*Introduction*

Over the past 2 weeks we have looked at practical aspects of the Christian life. We looked at Faith and feelings and how we should not just act on our gut instincts, or the way we feel, or that peace we may have without checking what the Scriptures say on the subject - Because God never goes against His Word.

Last week we looked at the subject of harm happening to us as Christians, and we saw that we are not kept from harm, it is part of our daily lives, and although God allows harm to come to us, he is not the author of it.

Having started looking at these practical things, I felt that God was leading me to look at the life of Jesus and His attitude towards things that affect our lives.

The world wants us to accept all things as being 'normal' even though God has not changed his stance on things. Our ideas on divorce etc, are all covered by Jesus, and in the society that we are in, it is good to remind ourselves of what God says and of course what Jesus' attitude to these things was, after all he had opposition from those in authority, both Government and Religious.

This morning we are going to kick off this series by looking at the Beatitudes.

There is a lot that we can say about these beatitudes, but rather than look at them individually, I believe it is helpful on this occasion to look at them as a whole and ask ourselves the question "What was Jesus' overall attitude to these things?"

So let us READ Matthew 5:1-12

PRAY

**The context**

Jesus has began his earthly ministry, but not before He was announced and baptised by John the Baptist, with the Spirit of God ascending on him like a dove and Gods voice saying:

***Matt 3:17 ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.’***

He is then led into the Wilderness by the Spirit of God to be tempted of the devil for 40 days and 40 nights.

Having accomplished this He begins his ministry of teaching and healing, as we saw in the run up to Passover, he was telling everyone who he was, and his healings. He was showing his authority over disease and the demonic and they were making him quite a celebrity and drawing great crowds.

He had come into a world that was sinful and fallen and had gone away from Gods laws or at least interpreted them in their own way so that the law had become a real burden to the people, instead of a joy that brought them freedom.

So he starts to teach the people about how they should really be.

This message also applies to us today, and especially to those who claim to belong to Christ and have been 'born again', who have become a new creation.

**The message**

What is the message of this sermon on the mount, or the first part of it at least.

In these first few verses Jesus covers every part of our lives, from being poor and hungry to being persecuted.

The first three 'beatitudes' deal with the physical, being poor in spirit, mourning and being meek.

This sermon is not about Jesus changing these things from what they are into something 'fantastic', it's about being different in the midst of these things.

We can be poor in spirit, without hope, without a future, and so many are! but Jesus says that as a believer in Him, we can know that heaven is ours, the whole riches of the glories of God are ours, we can have that hope for the future because it is actually a reality for those who believe:
***Eph 1:3Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. 4For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love 5he[***[***b***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians+1&version=NIVUK#fen-NIVUK-29212b)***] predestined us for adoption to sonship[***[***c***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians+1&version=NIVUK#fen-NIVUK-29212c)***] through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will – 6to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. 7In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace***

When we mourn for the passing of a loved one we can know His comfort. When Fred and Francis Gill came to speak at the breakfast, God had given them a verse of scripture about their Son that gave them comfort, they knew that although he was dead, he was with Christ.

Those who are meek, the Cambridge dictionary describes meek or being meek as one who is ***'not willing to argue or express your opinions in a forceful way'***, a bit like one who feels they must go along with the crowd and do what they say you should do.

The meek, are going to inherit the earth! what a change!

But despite what it looks like NOW, Jesus is saying to us that in Him, you can know it NOW!

To be blessed does not mean a physical blessing like being poor and coming into thousands and suddenly becoming rich. It means that in this or these circumstances, you can know the peace of God and the riches of God that He has already lavished on those who believe, meaning that although you are poor you can live as heir apparent.

The following attitudes are things that we will receive for being Godlike and kind.

v6 - Hunger and thirst for righteousness - they will be filled.

God wants us to seek him

***Heb 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.***

v7 Thos who are merciful - will be shown mercy.

***Matt 9:13But go and learn what this means: “I desire mercy, not sacrifice.”[***[***a***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+9:12-14&version=NIVUK#fen-NIVUK-23393a)***] For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.’and not*** [***willing***](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/willing) ***to*** [***argue***](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/argue) ***or*** [***express***](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/express)[***your***](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/your)[***opinions***](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/opinion) ***in a*** [***forceful***](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/forceful) ***way: and not*** [***willing***](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/willing) ***to*** [***argue***](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/argue) ***or*** [***express***](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/express)[***your***](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/your)[***opinions***](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/opinion) ***in a*** [***forceful***](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/forceful) ***way:***

The Pharisees were all about the sacrifice - "you must obey the whole of the law" OR ELSE!!

But Jesus was all about forgiveness. That did not mean that he 'let them off' he also had a compelling message.

To the woman caught in adultery - he said "go, and sin no more", to the lepers who were cleansed - "Go and show the priest", to the man healed - "get up and walk"

Jesus knew what it meant to show mercy, and so must we. And as we do, we to will be shown mercy.

Being pure in heart is all about seeking to know God and what He wants, and when we are pure in heart, we will see God.

How often are we peacemakers? This is really talking of bringing peace into peoples lives rather than stopping disputes. We have the message of the Gospel that brings peace, and that same peace makes us sons of God.

The last couple of verses go together and expand the theme in question.

Blessed are those who are persecuted....because of Righteousness.

The scriptures tell us

***Rom 3:10As it is written: ‘There is no one righteous, not even one;***

***Rom 3:22This righteousness is given through faith in[***[***h***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+3&version=NIVUK#fen-NIVUK-28014h)***] Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, 23for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.***

What these verses are saying is that we are not righteous of ourselves and cannot be, but Christ has made us righteous. He has paid the price, the sacrifice for our sins and made us righteous.

Therefore when it says persecuted because of righteousness, it is not being persecuted because of who we are! but because of our stand for Christ who has made us righteous.

We are blessed, when people come against us, when they insult us and hurt us, because of our witness for Jesus.

The prophets were also treated this way, those who stand upon the word of God have been and always will be persecuted. But you can rejoice in this because... your reward is in heaven.

*Conclusion*

In this sermon on attitudes, Jesus is saying to us, do not be like the world, who want things now and who will do anything to get what they want, don't be like them.

But instead, in everything, in your physical situation, as hard as it may be, you can rejoice, you can have peace in your heart and in your situation, because you are in Christ Jesus.

In your attitudes towards others, don't look down on anyone, don't even look up to anyone, but treat all with mercy, don't take revenge, but give it to God.

Seek God with all that you have, for when you do, he will unlock the riches of Heaven, you will find Him.

And when you stand for Him and are persecuted, Rejoice! for He knows, He has been through it, He understands, and He has your reward in Heaven.

What Jesus is saying here is this:

Don't look down, or around, LOOK UP! for that is where your real peace is, that is where your real reward is, that is where HE is.

Amen.