

As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby. - 1 Peter 2:2

# THE SINCERE MILK OF GOD'S WORD

The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword... - Hebrews 4:12

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## Who Our Lord Calls Blessed

Though the world may view fame, fortune, or earthly accomplishments as that which make one blessed, our Lord paints a different picture about the deepest kind of blessedness.

At the beginning of His "Sermon on the Mount," Jesus spoke what is often referred to as the "beatitudes." The word "beatitude" comes from a Latin word that refers to blessedness. In these verses, Jesus describes the kind of person who finds favor with God and is richly blessed by Him.

The Poor in Spirit: Jesus began the beatitudes with the words, "*Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*" (**Matt. 5:3**).

It is striking to hear the word "poor" included in a description of one who Jesus considers blessed. He is not here specifying those who are poor (or rich) *materially*, but rather those who are poor in *spirit*.

The one who is poor in spirit recognizes how much we *need* God. Instead of feeling self-sufficient, the poor in spirit understand that we are spiritually *hopeless* without the Lord. This is an attitude toward God that involves recognizing we have sinned against Him (**Rom. 3:23**), and thus need, but do not deserve, His grace (**Rom. 6:23**; cf. **Luke 18:13**).

Being poor in spirit is key for one to initially recognize his or her need to turn to the Lord, and it is key for those who are a part of the Lord's church in order to please Him.

Those Who Mourn: Jesus continued the beatitudes by saying, "*Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted*" (**Matt. 5:4**).

There are a few possibilities for what would cause one who mourns to be blessed by God. Jesus may have been referring here to one

who mourns due to persecution, or one who sorrows for the wickedness of the world.

In the immediate context, though, it appears quite possible that Jesus is including one who mourns with godly sorrow over his or her sins.

Notice **2 Corinthians 7:9-10**: *I now rejoice, not that you were grieved, but that you were grieved to repentance. For you were grieved in a godly way, that you might suffer loss by us in nothing. For godly sorrow produces repentance to salvation, which brings no regret. But the sorrow of the world produces death.*

One who is poor in spirit will recognize how grievous sin is, and thus will be led to mourn over his or her sins, and meekly turn to the One through whom we can have forgiveness.

The Meek: This leads into the next of the beatitudes: "*Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth*" (**Matt. 5:5**).

Though meekness is often viewed as a weakness, Jesus describes meekness as a strength. The meekness God demands is not a "push-over" attitude (**Eph. 4:14**), but an attitude related to self-control, humility, and proper submissiveness. Meekness allows one to be *directed*.

This can apply to earthly relationships in which we are to be in subjection (**Rom. 13:1**; **Eph. 5:22**; **Heb. 13:17**). First and foremost, though, meekness involves submission to God. Being meek means letting God mold us like clay. It means asking, "*Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*" (**Acts 9:6**), and receiving God's Word meekly (**Jas. 1:21**).

Those Who Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness: Jesus continued His Sermon on the Mount with another point that relates to our attitude toward God's will: "*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled*" (**Matt. 5:6**).

We should have a strong spiritual appetite that causes us to earnestly strive to *be* right with God by *doing* what He says is right, which requires us to *learn* what He says is right.

Thus, we should have a great longing for the Word of God (**Rom. 1:17; 1 Pet. 2:2**), and the things we learn should be zealously put into practice as God instructs us (**Jas. 1:22**).

The Merciful: While the first four beatitudes focus primarily on one's attitude toward God, the next four focus a lot on our attitudes toward others. This is seen in **Matthew 5:7**: *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.*

The word mercy generally involves showing pity. Being merciful includes having a willingness to forgive others.

Jesus spoke a parable in **Matthew 18:23-35** that teaches our need to be forgiving. This parable tells of a servant whose master was willing to forgive him of a debt he could not pay, but this same servant was unwilling to show mercy toward a *fellow* servant.

An interesting thing about this parable is that the servant owed his master "*ten thousand talents*" (**verse 24**), while his fellow servant owed him "*one hundred denari*" (**verse 28**). The servant owed his master about 600,000 times as much as his fellow servant owed him.

This contrast has a lesson for us. No matter how much one has wronged us, it does not compare to how much we have wronged God. Without Christ's sacrifice, the "debt" we owe God could never be paid. If God is willing to show us mercy, how much more should we be willing to show others mercy?

The Pure in Heart: The next beatitude gets at a theme of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Jesus said, "*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God*" (**Matt. 5:8**).

Many in Jesus' day focused on the "outward man" only, while ignoring the inward man. Notice **Matthew 23:25**: *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within*

*they are full of extortion and unrighteousness.*

Jesus told these individuals to "*first clean the inside of the cup and of the platter, that its outside may become clean also*" (**verse 26**).

God knows our hearts (**Luke 16:15**), and, while He commands righteous words and actions, He wants us to do and speak things that come from a *pure, sincere heart*.

The Peacemakers: Jesus went on in the beatitudes to say, "*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God*" (**Matt. 5:9**).

We should seek to be at peace *with God* (**Rom. 5:1**) and have *inner* peace (**Phil. 4:6-7**). In the context of **Matthew 5:9**, though, it appears Jesus is foremost talking about seeking peace with others.

While it is not always possible to be at peace with everyone, we should do the best we can to pursue this. Notice **Romans 12:18**: *If it is possible, as much as it is up to you, be at peace with all men.*

We should seek peace through love, kindness, and compassion, instead of being resentful and holding grudges against others.

Those Persecuted for Righteousness' Sake: Jesus concluded the beatitudes by saying "*Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*" (**Matt. 5:10**; cf. **verses 11-12**).

Those who live godly lives in Christ will face persecution of some kind (**2 Tim. 3:12**). This can be "mental persecution," such as being mocked, falsely accused, or "un-befriended."

While it is hard to consider oneself blessed when persecuted for faithfulness to Christ, those who face this please God (**1 Pet. 4:14**), and those who endure will receive an eternal home in heaven (**Rev. 2:10**).

Jesus' description of one who is blessed involves humble submission to God and treating others with love. May we be among those who are blessed richly by our Creator.

- **Michael Hickox**