

February 8, 2026
Pursuing the Kingdom: The Blessed Life of the Kingdom
Matthew 5:1-12
Vernon Advent Christian Church

Introduction...

As we have made our way through our theme of “Pursuing the Kingdom,” we begin to be naturally confronted with a question we all are already answering with our lives, “What are we pursuing?” Every one of us is chasing something whether its security, success, approval, comfort or meaning and our schedules, anxieties, and sacrifices reveal the kingdom we believe will satisfy us. During his famous Sermon on the Mount in which his main point is, “Seek first the kingdom of God,” Jesus first reveals to us what that pursuit looks like in real life.

Matthew places the Sermon on the Mount (chs. 5-7) at a strategic moment in his gospel. Jesus has announced that the kingdom of heaven is at hand. (Matt. 4:17) He has called disciples, healed the sick, and drawn crowds from every direction. People are coming to Him with all sorts of expectations. And now, as Jesus ascends the mountain, He does something unexpected. Instead of telling them how to overthrow Rome and set up an earthly kingdom, or 10 simple steps to improve their circumstances, He, instead, describes a kind of life that seems upside-down, or backwards, to everything they have been pursuing.

And the first portion of the Sermon on the Mount is known as the Beatitudes, which means “The Blessings” but can also be understood as giving the believer our “be — attitudes,” or the attitudes we should “be.” And these “attitudes,” or character traits, are marks and goals of all Christians, or at least should be. It is not as if we can major in one to the exclusion of others and there is no escape from our responsibility to desire every one of these spiritual attributes.

David Guzik in his commentary on this passage says, “If you meet someone who claims to be a Christian but displays and desires none of these traits, you may rightly wonder about their salvation, because they do not have the character of kingdom citizens. But if they claim to have mastered these attributes, you may question their honesty.”

You see, the Beatitudes are not a list of spiritual achievements, they are a re-definition of what the true Christian life looks like. This idea forces us to slow down and listen carefully. Because if we misunderstand what the kingdom is, we will pursue the wrong things even while claiming to follow Jesus. The Beatitudes teach us that the kingdom of God is not something we add to our lives, it is something that reshapes our lives entirely. To pursue the kingdom is to pursue a transformed heart and a life aligned with the reign of God.

So as Jesus opens His mouth on the mountain, He is not merely offering encouragement. He is inviting us to examine what we are chasing and to discover the surprising path of those who are truly blessed. The question before us is not whether we want to pursue the kingdom of God, but whether we are willing to pursue it on the King’s terms.

So, if you are able, please stand with me as I read the word of God found in Matthew's gospel, beginning in vs. 1 of chapter 5 and I'll be reading through vs. 12. [Read Passage]

Matthew tells us that when Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain, and when He sat down, His disciples came to Him. That single sentence sets the stage for one of the most important teachings in all of Scripture. The Sermon on the Mount presents Jesus as the "new Moses," the prophet promised by Moses himself in Deut. 18:15 who ascends a mountain to deliver a new, authoritative interpretation of God's law. While Moses received the Old Covenant law at Mt. Sinai, Jesus delivers the Kingdom of Heaven's fulfillment of that law, focusing on internal heart attitudes rather than just external compliance to the law.

And so Jesus ascends a mountain, not to receive God's Word, like Moses did with the law, but, with the authority of the Son of God to declare it. He sits down, the posture of authority for a rabbi, and opens His mouth. Again, what follows is not advice, but what many theologians have called, a "kingdom manifesto." This is the King describing the kind of people who belong to His kingdom.

And it is important to notice who Jesus is speaking to. The crowds are present, yes, but notice Matthew tells us that He is teaching His disciples. This sermon was spoken to the disciples of Jesus, but disciples in a broad sense of those who had heard him teach and had begun to follow Him, not in the narrow sense of only the Twelve, as at least in Matthew's account, some of the 12 have not been specifically called yet.

And so that little bit of information tells us that the Beatitudes are not instructions for non-believers on how to become a Christian, they are descriptions of what life looks like for those who already belong to the kingdom of heaven. Jesus is not saying, "Live this way so that God will bless you." He is saying, "Because the kingdom has come, this is what the citizens of the kingdom should look like."

Jesus begins with a word that would have captured everyone's attention: "Blessed." Now the simple definition of this term is "happy." But, in Scripture, blessing is not mere happiness or good fortune as we use those terms. It is the deep, settled joy of being right with God, of living under His favor and rule. Hopefully this describes your happiness in the Lord.

This kind of blessing is not dependent on circumstances. In fact, as Jesus will show, it often exists in spite of life's circumstances. And we'll soon see the blessed life Jesus describes looks nothing like the blessed life the world promotes.

Jesus begins by saying, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Jesus begins where we might least expect. Poverty of spirit is not weakness of personality or lack of confidence, it is spiritual bankruptcy. It is the honest recognition that we bring nothing to God except our need. To be poor in spirit is to stop pretending we are self-sufficient and to acknowledge that apart from God's grace, we are helpless and we can do nothing to help ourselves.

And this is foundational to everything that follows. Every other beatitude flows from this one. The kingdom of heaven belongs not to the spiritually impressive, but to the spiritually desperate. It's standing before God with empty hands instead of a résumé with all of our supposed "good" deeds thinking that's going to be enough. Poverty of spirit says,

“I have nothing to offer, but I trust Your mercy.” And, Jesus says, its this posture that opens the door to the kingdom.

Next Jesus says, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” This mourning is not a generic sadness or grief over life’s hardships, though God certainly cares about those things for scripture tells us “The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.” (Psalm 34:18)

The mourning described here is the mourning over sin, over the brokenness of the world and the brokenness of our own hearts. When someone becomes poor in spirit, they begin to see sin clearly, including their own, and that vision leads to grief.

The world tells us to numb sorrow, distract ourselves, or deny reality. But Jesus says blessing belongs to those who grieve rightly. Why? Because God Himself provides the comfort. This comfort is not shallow reassurance. It is the deep healing that comes from forgiveness, restoration, and hope. The person who mourns sin does not stay in despair, because God meets them with grace.

Those who mourn over their sin and their sinful condition are promised comfort. God allows this grief into our lives as a path, not as a destination. It is just part of the journey not the final stop.

Jesus continues, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” Meekness is often misunderstood as weakness, but biblical meekness is strength under control. It is not passivity, it is humility that trusts God to defend, to provide, and to vindicate. The meek person does not need to assert dominance or grasp for power, because they know the future belongs to God.

And as such, this beatitude is shocking. Jesus says the meek, not the aggressive, not the manipulative, not the ruthless, will inherit the earth. In the kingdom of heaven, the values are reversed. God entrusts His future to those who trust Him rather than themselves. Meekness flows naturally from mourning and poverty of spirit. When we know we are dependent on God, we stop fighting for our own glory.

But we can only be meek, willing to control our desire for our rights and privileges because we are confident God watches out for us, that He will protect our cause. The promise “they shall inherit the earth” proves that God will not allow His meek ones to end up on the short end of the deal. And so, we can trust him fully.

Jesus then says, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.” Hunger and thirst are intense desires, not casual preferences. No one has to tell us what these feel like because we have all experienced real hunger and thirst at some point in our lives. But Jesus is not describing the physical pangs of hunger and thirst but spiritually describing a people who long deeply for righteousness, for a right relationship with God, for holiness, for justice, and for a world made right. This is not about self-righteousness, but about longing for God’s will to be done.

Many people hunger and thirst for comfort, success, or approval. Jesus says the blessed hunger and thirst for his righteousness. And then He makes the promise, “they will be satisfied.” God does not ignore holy desire. He fills it. The satisfaction Jesus promises is both present and future experienced now through transformation and ultimately fulfilled when God’s kingdom is fully realized.

Jesus continues, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.” Mercy flows from recognizing how much mercy we ourselves have received. When we understand our spiritual poverty and God’s forgiveness, we become people who extend grace rather than demand repayment. Mercy is not excusing sin, it is responding to brokenness with compassion instead of condemnation.

Jesus is not teaching a transactional system here, as though we earn mercy by being merciful. He is describing a transformed heart. Those who have encountered God’s mercy naturally reflect it. A merciless heart reveals a heart that has not truly understood grace. Mercy is an active virtue that Christians can show each other because we have been given mercy. Since God has forgiven our offenses, we should be quick to forgive others and show mercy.

Next Jesus says, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” Purity of heart is not perfection, but integrity. It is singleness of devotion. The pure in heart are not divided between competing loyalties. This describes the person who desires God above all else. And this purity involves both inner motives and outward actions.

To see God is the greatest promise imaginable. Throughout Scripture, seeing God represents intimacy, access, and life itself. Sin clouds vision but purity clarifies it. When our hearts are aligned with God, we “see” His presence, His work, and His glory more clearly. The pure in heart are free from evil desires and purposes. They can see and experience God’s presence because they are free from self-righteousness and arrogance. And if we are able to see him clearly then we are able to follow him more easily.

Next, Jesus says, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.” We need to understand that peacemaking is active, not passive. It is not the avoidance of conflict, but the pursuit of reconciliation. Peacemakers reflect the heart of God, who reconciles sinners to Himself through Christ. They do not stir division for personal gain. They work toward healing, truth, and restoration.

Jesus calls peacemakers “sons of God” because, much like the family resemblance we often share with our parents, the sons and daughters of God are supposed to resemble their Father. God is the ultimate peacemaker, and those who share His character reflect His family likeness when we are obedient to him and act as he acts.

Jesus then turns his attention toward suffering. “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” This statement shatters the illusion that faithfulness guarantees a life of ease. We brought this point up last week when we found out that John the Baptist had been arrested in Matt. 4 which we will find out later in Matthew will lead to his eventual death.

Jesus does not promise His people escape from opposition. In fact, all over scripture we are promised it will come. Persecution for righteousness is the direct result of living faithfully in a fallen world. But even though we will face persecution of varying degrees, no matter what opposition we face, we have the promise of Emanuel, God with us.

Jesus expands this further when he says, “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you... on my account.” You see, the reason for the persecution matters. Jesus tells us that we need to evaluate our suffering to ensure it is actually persecution and not just the consequence of our own sinfulness. For example, there are times when Christians are put in prison because they refuse to follow the unjust law of an unjust

government. But there are also times when Christians are put in prison because they break good and necessary laws that the rightful authorities have put in place.

Peter makes this same point in 1 Peter 4:14-16 when he says, “If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed...But let none of you suffer as an...evildoer. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed.” [more]

Therefore, suffering for Christ, if indeed it is for Christ, is not meaningless. Jesus says it connects us to the prophets, to the faithful witnesses who came before us, and ultimately to Christ Himself. The reward is not applause now, but blessed joy rooted in eternity. Jesus assures His followers that such suffering is not a sign of failure but of belonging to the kingdom.

As we have seen, the Beatitudes form a portrait, not a checklist. Together, they describe the inner life of someone shaped by the kingdom of heaven. This is not natural humanity, this is redeemed humanity. These qualities are not achieved through effort alone, but produced by grace through the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Beatitudes also point us to Jesus Himself. He demonstrated what it means to be poor in spirit who depended fully on the Father. He mourned over sin and suffering. He was meek and gentle. He hungered and thirsted for righteousness, showed mercy, possessed a pure heart, made peace through the cross, and was persecuted unto death. Jesus does not merely teach the Beatitudes, He embodies them.

In light of these truths, this passage invites us to examine our own hearts. Not to ask, “Am I good enough?” but “Am I being shaped by the kingdom?” Or “Am I pursuing the kingdom?” Do we recognize our need for God? Do we grieve sin? Do we trust Him rather than ourselves? Do we long for righteousness? Do we extend mercy? Do we pursue peace? Are we willing to endure opposition for Christ?

The good news is that the blessed life is not reserved for the spiritually elite. It belongs to those who come empty-handed and open-hearted. The kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these. And as we follow the King and pursue his kingdom, He shapes us into the people He blesses now and forever. Let's pray.

Benediction: “And now may the peace of God, which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus; and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, rest upon you and remain, now and always. Amen.” – Philippians 4:7