

Introduction to the Beatitudes in Matthew 5:1-12
Freshbrook Church, Sunday 21 September 2025

What is a beatitude?

Either a state of great blessedness or the declaration of such blessing!

Who are the beatitudes from?

Jesus! But check out his credentials in Matthew 1:1, 1:23, 2:23 (c.f. Isaiah 53:3), 3:3, 3:11-12, 3:17 and 4:1-11.

His words could not carry greater authority!

Who are the beatitudes for?

Disciples (vv.1-2).

But not all are born again or fully fledged Christians yet (see 7:13-14 and 7:21-23)

So the beatitudes are for learners and there is time for us to grow!

What is the wider context of the beatitudes?

The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), the key theme of which is the kingdom of heaven.

The kingdom of heaven is:

God's rightful rule over creation, which is being re-established through God's king – Jesus. His kingdom or reign is breaking back into the world, overthrowing the devil's pretend kingdom, judging sin, liberating captive souls and starting to restore all that has been broken since the fall of Adam and Eve.

Key references to the kingdom in the Sermon on the Mount: 5:3, 5:10, 5:19-20, 6:10, 6:33, 7:13-23.

The beatitudes describe the kind of people who *receive* God's kingdom and *how* they will be *blessed* in it. They paint a picture of true discipleship and its rewards.

Are the beatitudes simply concerned with who we are *now* or what we *should* be and might grow into?

They provide comfort and reassurance if we *do* already possess some of these qualities or find ourselves persecuted.

They are a warning to the extent that we *don't* possess these qualities.

But as the kingdom is now *and not yet* (compare 3:2, 4:17, 5:3 + 10, 7:13-14, 7:21-23) there is time for us to change.

The beatitudes are thus a gracious invitation to grow.

Do the beatitudes speak of present or future reward?

Both! Present to some extent (v.3 'theirs *is* the kingdom), but especially future (5:4-9).

Only at Jesus' return will the kingdom and its blessings come in full (7:21-23, c.f. Revelation 21:1-4).

The beatitudes are a comfort and encouragement to press on, especially when life is hard.

Are the beatitudes about blessing or happiness?

'Happy' is within the scope of the original Greek word 'makarios', but doesn't always fit so comfortably (e.g. v.4 and v.10)

We might feel happy because of these promised blessings, but feelings come and go.

Blessing is greater, more permanent and dependable than the emotion of happiness.

Where is grace in all of this?

Grace is assumed throughout the Sermon on the Mount (e.g. 5:3, 5:45, 6:12, 6:32-33, 7:11).

The Old Testament background is key, e.g. Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Ezekiel 36:24-27.

Ultimately, God will bring about the change in our hearts needed to grow in the way the beatitudes invite us to.

All we need to do is keep in step with the Spirit's work in us and not resist him (c.f. Galatians 5:25).

So the beatitudes tell us what to look for as *confirming evidence* in the life of someone who is *already* born again and possessing saving faith.

Someone who possesses these qualities is already a citizen of God's kingdom at heart – these qualities are merely like a passport, which prove our citizenship.