

## Chapter 4: Who is Really Well Off? Matt. 5: 1-20

### *The availability of the kingdom to ordinary people who then become salt and light*

Introduction: Get ready to hear that the Beatitudes are not spiritual goals that you must strive for. They DO however announce that the kingdom of the heavens is available even to the people who are poor, meek, and downtrodden. This inversion and transformation is a primary theme of scripture. To understand the Beatitudes and the rest of the Sermon on the Mount, it is helpful to remember that Jesus taught using concrete details and ordinary examples from nearly every situation he encountered.

As we read the Beatitudes this week we will look at the attributes Jesus mentions, being poor in spirit, mournful, meek, hungry for righteousness, merciful, pure, peace-seeking, persecuted. We may wonder, are these the attributes or conditions of our soul and make us eligible to be blessed? Is that what the future of people of God's kingdom is supposed to be like? Both of these questions miss the point of Jesus' teaching. Willard reminds us that the issues Jesus was addressing of what really is the good life, who is eligible for this life and who is really well off—the hope and real truth of the Beatitudes is that the blessedness Jesus talked about is in the kingdom life.

- **Words:**
  - \* **The Sermon on the Mount**, which presents a summary of how to live in the reality of God's present kingdom available to us from the very space surrounding our bodies.
  - \* **Beatitudes:** "everyday sayings or common expressions about the Good Life...listing virtues everyone would be pleased to have." Barbara Brown Taylor in *Gospel Medicine*. Willard says they serve to clarify that the person of God and his power and righteousness are available to anyone who relies upon Jesus.
- **Scripture:** Matthew 5:1-20

#### To Discuss:

Jesus employed concrete events that occurred in the average person's life (parables, occasions and specific cases) and often used sayings that would relate to people's hearts and habits. How would you describe Jesus' teaching style? What parts of Jesus' teachings do you find connect to your life?

How do each of the Beatitudes reference a concrete example or a broader Biblical context?

(ex...Blessed are the poor in spirit [*"the spiritual zeros- the spiritually bankrupt, deprives, deficient, the spiritual beggars, those without a wisp of religion"*] for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven). p100DC

How does the church show or reflect the presence of Jesus?

How does the quote from the book inform how we view the presence of Jesus in our midst?

"Any spiritually healthy congregation of believers in Jesus will more or less look like these, 'brands plucked from the burning.' If the group is totally nice, that is a sure sign something has gone wrong... The complete obliteration of social and cultural distinctions as a *basis* for life under God was clearly understood by Paul as essential to the presence of Jesus in his people." (125)

#### **Choose a practice this week:**

**Journal exercise:** In your own words, write about how the Sermon on the Mount speaks to your understanding of who is *really well off in this life*, and *who is really good*.

**Activity:** Take an afternoon to travel through your town on public transportation. Observe the people who use the service reflect on their lives and your life. If you're not normally dependent on public transportation figure out how you would have to rearrange your life if you were always dependent on a bus schedule.

Take time to re-write the Beatitudes in your own words.

*(content adapted from Dallas Willard's The Divine Conspiracy and Study Guide by Jan Johnson and Keith Matthews)*