

The King's People: Hearts

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[0 : 00] Fellowship. Give him the praise. We're turning back again to our series on the Kingdom-Focused Church. We're just getting started, really, in many ways, but we are now moving forward into Matthew chapter 5, and we're going to begin looking at—this is kind of a—because we have communion today—this is kind of an introductory to this section here in Matthew chapter 5. So let's pray, and then I'll read our passage of study this morning. Father, thank you.

Thank you that we don't have to hold out in our own strength, because, Father, if it was just about our strength being able to hold out, we would fall because our grip gets slippery. Our grip gets weak.

Thank you that you are holding us so that we can hold out. Thank you for grace. Thank you for such love. Now be with us now as we open our hearts to hear your word. Will you speak to us? Will you do the work that only you can do in our hearts? Will you correct our view of things, Lord? Will you deliver us from worldliness? Will you deliver us from listening to the cult of the world around us? You give us—will you renew our minds, as your word says? Transform our hearts. We need you. We are so inundated, so inundated with the thinking of our culture. We, so often, we're no different. Have mercy, for you created us to be different, that we may point people to Jesus, who is really different than everyone else.

So, Lord, come. Correct us, guide us, rebuke us, change us, encourage us. Do all your holy will. Use your unworthy servant who also sits under this word.

[2 : 06] May we hear the voice of Jesus. In his name we pray. Amen. Matthew chapter 5, beginning at verse 1. We're going to read down.

Well, we'll stop at verse 3 this morning. Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain. And when he sat down, his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Amen. That is the word of the Lord. You may be seated. Thank you.

Thank you, brother. Now, I don't know how many of you are into rock and roll. You know, I grew up in all kinds of R&Bs.;

Oh, man. Earth, wind, and fire. The Gap Band. Come funk shun. You know, I got story. I mean, Ohio. I mean, I grew up on R&B.;

[3 : 16] But I got into some rock and roll. And I got into some rock and roll. And I remember years ago, back in the 70s, a little-known rocker named Mick Jagger.

I never heard of him. He was married to one of the first supermodels during the 70s. Her name was Jerry Hall.

Ha-ha. Gotcha. Rock trivia. Jerry Hall. They had four kids together, actually. And, of course, they finally divorced. But in an interview with Hall, she said something that I found very deep and very telling and very interesting.

She said, I think if I weren't so beautiful, I would have more character. Now, that's the...

It turned a few heads, I think, even back in those days. Today, I don't think that would turn many heads, probably, actually. Because there's some questions.

[4 : 28] Does beauty trump character today? Do you aspire to be beautiful or to have character?

Does politics trump character? Do our politicians aspire to win elections or to have character?

Does righteous anger trump character? Do you aspire to be authentic or to have character?

Does the movement trump character? Do you aspire to influence or to have character? Do feelings trump character?

Do you aspire to express yourself or to have character? I don't know. I will tell you this much.

[5 : 32] Our Lord Jesus is going to teach us that his people are known by their character. He would say that nothing trumps character. Because the king's people are known by their kingdom character.

So what say you? What are you known by? If I were to walk down your street or go to your job and mention your name or your school and mention your name, what are you known by?

Our Lord has just begun his ministry as we notice from the past couple of Sundays in chapter four. He is the bringer of the kingdom of heaven. That kingdom is real.

That kingdom is present because he is real and present. The king is real and present. So therefore the kingdom. He has a message of good news or gospel from this kingdom.

And he's come to bring divine light, knowledge of life from death to all the world. But to receive this, all must repent of their sins.

[6 : 52] They must turn away from disobedience to God and self-centered living to follow him, the king, putting their faith in him as their savior king.

And now he's begun preaching this message. And now he wants, he sits down as chapter five begins. He sits down to teach those who would be his disciples.

Sitting was the posture of the rabbi as he taught. And the crowds, verse one says, gathered around him. And he was speaking in particularly to his disciples.

But all the crowd could hear. And he wanted them to hear. What is it? What is the kingdom? What does it mean to be a member and a part of this kingdom?

And so he begins with these words here. I didn't read all of them, but the point is the king's confirmation on this people's character are called beatitudes.

[8 : 00] This is his confirmation on who his people are. And he talks about character, the character of his people. That's how you know his people.

Their character. Now he talks, now we use the words, the word beatitudes to describe all these sayings here. I didn't read them all, but you know them.

Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are those who mourn. Blessed are the meek. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Blessed are the merciful. Blessed are the pure in heart. Blessed are the peacemakers.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. You know those. You might have learned, memorized them in Sunday school like I did when I was a kid. The word blessed here, that's why they call them beatitudes, because they are blessings.

A beatitude is Latin for supreme blessedness. Supreme blessedness or supreme happiness. There are pronouncements upon certain people.

[9 : 08] What does it mean to be blessed? Some have focused on the thought of happiness, actually, in this passage. Who are the supremely happy people? Some have said. If you want to be happy, be like these people.

One preacher called them the be happy attitudes. If you want to be happy, you got to be like this. You see.

The problem with this is happiness tends to depend on one's circumstances being good. And I got to ask you a question.

Since when is poverty, mourning, meekness, hunger, thirst, and persecution themes for happiness? happiness. So our Lord probably has something much deeper in his mind than what we would consider happiness.

To be blessed by God is to have his favor. Therefore, it's to be at peace with him and to have his peace in you. The Jews would have called this shalom.

[10 : 16] Right? You know that word. It speaks of wholeness. It speaks of well-being that goes beyond one's circumstances. Today, we use words like flourishing or thriving.

Good words. That's what it means to be blessed. It's a different type of happiness. It doesn't depend if you got all the money you want to have in your pocket.

I'm so happy to hear that. Dr. Dan Durianna, who used to be a professor at Covenant Seminary, just simply says this, for disciples, happiness means wholeness and integrity even in the darkest hour.

That's blessed. What it means to be blessed? To be blessed by God is to know you are secure with him no matter what is happening in your life. And that gives you the ability, therefore, to follow Jesus when it gets difficult and when it costs you something.

Because if you're truly going to follow Jesus, things will get difficult and it will cost you. And so, in these Beatitudes, Jesus, therefore, also makes promises to his people.

[11:42] Now, before we get into the specifics of that, I need you to see how different Christ's kingdom character is from our cultural values today.

As a matter of fact, you could say the kingdom of God is the upside-down kingdom by the world standards. Upside-down.

Now, for those of you who are TV buffs, I'm not talking about Stranger Things. You've seen that show. A few of you have seen that show.

It's where middle schoolers save the world. I just closed my mind. The upside-down in that movie, in that show, was a name given to describe a mysterious alternate dimension existing in parallel to our human world.

It was a realm of alien violence. Minds and spores and predatory creatures. All psychically linked together. And see, what happens in that TV show is that alien world breaks into our reality and it begins to corrupt our realm with rot and death.

[12:57] and I only hope middle schoolers. One of them was a very powerful girl with strong telekinetic and psychic abilities.

Her name was Eleven. See, I'm not joking. See, people saw it. It's not just me. I'm not just geeking out. Some of y'all know what I'm talking about. But it was called the upside down and I think it's striking because to some people today, we Christians are like beasts from another realm who need to be shut up or put down.

We look like the upside down coming in. We look dangerous. And the more you look like Jesus, the more upside down you are in this culture and the more dangerous and uncomfortable you will become.

We're going to talk more about that later as we go on through the Beatitudes. You'll see. Jesus says, how upside down it is? Jesus says, blessed are the poor. blessed are the poor.

We say, no. Blessed are the rich. He says, blessed are those who mourn. The culture says, no. Blessed are those who party. He says, blessed are the meek.

[14:25] The culture says, no. Blessed are those who assert themselves and get what they want get their way. He says, blessed are those who hunger and thirst. The world says, no. Blessed are those who eat at the coolest restaurants.

Jesus says, blessed are the merciful. Our culture says, blessed are the merciful. are those who get even. Jesus says, blessed are the peacemaker. Our culture says, blessed are the rebels, etc.

Blessed are those who are persecuted? No. We say, blessed are those who are strong and in control. Ultimately, what we see in these beatitudes is the character of Jesus.

He embodies the beatitudes. Every one of them, Jesus is him. It's his character that he's talking about.

He is the most blessed one from the Father. And he's come for you and me. Remember, in ancient Israel, the king either led the people in keeping God's covenant or he led them in breaking it.

[15:44] Remember, Israel was divided into two kingdoms. You had the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom. The northern kingdom called Israel never had a good king. So that nation just kept going down spiritually, economically, until they were swept away.

The southern kingdom was called Judah. They did have some good kings, many good kings, many times. When they did, the nation flourished.

There was national prosperity, safety, and people were devoted to God. It was amazing. The nation would listen to the prophets as they spoke from God and they would follow the priests and celebrating the holy days, making sacrifices to God that were commanded in his law.

But then that king would die and his son or his grandson would break the covenant.

It happened every single time. It was, you know, very rare that you see a son follow his father and keeping the covenant and leading the people well. Very rare.

[16:55] Most of the time, one son or grandson would break the covenant and lead the people away from the true living God to serve dark idols that placed them in bondage.

Nations would rise up and try to conquer them and subdue them because they rebelled against God. You see, the king was their hero. He was their exemplar.

He was the one that they looked up to. He was the one they wanted to emulate. See? But he was always a man of flesh and blood.

And even the good kings failed. But now a new king has come. The true king has come. Jesus the Nazarene, the son of God, has come as king of the kingdom of God. And he announces his kingdom.

[17 : 59] The kingdom of heaven is there. He is the king now, the true and perfect king of the kingdom. And he always keeps the covenant with God. He is the fulfillment of the covenant.

He is the true prophet who speaks God's word. He is the true priest who doesn't bring a sacrifice. He is the final sacrifice for sins. And he is devoted to God.

You see, he's speaking now. He's calling upon his people.

His character is being revealed. He is the example. And more. He is who we are to follow and emulate.

He is the one, like I said, more, who keeps covenant on our behalf, in our place, so that he represents us. And this kingdom is a kingdom of grace.

[18 : 59] You see, in the Beatitudes, we read these kind of wrong sometimes. In the Beatitudes, Jesus is not saying, if you get this caricature, trait, then God will bless you.

He's saying that because you are in the kingdom, you have experienced God's blessing. You have these traits right now in Christ. In Christ, God sees every one of you as poor in spirit.

He sees every one of you as meek. He sees every one of you as a mourner. He sees every one of you as one who hungers and thirsts for righteousness.

He sees every one of you as a peacemaker. Every one of you in Christ, in your position before God, you bear these traits. You are perfected in him.

And it's through union with him that we can experience the blessings of God by being remade in his image by grace. You see, the Beatitudes are the attitudes we are to be because we are, because we be in Christ.

[20 : 13] I know bad English, so I'll say it again. The Beatitudes are the attitudes we are to be because we be in Christ. Bad English, good gospel.

And so what God is doing now with you is by his word and spirit, he is revealing those traits in you as you follow in faith the king.

Jesus says, follow me. See, Paul understood that. That's why he tells us in Philippians 2, therefore, my beloved, as you've always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence, but much more in my absence.

Obey me. He says, how do you want us to obey you, Paul? Work out your salvation with fear and trembling. Work it out, he says. Why? How? Why? For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

We're working out what God has worked in. The Beatitudes are the working out what Christ has worked in. You bear these traits. You don't have to go looking for them.

[21 : 25] They're there. All you do is come to the word and say, Lord, work in me. You bear these traits not because you want to earn blessing, but because you are blessed.

You are blessed. You are free to follow him. You are free from spiritual tyranny. Oh yes, you still mess up. Yes, yes.

But you're free from the tyranny. You now can follow the spirit of Christ. The character of Christ is in you.

I remember when I was a kid growing up, I had, we all had heroes. You got heroes, I know. You got people that you want to, you think about, man, I wish I was like, I wish I had.

Now for us, it was, in West Philly growing up, we were the Sixers fans, it was Dr. J. Julius Irving.

[22 : 33] That's how Zink would call his name at the games. Julius Irving. Man, we all wanted to be like the doctor. Michael Jordan wanted to be like the doctor, by the way. He talks about that if you ever watch some interviews with him.

Doc, Doc was amazing. Big Afro. Boy was the original Skywalker. Doc would jump out the building, come down on a kabloom, tomahawk slam.

It was amazing to watch. He was beautiful. And we all wanted to be like Doc. He perfected the finger roll. And for those who know basketball, that's the smoothest layup there is, the finger roll.

And it just spins up and oh, I perfected the finger roll because I couldn't slam. I was close, but I couldn't slam. We all wanted to be like Doc and then later we wanted to be like Mike and et cetera.

Everyone was like Steph. We all have heroes. Who are your heroes? You got them. Who's on, who's, whose poster is on the wall of your heart?

[23 : 43] Who do you see? You see, I said, like I said before, the people of Israel looked up to their king. They wanted to be like their king.

Jesus comes as king. Do his people want to, do, when you say, when I say, who is your hero? Who do you want to be like? Does anybody see Jesus?

You see, the person you want to emulate is the person you become like. I had to warn some, I remember in Miami, I had to warn my church because some of our people were getting caught up in these commentators on the news and whatnot and their particular commentator and, and, and from right or left, it didn't matter.

A lot of these guys had toxic personalities. And then, and when they, and when a toxic person becomes your hero, you begin to emulate them.

It's unstoppable. It's human. You can't help yourself because in your heart, that person speaks for you.

[24 : 58] Who are you trying to emulate without even trying? Is Jesus your hero? Well, let's dive in. We got a few minutes left.

Let's dive in. Eh, maybe not. Just to give you a little, give a little touch. Jesus begins now to talk about this particular character traits and he begins, it seems the first four seem to speak of our posture before God.

The last four speak of our posture before the community. The first, he says, is poverty of spirit which speaks of our entrance into the kingdom but is also a trait we need to continue to cultivate before the Lord.

Poverty of spirit is the right response to our Lord's message. When Jesus says in Matthew 4, 17, repent for the kingdom is at hand, poverty of spirit is what leads to the right response.

The king's people, here's the point, the king's people are those who have been humbled before the Lord. In Luke's version of this beatitude, he says, blessed are the poor.

[26 : 10] He leads off in spirit. So our Lord taught these truths on more than one occasion. But keep in mind, there's no blessing in being poor.

To be poor is to not only lack material necessities but to have no power, no agency, no voice. to be at the mercy of hostile forces who do have power, it is to be dependent.

Some would even say to be poor is to be invisible. This is what it felt like to live in American slavery and under more recent Jim Crow laws of the South. Those who live in poverty today, even in this country, would echo much of what I've just said about poverty.

But you have to understand, poverty is caused by the fall. Poverty was not part of God's original creation. It is not a desired state, therefore. Jesus uses that image, the image of poor, to show us how we must approach God.

His statement in Matthew fleshes out what he's saying. Luke is just, what he said in Luke is true. It's the same statement. He just fleshes it out more in Matthew. It is poverty of spirit.

[27 : 26] It is spiritual poverty. It is to stand before God, bankrupt, nothing in your account, and payday is nowhere to be seen. It is nothing in my hands I bring, only to thy cross I cling.

To be spiritually poor is to realize you have nothing to offer God that would induce him to bless you, let alone save you. On your own, you have no spiritual resources, no power, no agency, no voice.

On your own. David understood this when he was confronted by Nathan the prophet concerning his horrible sin with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband.

He says in Psalm 51, verse 5, behold, he's confessing to God. That's a beautiful picture of repentance, Psalm 51. I was brought forth in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me.

That's poverty of spirit. Paul shows us that same poverty in Romans 3, for we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are all under sin.

[28 : 39] None is righteous, no, not one. No one understands. No one seeks for God. All have turned aside. Together they have become worthless. No one does good, not even one.

You hear these statements, categorical statements, not even one, no one, no one. Their throat is an open grave. They use their tongues to deceive. The venom of ass, poisonous snakes, is under their lips.

Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood. And their paths are ruin and misery. And the way of peace they have not known. Very opposite of the Beatitudes.

There is no fear of God before their eyes. Listen, I got one question. Have you seen yourself that way? Oh, Rav, Kev, I'm not that bad, man.

Oh, man, we're not that bad. Yes, you are. Word of God says you are. Maybe compared to me, you're not that bad. But God is not measuring you according to me.

[29 : 43] He looks at his holy law and his personal holiness and all of us fall way short in thought, word, and action. Here's the thing. The person who is blessed to see her spiritual poverty comes before God's justice in this life and throws herself on the mercy of the court.

You see, you are blessed to see yourself that way. You are blessed when your eyes are open and you realize that you really are the worst mess you know.

When your eyes are open and you realize that as you stand before God, you don't have a leg to stand on. You have both feet planted firmly in midair. When you realize that's, someone said broken people know they're broken.

My answer to that is not always and not in the way God sees you. Yeah, yeah, I agree. It's broken people. I know people, sometimes we do know we're broken.

We do know we're messed up. We do know. But we don't think we're as bad as all bad. We don't see the depth of our brokenness. Because we think all we need is a helping hand.

[31 : 10] All we need is some money. All we need is an education. All we need is some improvement. You see, that's how, that means we don't see the real issue.

We see the surface of our brokenness. But there's something deeper inside of us that's broken. And it's our hearts. Paul said, we're dead in trespasses and sins.

Dead, not dying. Dead. And when you see that, see, that's the blessing. Blessed are the poor in spirit.

When you see that brokenness, Jesus says, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. When you see that brokenness, the idea is you recognize it and you own it and you stop trying to play games and stop trying to put on airs and impress people.

See, we say, blessed are those who impress people. Blessed are those who are admired. And Jesus says, no. Blessed are you who know how bankrupt you are before God.

[32 : 19] Amen. Blessed are you who know how deep your sin is. And we'll never really know fully that in this life either.

Blessed are those who like the tax collector in Luke 18 when he and the Pharisee go up to pray and the Pharisee says, before God, I'm so glad I'm not like immoral people.

That's really what he says. I'm so glad I'm not like these immoral guys. I mean, it's amazing. I mean, this guy's my hero. I mean, he really, he really just lays it on.

Self-righteousness lives in this man. He's my, he's me. He's Kevin Smith. I'm so glad I'm not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, and even like this tax collector over here, Lord.

Can you imagine talking to God that way? Can you imagine coming down front here and we're all gathered here to pray and you begin to, Bill begins praying, I'm so glad I'm not like Lenard.

[33 : 23] Can you imagine that? How do you think the tax collector felt? He's sitting next to him. What does he do?

He don't even look up to heaven. He beat his breast. God, be merciful to me, a sinner. It's like he was saying, he's right. It's right.

I am. That's poverty of spirit. Listen, someone insults you, says bad things about you, just look at him and say, you know something, if you knew me, you'd know I was really worse than that.

You don't know me very well. I may not be guilty of what you're saying, but I'm worse. I struggle with that. When people, I've experienced slander and I struggle with people slandering me because you know why?

Because I'm better than that. if you really knew yourself, if you really knew how God saw you, you would say, pray for me.

[34 : 40] I may not be guilty of what you're saying, but I am guilty. God, be merciful to me, a sinner.

On the basis of what? Why should God be merciful to anyone? Because you ask for mercy? Is that why God should be merciful to you?

Because you say, God, be merciful to me, have mercy on me? Is that it? You're guilty though. You're guilty.

The judge, if it's a good judge, you've got to pay. You can go, you can commit a crime. Commit a crime in this city. Go before the judge and say, be merciful to me.

And he said, but you're, okay, you're guilty, right? Yes, I'm guilty. So, what does mercy mean? Oh, you want me to let you go? Oh, but you're guilty.

[35 : 39] Excuse me, I can't, I hear you, but the law says you get this much time in the po-po, with the po-po and the po-key.

Why should, why should, why should God be merciful to us? The tax collector in Luke 18 didn't know the full story.

We do. Why should God be merciful? because a king, a divine king has come and he has paid the price for your sins.

He has paid the price. He's gone to jail for you. He's paid the fines. Here's the thing. Elders, come on down, please.

You're guilty of treason. So that's worse. That's the worst thing you can do because treason means death. There is no reprieve. There's no life imprisonment. When you get, you get caught with treason in most, in every country in this world, probably, they put you, they say, bye-bye.

[36 : 58] You have committed treason against the king of heaven and the only penalty is death. But the king has come. And when you recognize your poverty, when you recognize the darkness that lives in you, you can bring that to that king and that king says, I paid it for you.

I know who you are. I know what you're like, but I love you and I died for you. Come into my kingdom. His arms are wide open. That king does what no one else can do.

Brothers and sisters, that's why now we enter the kingdom in brokenness like that, but now we continue to live in that brokenness.

Why? Because you know you're dependent on him. To live in continual poverty of spirit is to live in dependence.

It's to live every day knowing my righteousness is a filthy rag only because of Jesus can I do anything good. Only because of Jesus can I walk in righteousness. Only because of Jesus.

[38 : 11] Listen, when you understand your poverty of spirit right now, you'll become a praying person. You'll give yourself to prayer. Well, prayer won't be just a drive-by thing you do on occasion because when you recognize your continued poverty of spirit, you realize you can't do it.

You can't live this thing. You can't live for Jesus. You can't. You have to keep coming back to the vine and saying, I'm a branch.

Feed me. Cleanse me from unrighteousness. Help me. Every day you cry out to him and that makes you a better witness, by the way.

Because now your self-righteousness goes down the toilet because you're not thinking how great you are, how great I art. You're realizing how great thou art that you would take me, a messed up individual like me and use me in your kingdom and make me a child of God.

You. See, poverty of spirit gets you in the kingdom, but then you live this way because every day you know you need a savior.

[39 : 30] Every day you know you need a king to guide you, to protect you, to strengthen you. What say you? Who's your hero?

Who are you following? Who do you want to be like? Father, help us. We are so easily entertained and so easily impressed.

impressed. We're impressed by people of the world. We impress each other. You don't recognize, oh Lord, we are but dust.

And in left to ourselves, we have nothing to offer you. But in Jesus, we have everything. He is everything. He is our life.

Help us, Lord. Help us to live in poverty of spirit and dependence upon you. Jesus is our voice. Jesus is our representation.

[40 : 39] Jesus is our prosperity, our wealth. He is everything. All that we need is in him. Help us, Lord, to acknowledge that and live that.

In his name we pray. Amen. Amen.