Improving Your Serve
Lesson 10
Matthew 5:1-12

Portrait of a Servant – Part 2

Our previous study opened with a thought-provoking question, “what do you want to be when you grow up?” It is a question that will always generate more questions than answers. However, in our exploration of that question, we learned that Jesus wants all of His disciples to be servants. Here, Jesus provides a comprehensive description of what we are to “be” and to “do” in the Beatitudes, the introductory teaching in the Sermon on the Mount.

In our examination of the first four character traits of the Beatitudes, we discovered that each trait builds on each preceding trait and that the transformative nature of the teaching must be taken as a whole. As we listen to Jesus’ words regarding those who are suffering, the poor, the grieving, the humble, and those who hunger and thirst for what can only be supplied by God; a definite progression of spiritual maturity can be seen as the major objective of Jesus’ teaching. As Jesus expounds upon the blessing of godly living in Matthew 5:3-6, He connects each trait to the next and paints a portrait of transformation at work in the lives of His disciples.

1. Poor in spirit – Discovering our spiritual bankruptcy before God and coming to understand that we are nothing, have nothing, and can do nothing apart from the power and spirit of God enabling us.

2. Mourn – To grieve over the cause of spiritual bankruptcy (our sins), and to be conscious of our guilt before a holy God that produce godly sorrow.

3. Meek – To be humble and gentle, and completely surrendered to God’s control.

4. Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness – An intense longing after Jesus Christ and His righteousness.

The Beatitudes become the stepping stones that invite us into a process of discovering our own brokenness and a longing for the righteousness that is only provided by God. These first four traits teach us how to come into a
right relationship with God through Jesus Christ. They deal entire with our attitude toward God.

In this lesson we shall focus on the next four character traits of the Beatitudes. Chuck Swindoll compares our study to taking a stroll through an art gallery. He points out that “you don’t run through an art gallery, you walk slowly, you stop often and you study the treasured works of art. The more time you spend examining the details of the art, the better you understand and appreciate what has been painted.”

In this unique art gallery, Jesus completes the portrait of the servant He begin painting in our first lesson. Jesus turns His attention to our attitude as a believer toward each other and teaches us what it means to “be” and to “live” as Kingdom people. In Matthew 5:7-10, we find the additional character traits that Kingdom people demonstrate toward God and each other. We learn that in addition to being “poor in spirit,” “mourning over sin,” “meek and submitted to God,” and having “a proper appetite for righteousness”; Kingdom people are merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers, and they know how to endure persecution.

I. The Authority of the Blessings

The divine character traits in the Beatitudes were so radical and out of the norm that Jesus starts this teaching with the suffering and those who would minister to the suffering. He spoke to those who were in need of hearing of a God who cares. Jesus opened his mouth and taught according to Matthew 7:29 as one having authority, one who was living every word He taught. His words were fresh and real, packed with a spiritual power and intensity that the hearers had not experienced before, it was as if it came directly from God.

- He offers God’s blessings,
- He brought God into their living situation,
- He pronounced God’s eternal presence, and
- He broke the spiritual silence of 400 years.

Yes, this was a different day! It was God speaking to His people. It was radical and different; Jesus spoke as one embodying the Word and making them come to life in the present of the hearers. This comprehensive portrait of a servant painted in the Beatitudes is the way God wants Kingdom people to live out our faith and show others His way.
II. The Second Four Blessings

Let's examine the second four Beatitudes in Matthew 5:7-12, as we complete this portrait of a servant. Let us look more closely into the blessings that belong to those who would live godly.

In verse 7, Jesus blesses the “merciful” and He promises they shall “obtain mercy.”

1. What does it mean to have mercy on another individual?

2. What is the difference between “mercy” and “grace” and what is the practical application of both?

3. Why is “mercy” not a natural character trait of life and how does it begin?

4. What does it mean to “obtain mercy”?

In verse 8, Jesus blesses those who are “pure in heart” and He promises they shall “see God.”

1. What does it mean to be “pure in heart”?

2. What does Proverbs 4:23 and Matthew 15:19 say about the “heart”?
3. Why is the state of one’s *heart* so important to Kingdom living?

4. Why is purity of the *heart* a prerequisite for seeing God?

In verse 9, Jesus blesses the “*peacemakers*” and He promises they shall be called the “*children of God*."

1. What does it mean to be a *peacemaker*?

2. What are some of the qualities of a person who is a *peacemaker*?

3. Why are *peacemakers* called the “*Children of God*”?

In verses 10-12, Jesus blesses those who are “*persecuted, insulted and slandered falsely for righteousness sake*” and promises them the Kingdom
of Heaven. Jesus then tells them to rejoice and be glad because a great reward awaits them in heaven.

1. According to Matthew 5:12, how does Jesus expect us to act under persecution?

2. What enables the disciple to rejoice when persecuted, insulted and falsely accused?

3. After saying "theirs is the kingdom of heaven," what did Jesus mean by saying "great is your reward in heaven?"

Now, that we have completed our study in the Beatitudes, what would we see if the portrait we painted was hanging in the gallery of your life? Would it be radically different from what we saw at the beginning? Would it be partially complete just needing a few touches or would it still be on the easel with a few strokes of paint poorly applied? Jesus' painting of His servant is not negotiable; it's all or not at all. His desire for our spiritual maturity is service and that requires that we be different. As you stroll through the art gallery of spiritual maturity seeking to find the unique treasures that will Improve Your Serve, remember that none of the character traits that Jesus calls us to exhibit in this art gallery of Beatitudes are natural traits they can only be supernaturally produced by God as we humble ourselves and totally submit to His plan.