**PURSUE (The Beatitudes) – Wk 1 – Blessed are…**

**One day Jesus walked up a hill on the northeast shore of Galilee, overlooking the sea of Galilee, sat down and He began to teach…**

**It started with a long day… Matthew 4:23 And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. 24 Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them. 25 Great multitudes followed Him—from Galilee, and from Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan. (coming from over 100 miles)**

**Sounds awesome – powerful – practical – hectic – exhausting**

**But he did not come to make our life here better – he came to help us plug into the Kingdom of God**

**Matthew 5:1** **And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. (seeing the crowds – he sits down w/ his disciples) 2 Then He opened His mouth and taught them… (Luke 6:20-22) (The sanctuary was a mountain. It had no significance, no name until that day)**

**What would it have been like to sit there on those hills 2000 yrs ago and hear the Son of God explain the Kingdom of Heaven?**

**He said: 3** **“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

**4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. 5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. 6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. *(satisfied)* 7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. 8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. 9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. 10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.**

**\*\* They are called the Beatitudes**

**Some of the best known, but the least understood teachings of Jesus.**

**To understand them, is to have your life altered – to follow them is to have the direction of your life changed.**

**What Jesus teaches here is the remedy for our shallow souls - In a world married to materialism and narcissistic superficiality**

**The beatitudes are the character foundations of the Kingdom mindset**

**8-character traits that reflect the heart of God. Not 8 kinds of people – but traits every Christian should live and the blessings they bring.**

**They are upside down to what the world says and expects. To pursue them is to do the opposite of what our flesh desires.**

**To pursue them is to discover a truly blessed life.**

**The misconceptions of the Beatitudes – some see them as a:**

**Pattern for social justice – a social gospel – the poor go to heaven**

**Extension of 10 commandments - a new set of rules and “thou shalts”**

**Contrast of 10 commandments - A flip side and the end of the 10 comm**

**Isolated sayings - Like proverbs or sayings.**

**Future Kingdom life- comforted, accepted- But they are present tense**

**As the ingredients for becoming a disciple – do this and you live**

**These misunderstandings tend to drain the life & heart out of them**

**They are not – if you will do this, then you are my disciple**

**They are – because you are my disciple – you will do this.**

**To understand them, let’s start here… How they would have heard it:**

**Background check:**

* **1st century Judea - Their life was a world of chaos**
* **Occupied by tyrannical military Govt (Rome)**
* **Rome had absolute rule – no active democracy – little / no freedom**
* **They were persecuted, belittled, and controlled.**
* **1/3 of their income was taken by Rome.**
* **3 out of every 4 people were slaves – to someone**

**As a result diff. groups had diff responses to the government & Culture**

**\* Zealots – demanded power – terrorist, riots, murder, insurrection**

**\* Sadducees – they stayed in power thru bargains & compromise**

**\* Pharisees – religious group kept power thru strict religious control**

**\* Public - racial prejudice was common, to keep & get a sense of power**

**Sounds like our world today… oppression, power, racism**

**In the middle of all of this life – Jesus walks thru the crowds – thru the valleys of Judea and up a hill near the Sea of Galilee to share a kingdom perspective of this life.**

**Blessed are the poor in spirit / …those who mourn / …the meek / …those who hunger and thirst for righteousness / …the merciful / …the pure in heart / …the peacemakers / …the persecuted.**

**Know what they all have in common? They are all painfully unpleasant. What??? How are they a blessing**

**Jesus was challenging them to a new way of life that is radically different that anything they had ever heard.**

**Jesus began preaching - before this sermon - Matthew 4:17 From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”**

**Jesus had often used the word – repent – what come to mind?**

**Repent = “a change of mind - to turn around” Jesus is asking them/us to change our mind on what we think. To radically change the way we see life and move in a diff direction. To PURSUE different things.**

**The beatitudes are not threats – no, do this and you will live – they are a compassionate call - for deep reflection.**

**So distinct and profound they shake every religious school of thought, past and present. To hear them is to not feel good, but to be crushed.**

**At the heart of the beatitudes is - How to live a Truly God Blessed life**

**To understand the meaning of the word Blessed – we need to look at – how he said it and what they would have understood.**

**Called the “Beatitudes”, the word is not found in the English text. That’s because it’s Latin – word used is “beatus” = “Beatus are those…”**

**But, the Bible was not written in Latin- that’s a later translation**

**NT was written in Aramaic / and later Greek – Greek is where most translations come from (GK) Makarios -“to be happy” “Happy are those”**

**But… problem with Gk is - Jesus did not preach this in Greek.**

**Blessed would not mean our version of happy to the listeners.**

**Jesus preached & spoke in the common language of Aramaic. Aramaic and Hebrew are from the same family.**

**Jesus *“blessed*” would have been - Ashray (Ar) / Esher (Hb) = “the best life, fulfilled life, true bliss” - as a result of moving in a certain path or direction. (Ps 1:1) (Barak (hbw) “to inherit”)**

**Based on what we know in the beatitudes – What is God’s blessing**

1. **God’s Blessing is not always based on prosperity and provision**

**The world defines blessed as… property, health, etc. But God defines blessed differently in the Bible.**

**You can still be blessed without them**

1. **God’s Blessing is not always based on health and well-being**

**It is not always about having a good day – but still blessed**

1. **God’s Blessing is not always based on having family and friends**

**You can still be alone and blessed without them**

1. **God’s Blessing transcends our circumstances**

**Every time Jesus said Ashray (Blessed) they were not thinking a promise of laughter, pleasure, possessions, or prosperity**

**What they would have understood the word blessed to mean -**

**The deepest form of hope, joy, bliss & peace from God imaginable.**

**Realize - A God blessed life includes brokenness, sacrifice, and surrender. I am blessed – I can be blessed by God in those moments…**

**#blessed photos – just lost my job #blessed / my father just passed #blessed / the doctor told me I’m dying #blessed / My girlfriend just dumped me #blessed / we have no groceries #blessed / my parents crushed my heart #blessed / I just got punched in the face #blessed…**

**Looking at their life - that is what Jesus was telling them.**

**God’s blessings come in spite of sickness, pain, sorrows, loss, or grief The joy and blessings God gives no one can take away. (John 16:20-22)**

1. **God’s Blessing is a result of being on God’s path**

**Like the word repent (to change direction) God’s Blessing is the result of a new path and direction. It is what follows the follower of Jesus.**

**Matt 5, gives the blessings of those who pursue Jesus character**

**The beatitudes are what God values and the blessings of those who pursue them – on that path. The Truly God Blessed life**

**When Jesus began his ministry… Luke 4:16 He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, 17 and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: 18 “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” 20 Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. 21 He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”**

**Jesus reading (Isaiah 61:1-3) This is who I am and what I’ve come to do. Then walks up a hill - gave a teaching… this is to be your heart too.**

**They are the character traits of Kingdom citizens and how they bring a present blessing in our life – even in the face of trials.**

**Okay - Let’s take a look at the first**

**Matthew 5:3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

**Before we can go to the other beatitudes – Jesus says we must start here…**

**THE POOR IN SPIRIT**

**That phrase echoing Isaiah 61:1 & 66:2 – they would have taken their thoughts to that terrible time in their history of abduction and exile.**

**Painting a mental picture of a time when they were poor, their land and possessions ripped away, afflicted and oppressed (think held down), powerless and without hope, and they were desperate. The physical poverty was intensified by the poverty in their spirit.**

**Jesus says – in times of complete brokenness and desperation – deep afflicted souls – this place of spiritual poverty is great place to be!**

**When trials come, sickness, pain, stresses… you are blessed!**

**HOW and WHY is this a blessing? 3 Reasons.**

* **The truly poor in spirit are comforted by God**

**Psalm 51:17 - The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.**

**Psalm 34:18 - The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.**

* **The truly poor in spirit are dependent on God**

**In those moments a wonderful desperation is discovered.**

**Ecclesiastes 7:3 Sorrow is better than laughter, for by sadness of face the heart is made glad.**

**Not that God wants you sad – but humility and brokenness is what is necessary to be fully reliant on God.**

**The person poor in spirit is one who lives in total dependence on God to supply their needs. Like a small child with a parent – trust / reliance.**

**The world says: self-improvement and self-reliance**

**God’ Word says: self-denial and self-surrender**

* **The truly poor in spirit are lead to the hope of salvation**

**The blessing Jesus announces is - “theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”**

**This does not mean that all poor people are in the kingdom. (some teaching) The issue is not the poverty state, but the spiritual state.**

**Everyone who wishes to enter the kingdom must be “spiritually poor,”**

**A humbled and broken spirit is essential for salvation.**

**This good news for the genuinely poor and oppressed in this world. The poor person is not excluded because of poverty; and the rich person is not accepted because of wealth. Both must be humble… to be blessed with the kingdom of heaven.**

**Being poor in spirit means that only those who admit to an absolute bankruptcy of spiritual worth will inherit eternal life.**

**The way into the kingdom is to realize you have nothing.**

**James 4:6 God gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: “God opposes the proud but shows favor (grace) to the humble.” 7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.**

**All who enter the kingdom but pass thru the door of humility – Contrite and empty – broken. A recognition of need and surrender.**

**\*\* Luke 18:9-14. Parable: Tax Collector and the Pharisee - movie clip**

**If you are ever to enter the kingdom of heaven – you must become poor in spirit. This is the call of repentance.**

**I was wrong – God, change my perspective – I’m humbled by my sin & selfishness – I am not as good as I think I am – I am desperate for you!**

**How does one become poor in spirit? Only by the Holy Spirit. We can’t humble ourselves, we are not spiritually self-sufficient. That is the mark of the “poor in spirit” – an understanding of our total depravity.**

**Just as many in true poverty – have no ability to rescue themselves – neither can one is truly poor in spirit.**

**Sometimes God uses heartache, trials, consequences, to be face down in a gutter – just to see the curb and our first step. Maybe that was case for some of you. In your brokenness – God drew you to salvation.**

**Hawk Nelson song - I’d Never know**

**I'm grateful - Not for what I'm walking through, but because I know it leads to you - These are the moments You're drawing me closer**

**I'd never know you was a healer, if I never needed healing**

**I'd never know you was a savior, if I never needed saving**

**I'd never know without going through the valley low**

**I’d never know so much about you**

**You want to be blessed – you must be broken… and some of you are halfway there already.**

**I am tired – broken – hurting – desperate… Good news**

**Matthew 5:3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**