

## **Blessed: Part III**

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### Matthew 5:7-9

- The Merciful Ones
- The Pure in Heart
- The Peacemakers

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“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. 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.” (Matt. 5:1–12 ESV)

#### PRAYER

For the last two weeks we’ve been looking at what is probably the most well known of Jesus’s teachings, the Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount. By way of reminder, Jesus is teaching his disciples, but with intentionality of the crowds listening in on the teaching. The content of his teaching is this list of concepts and how they apply in the kingdom of heaven, which is the theme of all his teaching. “Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” This list is a starting place of description of what the kingdom of heaven is like. The kingdom of heaven again is not a kingdom like we think of them in an earthly sense, but rather a kingdom of people whose hearts are bent to the Lord, trusting him and following his leadership. So now as he is teaching his disciples he is presenting the standards of the kingdom of heaven. This list is a list of what to expect as part of the kingdom of heaven, the norms of the kingdom of heaven.

It all starts with verse 3, being poor in spirit. You hav to start with an understanding of your spiritual lacking, bankruptcy really. Realizing we bring nothing to the table, that everything we receive from God is grace. Every breath we breath is a gift from him. He owes us nothing but wrath in our sinfulness. When we come to him poor in spirit, knowing our emptiness without him, we begin with a proper perspective, and it is a perspective with a promise, understanding this is part of what it means to be in the kingdom of heaven, and to have the promise of the kingdom of heaven.

When we begin with that perspective we mourn sin in the world, (v4) we can take an attitude of meekness (v5) and start to have an appetite, an insatiable desire to be right in the eyes of God, because we are looking forward to being with God forever. This first half of the beatitudes gives is a proper starting point for how the last half works itself out. When we have these priorities in our hearts, then we can begin to live out what this

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last half calls us to, which is where we will spend our time this week. When we begin with a recognition of our poor ness of spirit, we can only then be merciful the way we are supposed to be. Only then can we approach life together with a pure ness of heart, and only then can we be real peacemakers in our communities. That's what we are going to be looking at today. Being merciful, pure in heart, and peacemakers. Next week we'll finish up this section of scripture with the final piece of the norms of the kingdom of heaven by looking at persecution.

#### POINT 1: Merciful

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.” (Matt. 5:7 ESV)

What is mercy? Often we think about mercy and we find it synonymous with grace. That's not entirely wrong, but it is limited in scope. It's like looking at the Mona Lisa and focusing only on the eye or the hands of the painting. We're missing the bigger picture and we limit ourselves this way. DA Carson defines it this way: Grace: loving response when love is undeserved. Every single Christian understands this idea, because its where we all begin. Grace is the epitome of verse 3 of this passage. Being poor in spirit is the recognition that we are trusting in, having faith in the grace of God to save us from our sinful state. The reality that we can't pull ourselves out of our sinful deficit. Grace is getting something that we don't deserve. We don't deserve salvation or eternal life, but God gives both to those he calls it himself. It's his love that accomplishes this for us, and just to be clear it is merciful. He sees us in our sinful state and he has mercy on us. Mercy then, DA Carson says is “a loving response prompted by misery and helplessness. That's us. All mercy is grace, but not all grace is necessarily mercy.

So those who are blessed, approved by God, are those who offer a longing response prompted by misery and helplessness. These situations are easy for us to understand, that stranded motorist you pass on the highway. Maybe you pull over and help them change their flat tire, or offer them a ride to the next gas station. It's that elderly person who could use some assistance getting about that you help to cross a street safely. Kids, maybe for you it's that one loner at school who looks like they could really use a friend. Who are the people that God is putting into your life that are experiencing misery that God has equipped you to be a healing balm for? Who are the people that God has put in your life who are helpless that God has equipped you to be His hands and feet for? We don't have to know these people but we step in and assist. So this is a tiny picture of what mercy might look like in your life.

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Blessed are the merciful... but merciful to whom? Jesus intentionally doesn't say to whom, and I think there is a reason for that. Mercy isn't picky. Being merciful recognizes the need and seeks to make a difference.

Sometimes this comes easily. We see our loved one, those we care about the most and their needs, and our hearts are warmed by the thought that we could make a difference in their lives. On the other hand, sometimes it's difficult. Sometimes the one that God points out to you who needs to receive mercy, is someone you don't want to give mercy to. We see this in our families too, it seems like so often it's easier to give mercy to a stranger than it is to our own relations. Sometimes it's the stranger that gets the merciless nod from us though too. The car that cuts you off and runs a red light is less likely to get your help if you see them traded another mile down the road when you finally catch up to them. We sit back in smug satisfaction that they got what they deserve. I find it incredibly interesting that we're very enthusiastic about justice being served until we are the guilty parties. The reality of our spiritual bankruptcy, our being poor in spirit acknowledges that we are all guilty and deserve a justice that none of us wants. When we read in Romans that the wages of sin is death, nobody enthusiastically raises their hands and says, "that's me!" We hear it and sit a little lower in the pew, like, "don't make eye contact, pretend to be reading your bible, maybe the conviction will pass by."

It's everyone of these situations that is worthy of receiving mercy. I think Jesus didn't specify who the recipients of the mercy that the blessed are supposed to be doling out because it is everyone who we're supposed to offer mercy to.

Now, look at the ground of the argument, those who give mercy are giving mercy why? Answer: Because they will receive mercy. This isn't a trade off that we're talking about here. We give mercy SO THAT we'll receive mercy, but rather, we give mercy, because we know that when the kingdom of heaven comes in fullness, we will be the most grateful mercy recipients. Think about it with logic like we find in (1 John 4:19 ESV) "We love because he first loved us." We don't love SO THAT he'll love us. We love because he first loved us. We don't give mercy SO THAT he'll be merciful to us, we give mercy BECAUSE he is going to be merciful to us, as the text points out, they SHALL receive mercy. The other side of that truth is, that we have already received mercy from him. Being merciful doesn't guarantee you mercy, it's an overflow of the mercy you've received, and a reminder of the mercy you will receive in heaven. We forgive the guy who cut us off in traffic, because we've been forgiven so much more than that minor offense. We love God because he loves us first, when we were the most unloveable. We give mercy to those who are in need of it, not because they deserve it, not because

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owe are trying to win the approval of God, but because he has shown us mercy. (1 Peter 1:3 ESV) “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” So if God has shown us through Christ his example of giving mercy, who then should we withhold mercy from? The correct answer here is there is no one whom we should withhold mercy from. We give mercy, and especially when it is undeserved, because it is then that God is glorified most, because we are being most like him in the giving of mercy. Sometimes giving mercy feels risky, but if we remember that we can be meek because we are co-heirs with Christ, and remember that our satisfaction is in Christ, not our own benefit here and now, we can take the risk, knowing that no matter what we lose here and now, we have infinite riches in Christ to gain in the age to come.

#### POINT 2: Pure In Heart

(Matthew 5:8 ESV) “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

What does it mean to be pure in heart? Is it to have a strong cardiac muscle? Clean blood pumping through your veins? No, rather the heart is seen as the core of an individual. In the same way that our physical hearts are the central point of maintaining our lives for us, so too does the spiritual heart act as the source of life in us. Listen to how Jesus explains it from (Luke 6:45 ESV) “The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.” Likewise in Matthew he says, (Matthew 15:19 ESV) “For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.”

So to be pure in heart means that the things that come forth from us are pure things. According to this then, should we be able to know a person’s heart from what they do? (Proverbs 20:11 ESV) “Even a child makes himself known by his acts, by whether his conduct is pure and upright.” It is by actions that we understand where a person comes from. This passage is probably based in (Psalm 24:3–5 ESV) “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.”

But pure *actions* aren’t the end of it. No, the source matters as much as the outcome. If the heart isn’t pure, but the actions appear good, then we know something about the person. Their motive is evil and hypocritical. Let me talk specifically to the kids for a minute. How many of you have ever had to do things you didn’t want to do? Maybe by

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a parent or guardian, your family, a teacher or a coach? You got backed into a corner and had to face an ultimatum. You have to either obey, or suffer the consequences. Well, the consequences, whatever they are were, was something that you didn't want to experience, so you complied and did what we were asked. If you're under 18 and experienced this in the last month raise your hands. Ok, put your hands down. Now watch this: Adults, same question, how many of you did things you didn't want to do this week because you wanted to avoid the consequences?

No one is immune to this. We have all been guilty at some point of doing the right thing for the wrong reason. This is the core of being pure in heart. It's a rightly pointed heart, with a rightly pointed outcome. DA Carson asks these questions: "To what extent are your actions and words accurate reflections what's in your heart? To what extent do your actions and words constitute a cover-up for what is in your heart?"<sup>1</sup>

We need to be transformed from the inside out. God told this to Israel in Deuteronomy. Remember that the sign of the covenant of God with Israel was the sign of circumcision. He tells Israel in (Deuteronomy 30:6 ESV) And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live. He wants right actions, but he wants them to be an overflow of our hearts, not legalistic obedience. He wants to transform us from the inside out.

Now the why: Why are those who are pure in heart blessed? For they shall see God. The already here, and not yet completed kingdom of heaven has a connection to the pure in heart. The pure in heart are already part of the kingdom of heaven, so they start living like it now. They live out the miracle of a transformed life among a broken deceived and dying people. This is the essence of being a light in the darkness, because we know that the light is coming and has come already. (1 John 3:2-3 ESV) "Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure." We live lives pure in heart, giving up our selfish desires and living in faith of a future that isn't here yet. This is what living by faith in future grace is all about. The pure in heart are blessed living out now what life will be like when we see God. This is what we look forward to. Being with God face to face. And how does sin impact that? Sin is believing a lie, giving into the temptation and acting on that wrong belief. Sin blinds us to the truth. We want to keep our hearts pure, because when we don't we miss seeing the most beautiful thing in existence, the glory of God. We are blinded by our sin and we believe and

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<sup>1</sup> Carson 26

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follow the illusion rather than the truth. Don't get stuck following an illusion. Find and follow the truth and live a changed life because of it.

### POINT 3: Peacemakers

Peacemaking is somewhat of a lost art in America today. In America we are more likely to separate, divorce, unfriend, unfollow, mute, enter litigation, or run away, than we are to pursue peace.

The greek word here is just like the English translation, a compound word from peace and make. Its a title that implies action. It isn't stagnant. Peaceful people don't qualify as peacemakers.

Followers of Christ are by nature peacemakers of the highest order. People don't find peace with God and walk away unchanged. We know a greater category of peace than the rest of the world can fathom. Peace with God is possible because of the Prince of Peace. Jesus is the peacemaker, the mediator between God and man. We look at what he does and we're supposed to emulate it. He makes peace for us with God and we're supposed to go out into the world and bring peace where we go as well.

This has a number of implications. Bringing peace isn't about colonialism. The church tried that and has caused great damage to peoples around the world because they tried to force their cultural understanding of what being at peace with God looks like. Peace with God isn't about what your expression of church looks like, its about a personal relationship with the creator of the universe. We bring the truth of the gospel, and teach the Bible and watch as the Lord raises up indigenous leaders from peoples all around the globe.

Peacemaking and helping people to be at peace with God isn't the only thing that Peacemaking is about. It's also about being present in relationship struggles. It's about making peace where there is no peace. We get to mimic our creator by being creators of peace. Where the world says break relationships, an eye for an eye, we walk in with confidence that there is a God in heaven who can make a difference in this situation.

Peace sometimes feels like the most distant thing from reality for us, but it is always possible. The power of God does amazing things. The power of God reunites brothers who have been enemies for years. The power of God turns a stalled out sour marriage into a flourishing garden of delight and joy. The power of God can reconcile men and women, fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, back into right relationships. He is able, and he wants to use us as agents of his peace in our communities. Instead of drawing up sides on whether things should be this way or that way, followers of God, who know he is sovereignly working out His plan for His glory for our good and our joy,

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KNOW that no matter what happens, our faith cannot be shaken. Relationships might experience pain and crack under pressure, but there is nothing that will separate us from the love of the father. So we can say with confidence in the midst of conflict, help me understand how you feel about this. Let me help you have peace about it even if it isn't the way we might want it ourselves. We don't put our hope in flesh and blood, but in the truth of the Gospel at work in us daily.

Peacemakers don't take delight in division. The woes of separation and broken relationships grieves their hearts. The pain of the way sin deceives others and separates them from God is mournful to them. Peacemakers step into make peace between anyone. It doesn't have to involve them, and it may seem like all hope is lost, but that's what God does for us. Jesus Christ was sent as the peacemaker for us with God. All hope seemed lost for us before we came to God. We were at the end of our rope, we had tried and tried to do it ourselves, to be independent, to fix it on our own for so long with failure after failure, but in the midst of that when it felt like there was no way out, Christ entered in and met us, drew us to himself and helped us into a relationship of peace with God. He did that for us, and he calls us to it as well. Jesus is our mediator, and he calls us to be mediators for others. Jesus gave sacrificially and he calls us to give sacrificially. Walking into a situation to make peace isn't comfortable. We sacrifice that in order to help others know peace. The sacrifice of Christ is the example he gives for us. He sacrificed himself for us so that we could be at peace with him.

Why are peacemakers blessed? (Matthew 5:9 ESV) "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

Have you ever met a person, and then met one of their parents? It's astounding how our biological tendencies transfer between people. I have a picture of my granddaddy and I and I can see my dad in his face, and a little of myself as well. You want to know what I'm going to look like in my 70's? It's a lot like my granddaddy. I look at my own kids and there are ways that we are very much alike. Lydia and I share some qualities, Joel and I share qualities, Abby and I share some qualities. Some of them I look at and am thankful for, others I regret passing on to them. The peacemakers are blessed because they shall be called sons of God. They're going to look like their father in heaven. "You're just like your dad. He's so loving and faithful, he makes peace between himself and others, and here you are doing the exact same thing. You're just like your father."

When we look like the father, there's no aspect of regret that we experience. He is the one we want to imitate. We want to be like him. We want to look more like him day by

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day, so that when others see us, they say, you're just like your Dad, your Father in Heaven

#### APPLICATION

Being merciful, and being pure in heart, and being peacemakers is impossible without first being poor in spirit, mournful of the sinful condition, meek, and hungry and thirsty for righteousness. We're starting to see all the pieces of this section of scripture assemble and lock together like legos. This is not some arbitrary list of profound proclamations, it is the norms of the kingdom of heaven. We all have times that we do some of these well and others not so well. The slippery slope begins when we stop leaning on the one who is the king of heaven and attempt to operate on our own.

Here's where it comes for those of us who are believers. In every way, God has blessed us. He has been merciful with us. He has been pure in heart with us, he has been a peacemaker with us. He is the example we need to be following. So with that as the reality that we stand on, we have to ask ourselves, how have I been unmerciful with others. Can I show mercy to the stranger, to my loved ones, or to the one who has sinned against me? Have I been pure of heart, are my motives and my actions matching up, or am I living a lie for the sake of the show? Am I effectively a hypocrite? Am I actively being a *peacemaker* or am I just a peaceful person? How have I lived sacrificially to those around me the way that Christ has been a sacrificial peacemaker for me? Am I a *peace-faker* or a *peace-breaker*? Am I too content to let opposition separate and relationships break, or am I willing to step in, even when I might get hurt for the sake of helping others find peace?

If you're not a believer today, What does the idea of being shown mercy feel like in your heart? Do you want to know that truth? How might it feel to not be living a double life where you have to hold up a mask to find acceptance from others, but to be loved in the right way by the God of the universe? How would you like to know true peace with him, and be prepared to see him face to face as one who is approved of God? You can, and we don't want you to leave today without that. We'd love to pray with you after the service.

None of us lives these things perfectly. We all fail in multiple ways, but there is grace at the foot of the cross. Jesus died so that he could make a way of peace between us and God. Lets celebrate that joy together, that our meek, pure and peacemaking God draws us to himself, for our good and his joy!