

“The Look and Cost of Righteousness” (or “The Norms of the Kingdom: Part Two”)

– Matthew 5:1-12

Brandon Holiski

Southern Oaks Baptist Church

January 18, 2015

[What follows is the transcript of a sermon. It was originally intended to be heard, not read, so the tone is more conversational than academic. It has only been loosely edited, so forgive any grammatical, syntactical, or spelling errors. If you have questions please contact Southern Oaks Baptist Church through their official website, www.sobc.net.]

Take your Bible and let's turn to Matthew 5. Today we are going to look again at the Beatitudes, which serve as the introduction to Jesus' most famous sermon, the Sermon on the Mount. I realize many of you probably were not here last week, so it is probably worth reviewing a few things before we pick up our study.

The Beatitudes consist of eight declarations of blessing. You'll notice that each of the statements begins with the word “Blessed,” which is why they are called “Beatitudes.” The word “beatitude” comes from a Latin word that means, “blessed.” I'm not sure what you think of when you hear the word “blessed,” but in this context we should think “favored.” Jesus is describing those individuals who experience God's favor. They are not a list of conditions for earning God's favor, but rather a list describing the character of those who have God's favor. That's real important.

Therefore, as we saw last time, by starting the Sermon on the Mount with the Beatitudes, Jesus is launching His sermon from a context of grace. The righteous behavior that will be described in the rest of the Sermon flows out of divine blessing and not the other way around. The Beatitudes (and the rest of Jesus' Sermon for that matter) are describing what the person looks like who has experienced God's saving grace.

Matthew indicates that even in the structure. The first and last beatitude end with the same declaration—“theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:3, 10). As we say last week, the reason a writer bookends a block of teaching with the same thought is to communicate that the whole section relates to that theme. So in this case, the whole section (i.e., the Beatitudes) is describing what a person looks like who is part of the Kingdom of Heaven. And since entrance into God's Kingdom is granted to believers, those who have faith in Christ, then these statements describe what true believers should look like. They are what D. A. Carson calls “The Norms of the Kingdom.”

So then, what do Kingdom people look like? Well, let's read what Jesus said to find out. Pick up in Matthew 5:3. This is God's Word...

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” (Matthew 5:3-12)

We covered the first four descriptions last Sunday and we discovered that, first...

Kingdom People Are Poor in Spirit

By which we mean that they know they have nothing of spiritual value to bring to God's table. They recognize their spiritual bankruptcy and need for God's grace. They acknowledge that the only way they could experience God's favor is if God shows them grace. Since they have nothing of spiritual merit to earn salvation, they are reduced to spiritual beggars and God's salvation must be *given* or it will never be had. But Jesus says that it is actually the poor in spirit who belong in God's Kingdom. So, as we saw last time, that implies that Kingdom people are always poor in spirit and Kingdom entry must therefore be a gift of God's grace. This understanding, this poverty of spirit, is really the foundation of all the other beatitudes. The second beatitude is related...

Kingdom People Are Mourners

As we saw last time, this context suggests that this is probably not a reference to any old mourning, but a specific kind of mourning. The mourning over sin. The mourning over their poverty of spirit. The mourning of repentance. And Jesus says that these folks have God's favor because God has promised to comfort them, which must mean, at the very least, that He remedies the reason for their mourning. This is precisely what God does. The mourning of repentance and faith is met by God's grace and forgiveness. What a comforting reality that is for God's people. The third beatitude reminds us that...

Kingdom People are Meek

They don't exert their strength for their own advantage, but for others. They are humble and controlled. They wait on the Lord. They trust in the Lord. And they do this because God has promised them an inheritance that far exceeds anything they could obtain if they were advancing their own agenda. Jesus says, "*they shall inherit the earth*" (5:5). Then, finally, we saw last time that...

Kingdom People Long for Righteousness

The word "righteousness" is used in a variety of related ways in the Bible, but in this context it seems to be referring to the righteous way of life that God calls us to live. It's a moral righteousness. We could think of this righteousness as Christ-likeness. This person is hungering and thirsting to live the life God intends. So when Jesus says, "*they shall be satisfied*" or "filled," He is saying that God will give them what they long for. He will satisfy them by working in them the transformation that manifests in a righteous life. God does that in His people. He makes them more and more like Christ. It doesn't happen. It's a process that lasts a lifetime and is not completed until our life is over. But that transformation marks God's people. We are not who we will be, but we are also not who we once were.

Now, as we saw last week, these first four beatitudes are related. All of them draw on the truths found in Isaiah 61. There's intentionality in how they are arranged. They accompany one another. There's a logical flow here. Everyone seems to agree that the order of the beatitudes is significant, but hardly anyone agrees on how that significance should be understood. Here's my attempt at capturing the logic (take it with a grain of salt and check it against the rest of Scripture)...

Poor in Spirit { *Mourners*
Meek
Desire Righteousness

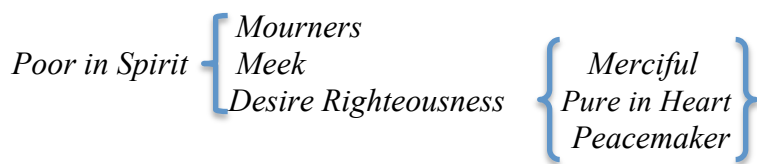
When we realize our spiritual bankruptcy we will mourn our spiritual state and adopt a posture of meekness toward God and other people and long to exhibit true righteousness. Do you see how these

relate to one another? Beatitudes 2 through 4 seem to describe what the “poor in spirit” look like. Make sense?

Now, if God promises to fill us with the righteousness that we long for, then what might that look like in our lives? What does righteous character look like? Another way of asking that is what does God require? Well, the answer to that is complex, but it is boiled down in a number of places in the Old Testament. One of the more famous summaries is found in Micah chapter 6. Here’s how the prophet answers the question, “what does the Lord require?”

“With what shall I come before the LORD and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”
(Micah 6:6-8; NIV)

Act justly. Love mercy (or “kindness” or “steadfast love”). Walk humbly with your God. So, according to Micah, *that* summarizes the righteousness God requires, which is interesting when you look at the next few beatitudes in Matthew 5. They convey similar ideas. I don’t think, necessarily, that Matthew was alluding to Micah 6, but I also don’t think the similarities are coincidental. Micah was describing what righteousness looks like in practice. The next few beatitudes are probably describing the same thing. “*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.*” What do those people look like when God begins to satisfy that longing in their life? Well, their lives begin to take on the character of the next few beatitudes...



So just as beatitudes 2-4 describe what the “poor in spirit” look like, beatitudes 5-7 spell out what righteousness looks like. Those who live righteously are merciful. They are pure in heart. They are peacemakers. And because all of the beatitudes are descriptions of Kingdom people, we have three new characteristics to consider. Let’s do that.

The fifth beatitude teaches us that...

Kingdom People Are Merciful

Look again at verse 7—“*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.*” This is true. God promises that He will extend mercy to the merciful. But we can’t read this statement in isolation. It relates to the previous beatitudes.

The person who recognizes his spiritual poverty and mourns the condition of his heart sees his need for God’s mercy. And the one who sees his need for mercy tends to become a merciful person. As one writer put it, the person described “is merciful toward the wretched because he recognizes himself to be wretched...”¹ In other words, when you honestly admit your failures, it changes the way you look at the failures of other people. You either become merciful toward them, because you see yourself as in need of mercy as well, or you become hypocritical, because you forget your own need for mercy.

God wants us to live righteously. He wants us to live like Christ. Christ was the most merciful person to have ever lived. He showed mercy to a woman caught in the act of adultery. He showed mercy on the countless people He healed. He showed mercy on those who beat Him and drove nails through his hands by praying for their forgiveness. He showed mercy on Peter when he denied even knowing Jesus. And if you would turn from your sin and turn to Christ to save you, He will show mercy on you by forgiving your sin. And if He has done this for you, you will increasingly show mercy to others to the extent that you remember the mercy God has shown you.

This is part of what God does in us. This is what God requires from us. Remember Micah 6? What does the Lord require? For us to love mercy, to love kindness, steadfast love. But God gives what He requires. That's the grace of it all. The gift of it all. The previous beatitude taught us that it is God who fills us with the righteousness that we long for. So that must mean that it is God who makes us merciful people. He does that by showing us mercy in Christ. That changes us. We look at the empty cross where Jesus took our place and it breaks our unmerciful heart. We become merciful like our Lord. And God has promised to show the merciful even greater mercy in the future, which we will certainly need.

With that in mind, the next beatitude communicates that...

Kingdom People Are Pure in Heart

Verse 8 says, "*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*" Jesus is echoing here Psalm 24. David asks,

*Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD?
And who shall stand in his holy place?
He who has clean hands and a pure heart,
who does not lift up his soul to what is false
and does not swear deceitfully.
He will receive blessing from the LORD
and righteousness from the God of his salvation.
Such is the generation of those who seek him,
who seek the face of the God of Jacob. (Psalm 24:3-6)*

See the connections? David says the one who will be in the presence of the Lord is the one who has "clean hands" and a "pure heart." This person receives "blessing" and "righteousness" from the Lord. There it is—gift, grace. These are the same ideas that are dripping from the beatitudes.

Purity of heart could be referring to moral purity. Certainly God desires for us to live a pure life, to be people of integrity and honesty. Jesus will demonstrate throughout His Sermon that such a life is about more than just externals; it involves the attitude of the heart. You can keep the letter of the Law, without actually keeping the Law. There is a whole section in the Sermon on the Mount that deals with this. Internal purity must match external purity. External religion is worthless in God's sight.

But purity of heart can also mean having an "undivided heart." It's the person who is single-minded. This is why James tells the "*double-minded*" to "*purify your hearts*" (James 4:8). That's another way of suggesting that the pure in heart is the one with an undivided heart. It's the person who loves the Lord with *all* her heart, soul, mind, and strength. She has determined to serve only one Master. In the words of Micah 6:8, she "*walks humbly with [her] God.*" This person reminds me of Enoch, a man who lived during the Old Testament. Genesis 5:24 says, "*Enoch walked faithfully with God; then he was no more, because God took him away*" (NIV). Similarly, Jesus promises that the pure in heart will "*see God*" (Matthew 5:8). What an incredible thought! They get to see God. What an incentive!

This is amazingly practical. Some of you really need to hear this, so listen up. Yesterday as I was preparing my sermon I encountered an article in *Leadership* magazine that was written by an anonymous pastor who struggles with sexual lust. This is what he wrote:

“Most of our arguments for purity are negative arguments: Be pure, or you will feel guilty, or your marriage will fail, or you will be punished. But the Beatitudes clearly indicate a positive argument that fits neatly with the Bible’s pattern in describing sins. Sins are not a list of petty irritations drawn up for the sake of a jealous God. They are, rather, a description of the impediments to spiritual growth. We are the ones who suffer if we sin, by forfeiting the development of character and Christlikeness that would have resulted if we had not sinned.

The thought hit me like a bell rung in a dark, silent hall. So far, none of the scary, negative arguments against lust had succeeded in keeping me from it. Fear and guilt simply did not give me resolve; they added self-hatred to my problems. But here was a description of what I was missing by continuing to harbor lust: I was limiting my own intimacy with God. The love he offers is so transcendent and possessing that it requires our faculties to be purified and cleansed before we can possibly contain it. Could he, in fact, substitute another thirst and another hunger for the one I had never filled? Would Living Water somehow quench lust? That was the gamble of faith.”ⁱⁱ

Do you see what is happening there? Sin promises a lasting glory, but it doesn’t deliver. It’s just an idol that breaks under the weight of our worship. Only God can sustain our worship. Only God can satisfy our worship. You may not realize this, but everyone worships. Everyone! It’s just a matter of where are worship is aimed. Is it aimed at God or the idols of our sin.

If we realize it’s aimed at the idols of sin, then we will want to remove the idol. But we will never be successful at tearing down idols until we get a thirst of God’s glory. Until we see God as more glorious than our sin. Until the promise of seeing God excites us.

Recently I was reading a book by Matt Papa (yes, that’s his real name), called *Look and Live*. The subtitle of the book is “Beholding the Soul-Thrilling, Sin-Destroying Glory of Christ.” There is a paragraph in the book that I just thought was gold. He writes,

“...we cannot not worship—since the heart is a throne that must be occupied—we don't change simply by removing what's there. We don't change by saying, 'Bad soul! Stop worshipping that.' We cannot keep continually dragging our idols off the throne. That throne is a magnet, and this process is utterly exhausting and otherwise known as religion. No willpower, sheer human grit, or determination will overthrow that pseudo god. It will not be removed; in fact, it cannot be. Idols are never removed. They are replaced. Displaced. They are not suppressed. They are eclipsed.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Some of you in this room are thinking, “Eureka!” That’s exactly what that pastor was thinking. All those years of struggling through lust unsuccessfully because it was fear that was prompting a white-knuckled attempt to change. All those years of resisting out of fear and failing again and again. It wasn’t until the glory of Christ, the prospect of seeing God in all His glory, became more desirable than the sin that the idol was dethroned. He was missing out on something better because he was choosing sin. It was seeing this that changed his life and changed his struggle. It was seeing God. Seeing God for who He is. Seeing God more and more clearly. Seeing God as more glorious. That’s where victory comes. Seeing that God offers more than the sin.

Finally, consider the seventh beatitude, which reminds us that...

Kingdom People Are Peacemakers.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God” (Matthew 5:9). Why are citizens of God’s Kingdom peacemakers? For the same reason they are merciful. Christ Jesus has made peace between Christians and God by substituting Himself in the place of sinners on the cross. He took upon Himself the wrath of God that we deserved so that we would be spared. This is how Paul puts it in Romans 5...

“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ... Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.” (Romans 5:1, 9-10).

Similarly, to the Corinthians, he wrote,

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.” (2 Corinthians 5:17-20)

Isn’t that awesome. When we stop trying to earn our way to God and realize we cannot save ourselves, we can for the first time turn to Christ to save us through His death and resurrection. Biblical faith is trusting in Him alone to save us and when He saves us He reconciles us to God. How? By removing our sin that created a rift between us and God. Sin separated us from God. Our sin was rebellion against God. It positions us as enemies of God. Our sin is always against God. After King David committed adultery with a married woman and had her husband murdered, he cries out to God—*“Against you, you only, have I sinned...”* (Psalm 51:4). Do you see? Every sin is against God. Every sin. But God send His son to absorb the punishment for our spiritual treason, so that we could have peace with God. Jesus is the ultimate peacemaker!

But Paul takes it a step further. Now that Jesus has made peace between the Christian and God, He calls us to join Him a ministry of peacemaking, a ministry of reconciliation. We are Christ’s ambassadors. We are the cheerleaders of His reconciling initiative. We get to announce the Gospel, the “good news” that Christ died for sinners! The war with God is over, if we would but lay down our arms and put our faith in Christ. We can have peace with God!

And if that is our ministry and the Gospel is about reconciliation, then unreconciled Christians don’t advertise it well. (How many times have you heard me say that?) This is why every New Testament letter that Paul wrote to a church stressed unity. Unity. Disunity slanders the Gospel. In the church, we must work out our differences. If we don’t, our witness to the world suffers. Our example will undermine our message. Jesus is going to say in the Sermon on the Mount, this same chapter in fact, that our worship at the altar should not precede our pursuit of reconciliation with our brothers and sisters (Matthew 5:23-24). That’s how serious this is. It matters to God. Does it matter to you?

When we experience peace with God and we meditate on the Gospel where we see our peacemaking God in action, it transforms us into peacemakers. Kingdom people are peacemakers. And according to Jesus, they will be called *“sons of God.”* (Matthew 5:9). Children of God! The people of Israel were given the same designation in the Old Testament. It’s another way that God reassures the Christ-follower that he is

indeed part of God's people, adopted into His family. I love what Charles Quarles says about this beatitude: "Peacemaking does not make one a child of God, but peacemaking is an essential expression of divine sonship... Nothing expresses the Father's character more clearly than the ministry of reconciliation."^{iv}

Of course, reconciliation involves at least two parties. Both have to desire reconciliation for it to happen. And, often in our lives, that other party or person resists it. Once again, the Bible is a realistic book. It recognizes this possibility. Paul said to the Romans, for example, "*If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with every one*" (Romans 12:18). That phrase, "*as far as it depends on you,*" reminds us that there will be times when peacemaking breaks down when you have done your part at pursuing it. Paul's point though is that *we* must never be the point at which it breaks down. We need to pursue it. When it doesn't occur, may it not be for our lack of effort or some door that we closed with our attitude and resentments.

What we do in those circumstances is something we will talk about in a later sermon, when we cover Jesus' words on anger here in chapter 5 in a couple weeks. For now, we simply acknowledge that God's people are peacemakers like their Father. And, like our Father, people will not always want peace with us. This is the point of the final beatitude, but before we cover that let me mention another thought that is worth adding...

Peacemaking doesn't simply mean closing our eyes to wrongdoing in society. No, very often peace doesn't exist because justice doesn't exist. This is why Micah 6 called us to "do justice," remember?

As I mentioned earlier, today is the National Sanctity of Human Life Sunday. The fact of the matter is the world around us doesn't value life as it should. But as Christians we do. Every life was created by God. Every human life was made in His image. Every human life, therefore, has a certain dignity to it. But every human life is not valued in our world. So we carve out this Sunday every year to remind ourselves that life has value.

Why this Sunday? Because it's the Sunday that precedes the anniversary of the Roe v. Wade U.S. Supreme Court decision, which legalized abortion in our country. Since that decision there have been over 56 million abortions in our country alone. 56 million! Those statistics are not even up to date. According to the National Center for Health Statistics, in recent years, over 40% of all unintended^v pregnancies are terminated by abortion. Just a few years ago, our President released a statement on the anniversary of the Roe v. Wade ruling that read:

"We are reminded that the decision not only protects women's health and reproductive freedom, but stands for a broader principle: that government should not intrude on our most private family matters."

When that statement comes out and is met by the applause of millions, I can't help but weep. It shows how trapped and blind we can become in a culture of deceit. I'm not making a political statement. I am making a morality statement. This is *the* civil rights issue of our day. This is *the* issue that we will look back on one day, when death toll blocks out the sun, and cry out, "what were we thinking? How could we have been so blind?" In one of the most powerful sermons I have ever heard, John Piper makes this same point. How, in the name of "protecting women" did we justify destroying the lives of 500,000 little women every year? How, under the banner of "protecting reproductive freedom," did we authorize the destruction of freedom for over one million little children every year? How did repeating over and over again that this is a "private family matter" so numb our conscience that we forget the value of their lives and fail to mourn their loss?^{vi}

Listen, part of being a peacemaker means standing up for justice for those who cannot stand up for themselves. And part of being a peacemaker means holding out the Gospel to those who mourn the decision that has haunted them and extending the same mercy that we ourselves needed just as badly from God (“blessed are the merciful”). And part of being a peacemaker means saying, what Jesus says here to those mourners, “God will comfort. Don’t run from God. Run to Him. He will heal you. He will receive you. He will forgive you. He will comfort you. He has promised to wipe away the tears in time. He loves you. We love you. We’re in the same boat ultimately.”

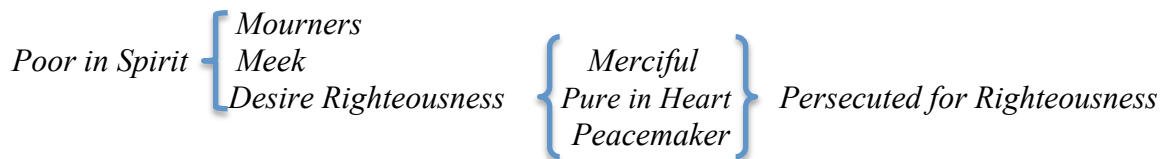
And the causes of justice go far beyond this. Who will speak out and pursue justice for those trafficked in slavery around the world, including in our very state? Who will speak out and pursue justice for those discriminated against because of their race or nationality? Who will speak for those who have no access to food, shelter, and education? Who will pursue justice for the widows of the world? For the foreigners in our community? For the 153 million orphans around the world? We will! We will be the salt! We will be their voice! We will lead the way! We must. It’s who we are. We are peacemakers. And pursuing peace for some means pursuing justice, not necessarily for ourselves but for those with no voice. We must lead the way. We’ll talk more about this next time.

For now, consider the last beatitude, which teaches us that...

Kingdom People Are Persecuted

As I mentioned last week, the eighth beatitude is developed and expanded more than the others. He gives the beatitude in verse 10 and then expands it in verses 11 and 12. The expansion deals with the same subject, but shifts the language from third-person pronouns (i.e., “they” and “theirs”) to second-person pronouns (i.e., “you” and “your”). Jesus says, “*Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you*” (Matthew 5:10-12). Please notice, he is describing suffering “for righteousness” and “on [Jesus’] account.” This isn’t you getting punched in the face because you were a jerk or because you failed to speak truth in love or something like that. This is suffering that comes into our lives because we are following Jesus and because we are living like Jesus.

How does this beatitude relate to the others?



When God begins to transform our hearts and we begin to live more and more like Christ (merciful, pure in heart, peacemaking), more and more righteously, it will invite persecution. Many in the world didn’t like Christ. They didn’t like what He said, what He stood for. They didn’t like Him because of who He associated with. And, inevitably, when we live like Christ, persecution will follow. It certainly won’t be the extent of persecution that Christ faced. And, by virtue of where we live and the freedoms that exist here, it likely won’t approach the degree to which our brothers and sisters around the world are persecuted because of their faith. But, nonetheless, as Paul said to Timothy, “*all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted*” (2 Timothy 3:12). Jesus prepared His disciples on numerous occasions for the same treatment He faced. He warned them that they would be hated for His name’s sake (Matthew 10:22). He said,

“A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household.” (Matthew 10:24-25)

Peter said something similar to the churches of Asia Minor—“...they are surprised that you do not join them in their reckless, wild living, that they heap abuse on you” (1 Peter 4:3). This teaching is all over the Bible. Those who follow God will pay a price for it from the world. It’s not always going to be easy. Those prosperity preachers of the world are lying to you. Jesus points out in this beatitude that Kingdom people will be persecuted. He says, “when [not “if”] they revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you...” (Matthew 5:11). It’s going to happen. It’s always been this way. Jesus reminds us that this is how it was for all the prophets of old (5:12). Jesus is realistic. He wants us to know that on the frontend. He wants us to count the cost before we follow. And He wants you to see that He is worth the cost.

He promises these folks, yet again, “theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (5:10). He says, “Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven” (5:12). This is why we can wait on God. This is why we can endure affliction. Future grace. Promised grace. This is why we can defend others and work for justice for others, but we don’t have to for ourselves. We can wait on God’s vindication. We don’t have to retaliate; we can turn the other cheek because God will make things right in the end. We don’t have to seek revenge. We can forgive our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. It’s hard and it hurts, but even in the midst of that Jesus says we can rejoice because it will be worth it all in the end. There is “an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison” in our future because of God’s grace (2 Corinthians 4:17). What a wonderful promise!

Next time, I want to show you a couple more implications of the Beatitudes and how they relate to the “salt and light” passage that comes next in the Sermon on the Mount. They are really important truths that I think will help get some of you out of your rut. So make sure you are here. And bring a couple friends with you. But let me close with a word for those of you who have been suffering lately because of your faithfulness to Christ. The word comes from Peter’s own reflection on this eighth beatitude. We will close with this. In 1 Peter 3:14 and following, Peter writes:

“But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. ‘Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened.’ But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. For it is better, if it is God’s will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.” (1 Peter 3:14-18)

Amen! Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!

Let’s pray...

ⁱ D. A. Carson, *Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount and His Confrontation with the World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1987), 25.

ⁱⁱ This article was written in 1982. I encountered it in a sermon called, “A Sermon for the Ages: Character Qualities of a Counter Cultural Christian,” preached by Michael P. Andrus on January 11, 2007.

ⁱⁱⁱ Matt Papa, *Look and Live: Behold the Soul-Thrilling, Sin-Destroying Glory of Christ* (Bethany House, 2014), 77.

^{iv} Charles Quarles, *Sermon on the Mount: Restoring Christ’s Message to the Modern Church* (NACSBT; Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011), 70. He also writes, “Sons of God will bear a resemblance to their heavenly Father, and the SM appeals to the character and behavior of God as a model that Jesus’ disciples are to seek to emulate (vv. 44-45, 48). Jesus’ disciples will

be recognized as God's children in the eschatological judgment, not merely because they claim to be His children but because they resemble Him in their character and behavior." Ibid.

^v In the audio of the sermon, Brandon left out the word "unintended," which would drastically change the numbers. Nevertheless, the numbers are still unfathomably large. This sermon omission was *unintended*.

^{vi} John Piper asked these questions in a slightly different way in a powerful sermon. It was since captured in a video, which you can watch here: <http://www.desiringgod.org/blog/posts/no-mr-president-killing-is-killing-no-matter-what-we-call-it>.