
BEATITUDES

Changing the Way Life Turns Out

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INTRODUCTION:

Jesus is the Light shining in the darkness (John 1:5)—the One who can turn our deep cave into a tunnel. If we walk in the light of His presence, believing that the tunnel will end, and do not walk like unbelievers walk (see Ephesians 4:17-24), we will experience bounty and blessing that seem impossible given the particulars of our circumstances. When unbelievers find themselves in difficult, painful circumstances, they have only two options: try to change those circumstances by their own efforts, or resign themselves to those circumstances.

We who believe in the Lord have a third option, one that is sometimes hard to exercise given the way the rest of the world thinks and lives. Instead of trying to do something ourselves to directly address our situation, and instead of giving up hope that things will ever be different, we are encouraged by Jesus to take a third course:

1. Trust the goodness and sovereignty of the Lord.
2. Refuse the help and power of false gods (bitterness, fear, divination, etc.).
3. Remember that the battle is resolved in the unseen dimension.

Throughout the *Sermon on the Mount*, which is Jesus' first extended teaching about how His government (Kingdom) works, we are presented with stark contrasts between the way that people of the world live and the way citizens of His kingdom are privileged to live. Jesus tells us that the gate is small and the way narrow that leads to the kind and quality of life God has for you. He says that everyone who hears His words and lives by them will have a stable and strong foundation that will stand up to the inevitable storms of life. There is a huge difference between those who just call Him Lord, and those who live like He is their Lord." (Reference Matthew 14; 24-27)

Among the many different ways He advises us to live (ways that make no sense to people who want to fight their way through their distresses, or who have no hope that things will ever change) are the following:

1. Treat people the way you want to be treated, not the way they deserve.
2. Keep praying and seeking the Lord, even when you don't get an answer right away.
3. Think about your own mistakes and imperfections, not about others.'
4. Put priority on your spiritual wellbeing, not on the needs of your physical life.
5. Lay up for yourself treasures in Heaven, not on Earth.
6. Practice worship only toward the Lord, not toward other gods.
7. Aim to please God (who sees in secret), not people in public.
8. Pray for and "do good" to those who afflict, oppress and persecute you.
9. Reconcile with those you have offended or violated.

At the beginning of this incredible discourse in Matthew 5, Jesus speaks of the many blessings that will come to people who live the way He outlines. That promise of good—a great expectation—is very important to accepting His counsel. The Lord is not telling us to resign ourselves to the trauma; He doesn't conclude that our situation *isn't that bad*. He isn't saying there is nothing we can do about what we face. Instead, Jesus says there is a way to live that brings victory and blessing in the midst of difficulty...

(Reference Matthew 5:1-12—The Sermon on the Mount; The Beatitudes.)