks, monastics, living in a sort of a minimal conditions out on the edge of the desert in caves. The Zealots, they were the

ones who assassinated the Romans at every turn. Some of them carried daggers around and when they saw a Roman soldier they slit his throat. Zealots believed happiness was found in the overthrow of Rome.

So you had these various factions. The Pharisees believing happiness was found in legalism and tradition, the Sadducees believing it was found in liberalism, being liberated from old traditional laws and in philosophy, Essenes believing happiness was found through personal self-denial and separation from the world so they lived in isolation like monks, and Zealots who believed happiness was found in overthrowing Rome. I suppose we could say this, to the Pharisees happiness meant go back. They were the nostalgia people. They wanted to go back and hold to the traditions. To the Sadducees, happiness meant go ahead, modernize, get away from the past, let's liberalize. To the Zealots, happiness was go out, let's isolate. And to the Essenes, rather, it was go out, let's isolate. To the Zealots it was go against, let's revolt, let's kill. Go back, go ahead, go out, go against...every direction they were going trying to find true happiness.

The Pharisees in going back to the law and back to tradition rejected the present and sacrificed the spiritual reality to hold on to the past. They killed their Messiah to hold on to the past. The Sadducees in rejecting the past and going only with the present and their future ignored the Messiah who was the fulfillment of all the past prophecies and types. The Essenes in their desire for holy living made an issue out of geography and for them holiness was all about where you live and the style of life you live, not the heart. And the Zealots were caught up in violence and rejected the message of Jesus Christ as well.

The point I'm trying to make is that there were all these religious factions all looking for happiness in some zone and not ever finding it because it isn't there. It's not in tradition. It's not in philosophy and modern thought. It's not in self-denial and isolation from the culture. It's not in political overthrow. And Jesus came into the situation and said, "Happiness is..." and gave all new direction for the answer to the longing of the heart of man. He literally dismantled all of those groups. The Pharisees and Sadducees He confronted regularly. The Essenes and the Zealots are not as much an issue in the New Testament, but obviously the Essenes disappeared into oblivion. In their isolation they eventually went out of existence. And the Zealots were perhaps for the most part slaughtered by the Romans. In 70 A.D they disappeared.

Jesus brought a completely different way. He brought a way of happiness that had to do with the heart and nothing else. With that, let's look at verse 1 for a moment and see how this begins. "And when He saw the multitudes He went up on the mountain and after He sat down His disciples came to Him. And opening His mouth He began to teach them, saying, `Blessed...blessed...blessed...blessed...blessed...blessed,'" and so forth.

In order to master this sermon, in order to understand the Beatitudes you have to understand that Jesus was saying something different than what those people were used to hearing, and even what the disciples were expecting to hear. He was talking about an internal happiness that only God can grant and He grants it to the most unlikely people, those who are poor, sorrowful, meek, hungry, thirsty, merciful, pure in heart, and peacemakers, persecuted and insulted. And nobody would draw up a list like that and say...Here, folks, is the path to happiness, all it takes is a bankrupt spirit, sadness, humility, hunger and thirst, mercy, purity, peace making, persecution and being insulted, that's the path to real happiness. But, believe me, Jesus was counter-culture in every sense.

It says in verse 1 that He saw the multitudes, and He always cared for the multitudes, they always filled His heart with sympathy and a deep desire to help them. He had, of course, wept later on in His ministry when He looked over the multitudes and saw them as sheep without a shepherd, they wouldn't come to Him no matter how He had tried to gather them. He cared about them. When they were hungry, He fed them. When they were sick, He healed them. When they were demon-possessed, He delivered them. He cared about them. When they were ignorant, He endeavored to teach them. And there was a wonderful attraction in Him that drew the crowds. They came to Him.

In fact, look back at the end of chapter 4 verse 23, "Jesus was going about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people. And the news about Him went out into all Syria...to the east...and they brought to Him all who were ill, taken with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics and He healed them and great multitudes followed Him from Galilee and Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judea and from beyond the Jordan." He was really amassing a huge crowd, all sorts, all classes. There were Pharisees and publicans. There were ritualists and legalists, along with harlots and prostitutes. There were scholars and there were the illiterate. There were the refined and there were the degraded. There were the rich and there were the beggars. There were the well and there were sick. There were men and women. He was the attracter of every man and He brought to them the message of the gospel of the Kingdom, the good news that God had a kingdom and they could enter into that kingdom. It was a spiritual kingdom and they could enter that kingdom. There was a way to true happiness. There was a way to sharing the very nature of God.

So, the crowd was gathered. But in reality they were kind of a secondary audience because it says He went up on the mountain, that's a mountain somewhere on the north of the shore of Galilee. There's a traditional site that is believed to be the place where Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount. If that's not the exact spot, certainly it's nearby. I myself have stood there on that very spot and preached the Sermon on the Mount a number of times. It's a beautiful, beautiful spot, the slope of which is so far elevated above the sea of Galilee that you look down upon that beautiful body of water beneath you and see the fields all around you. And Jesus was there on the mountain.

But it says, "After He sat down," that was the teaching posture the rabbis always took, they sat, "His disciples came to Him, and opening His mouth He began to teach them, saying..." And I just note that because though the multitude was there, closest to Jesus was the disciples and the multitude only heard the sermon in a secondary way. Probably the further away they were from Jesus, this massive amount of people, the less they heard at all because Jesus was sitting and He would have been above them if He was sitting on that slope of the mountain because being even seated the crowd would have been below Him because the slope is that severe. But further back they might not have heard everything, but the disciples up close would have heard every word that He spoke and that was His intention. Because, as I told you before, this happiness which He was talking about, this blessedness which He offered belonged only to those who belonged to God...only to those who belonged to God. Only the sons of the kingdom could understand this. Only the sons of the kingdom could have this happiness.

So, as Jesus begins to talk about happiness He talks to the people who will understand what He means, He talks to His own, He talks to His disciples. And beyond them certainly the multitude could have heard and would have heard and maybe not as clearly understood it if they understood it at all and the further back in the crowd you might have gone, you may have heard people saying, "What did He say? What is He saying? Well I can't quite hear, what does He mean?" And as it got passed back it may have not been as clear as He had first uttered it. But the disciples, they needed to hear the message because it really was a message designed for them.

He took the official Jewish rabbinical position, sat down, began to teach. The primary target, I remind you again, was the disciples. Who would that be? Well, that would be the Twelve to start with and then it would be others who were following Him in faith, true believers. They are the matheti(?), that's the word used here, followers. The message is for all in every age, the message is for all, but it is only able to be understood and grasped by those upon whom God has worked powerfully and graciously to transform their hearts. They gathered around Jesus with believing hearts and hearing ears and they could understand what He was saying. So could the others but not nearly as well until God marvelously worked upon their hearts.

So, Jesus speaks primarily to the souls loyal to His kingdom that they might understand the principles of true happiness, which principles are already a reality in their lives as they had come to believe the truth as Christ preached it. He speaks then to loyal souls primarily. And this then is a message to us who are believers, to remind us of the message that the King preaches so that we can pass it on to the rest. It would then become the responsibility of the disciples to go to this multitude as they went out from Christ and went out to preach, they would go back to this multitude wherever they were in what every city or location and they would preach what they learned from the lips of Jesus.

The late archbishop McGee once said, England, once said that it was impossible to conduct the affairs of the English nation on the basis of the Sermon on the Mount because the nation was not

loyal to the King. This great Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5 through 7 is only applicable to loyal subjects. That's an interesting thing because if you typically today talked to anybody in the religious world who is not saved, not truly converted but they're in the religious environment, they teach theology at a college or a seminary, they teach the Bible or they're a liberal...liberally trained pastor or whatever it might be but they don't know the Lord but they sort of name His name and they're in the Christian world, they will invariably go back to the Sermon on the Mount and sort of camp there and say..."Well certainly the Sermon on the Mount we proclaim and we believe because it is this great ethical treatise." The fact of the matter is they don't understand it at all. Because they are not loyal subjects to the King, they cannot comprehend the manifesto of the kingdom. People have tried to apply the Sermon on the Mount, even the Beatitudes, socially. They've tried to apply this sort of externally in a social way. It's become kind of a social gospel. But that effort is doomed to failure. And I think the social gospel is pretty well doomed to failure nowadays, it's not succeeding too well.

This is not a social gospel. This is not an ethical message. This is not something that's trying to call people to a higher level of human devotion. This is a message that tells people how to get into God's kingdom. And it reminds the disciples of the attitude that they had when they came to this happiness and it's the message they must preach. He says, "You must tell people that if they want to be happy, they have to be poor in spirit. If they want to be happy, they have to mourn. If they want to be happy, they have to be meek, that's what the word gentle means, or humble. If they want to be happy, they have to hunger and thirst. If they want to be happy, they have to be merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers. They have to suffer persecution and insult.

Strange, but some evangelicals have taken the Sermon on the Mount and objected to it because they say it's too hard...it's too hard, they say. They say, you know, "Matthew 5:48 Jesus says, `Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect.'" And they don't even like the Beatitudes. There are many evangelicals, we think the Beatitudes are too hard because it sounds here like if you want to get in the kingdom you've got to go through all these kinds of attitudes to receive the blessing of God that brings this true happiness, and we don't like that because getting saved shouldn't be difficult, there shouldn't be such a wrenching experience as this. There shouldn't be such a soul searching. There shouldn't be such a poverty of spirit and mourning and meekness and hungering and thirsting and all of that. That sounds like pre-salvation works and coming to Christ should be an easy thing where you just receive the gift. And so there are evangelicals who say..."Well, we don't even think the Sermon on the Mount applies to us today, we'll just take it and push it off into the millennial kingdom and it will apply in the millennial kingdom.

But the text doesn't say that. It's not in there. Nowhere in this Sermon on the Mount, nowhere in these Beatitudes does it say..."By the way, fellas, make sure that the folks who come after you know this doesn't apply to them." In fact, Jesus spoke to a people in a real world just like our world and also, He promised persecution and there won't be persecution in the millennial kingdom. Matthew 5:44 He says you're going to have enemies and there's going to be persecution. That's meaningless

in the kingdom, there's not going to be any persecution in the kingdom, we're going to reign with Christ. And the only persecution is going to be when the King wields the rod of iron on the ungodly. Plus, all the same principles that are in the Sermon on the Mount and in the Beatitudes are elsewhere all over the Scripture and particularly in the New Testament also.

This is not something that has to be relegated to some future kingdom on earth. It is simply this, Jesus is teaching the life patterns of true believers. That's what the Sermon on the Mount is about and it starts with the Beatitudes which show us that God designs for us to be happy and here is how we enter the kingdom wherein happiness dwells. It starts out with the Beatitudes because that's the point of entry, and then goes on through the rest of the sermon to discuss life among kingdom citizens. It's just a tremendous, tremendous sermon. We're not going to go through the whole sermon, just at least for now the Beatitudes. We'll get a little more into it once we get into our study of the gospel of Luke. But Jesus is saying happy people are people who have the right attitudes. Can I get that across to you? And we're going to leave that tonight, our time is gone. It's attitudinal, it's not what you possess, it's poverty of spirit, mourning, gentleness, hunger and thirst for righteousness, mercy, purity, peace. It's attitudes that produce happiness. It's attitudes that are God-like attitudes that literally come to us by virtue of us sharing His divine nature. Jesus was saying, happiness then starts from the inside and works its way out. And even where there is suffering and sorrow, happiness is not cancelled out, it is, in fact, generally aided and increased.

Well, much more I could say about it, but let's leave it at that for tonight. The sequence I'll give you and then we'll start them next week. The sequence leads to from the first step of entering into a relationship with God that produces happiness and that is being poor in spirit. That is simply admitting spiritual bankruptcy. That leads us to dealing with my attitude toward my spiritual bankruptcy. Spiritual bankruptcy simply means I'm in sin and nothing else, and that leads to mourning, mourning over my sin. And the consciousness of my sin and the sorrow over my sin leads me to meekness, I feel small and insignificant in the face of a holy God. And that leads to a hunger and thirst for a righteousness I know I need and do not have. And when that righteousness manifests itself to me, it manifests itself in mercy, purity and peacemaking and a willingness to suffer persecution and insult. That's the flow of these beatitudes. It is a rich and profound sequence.

I don't believe there's anything more instructive in all the teaching of Jesus in the area of evangelism and entrance into the kingdom than these beatitudes. And they're so often just kind of thrown away as sort of ethical statements or social statements. They are not. They are salvation-oriented truths. And we're going to see that unfold. And once, of course, we enter in and we have this blessedness, we share, as it were, the divine nature. Verse 13 says, "We become the salt of the earth," verse 14 says, "We become the light of the world." We then become what the world needs, salt and light.

So, not only is there happiness provided for us here, but great usefulness. It is God's standard for living in His kingdom so that we might be happy and that others might be influenced for the glory of

God and their salvation as we live as salt and light.

Well, that's the overview. Next week we'll start with beatitude number one, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Our Father, again today has been a rich and wonderful day and we thank you so much for it. Certainly Your Word has penetrated our hearts and opened us up again to a fresh and new understanding of Your own mind, Your character, Your will, Your way which calls us then to live obediently, submissively to that revelation. We have received much and are accountable to respond in obedience. We thank You for the Word, the promise that You have come to bring happiness, blessedness, bliss, joy, but that it comes in the most unlikely matrix of brokenness, mourning, meekness, hunger, thirst, that it is out of that brokenness and contrition effected in our hearts by the wondrous sovereign working of the Holy Spirit that we come to the place of repentance and embrace the gospel and enter the kingdom and thereby are blessed. We thank You for that permanent state of true happiness that exists deep within us because we share Your divine nature and we can, with Paul, say, "Rejoice always, and again I say rejoice," because our joy is not connected to any passing emotion or changing circumstance but an abiding and eternal relationship which You have determined to engage with us by Your mercy. We thank You for that and we pray, O God, that You might help us to enjoy the happiness that is ours, to enjoy the bliss of knowing You, to not have that stolen as the psalmist who cried out in the midst of his sin, "Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation." Lord, it's so easy for us to become unhappy, to lose the bliss and the joy of our salvation because of sin. O Lord, help us to live with fullness of joy as we obediently respond to Your Word which has been written that our joy might be full. We thank You for the fact that You desire us to be happy, contented, fulfilled, satisfied, blessed and You've called us to this by the sweet grace that bestowed ...was bestowed upon us in Christ at the time of our conversion and now we would desire to enjoy that, to enter into the fullness of it by obedience and faithfulness. And, Lord, as well that we would learn from the study of the beatitudes how to proclaim this to others that we might call them to an appropriate response to the gospel, to their own sinful condition that they thereby may enter in to this happiness and we cherish and shall forever enjoy. We'll thank You in Christ's name. Amen.

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