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THE BEATITUDES

Most of Jesus' ministry was a teaching ministry. He taught in parables, and he taught by example. He had thousands that followed him and they "hung on every word" that he taught. He didn't come with a religious attitude. He didn't berate the sinner, and the sick or the lepers. He came as a servant to reconcile man back to God. The love that he demonstrated to those that had no hope truly caused them to want to be near him.

Early in his ministry he went up into a mountain and his disciples came with him. How many disciples we don't know, but Peter, Andrew, James and John were called early in his ministry and this episode took place in the very beginning. He taught his "inner circle" things that he didn't teach others. In Matthew chapter 5 he taught these men the "sermon on the mount". He taught them some things that were the opposite of the religious leaders of the day. They would go in their robes and expect people to bow to them. They were whitened sepulchers. They looked good on the outside but inside they were "dead men's bones." The Jews were looking for a leader that would defeat the Romans and take back their country. This wasn't Jesus' mission. He taught them some very important things that they would carry over into their lives long after Jesus died.

The word "beatitude" means blessed or blessing. Jesus taught they would receive these blessings for being faithful to follow him. They were as follows:

1. Verse 3: ***"Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*** This indicates they were not to have a "haughty" better than thou attitude. They were to be humble in their lives and in following Jesus. Those with this kind of loving spirit would receive the kingdom of heaven.
2. Verse 4: ***"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted."*** Jesus was letting them know that there would be many days that great loss and death would visit them. In spite of this, the Holy Spirit would be the comforter that Jesus would send. They had no reason to doubt this promise.
3. Verse 5: ***"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."*** Moses was said to have been the meekest man that lived, but he was strong in his faith and trust in God. The disciples were to be like Moses and must have a humble spirit. He was teaching them that it was not their own superior attitude, power or might that would bring victory; it was God alone that would bring it. Those with this spirit would inherit the earth, and rule and reign with Christ.
4. Verse 6: ***"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."*** Jesus is saying that those that hunger for the things of God, for his word, and for time with Him will not be disappointed. He will fill them up to overflowing because of their passion for Him.

5. Verse 7: ***“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.”*** Mercy is such a wonderful character trait. You give it out and you receive it. Even knowing that death would follow them, the disciples had mercy. They learned to have a servant’s heart, and not look down on those that needed mercy. They were Jesus’ hands of mercy extended.
6. Verse 8: ***“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.”*** God knows our motives in all that we do. Those with a pure heart have no malice, no sin, no desire for things of the world. If the disciples were to put these things to death daily, he was letting them know that they will see God.
7. Verse 9: ***“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.”*** Jesus knew the heart of each of his disciples. Some had been “diamonds in the rough” and he knew that the “sons of thunder” would like to bring a little “lightning” to those that didn’t toe the mark. Jesus is letting them know that the way of peace will bestow the name “child of God” on each of them and others would see it in them.
8. Verse 10: ***“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”*** Jesus was letting them know that there would be those that come against his disciples for “doing right.” Man’s ways differ from God’s ways. The natural man would want to fight back, but He is reminding them that they will be rewarded with the kingdom of heaven for not retaliating.
9. Verse 11-12: ***“Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”*** Jesus is letting them know there has always been a price to pay for following after God. They were to “count it all joy” when they were put into hard situations and others persecuted them and criticized them. They would receive heavenly rewards for this. They shouldn’t go looking for trouble, but trouble from those that would oppose them would be part of the call. But in spite of these hardships that they would endure, they would be rewarded.

Jesus used these beautiful statements to train his disciples from the beginning the price of discipleship. I truly believe each of us should examine them and take it to heart for our lives. When we realize the true cost of discipleship then we will be prepared to live for Jesus.