

SIMPLE FAITH

The Qualities of Simple Faith

Matthew 5:1–12



LET'S BEGIN HERE

We can read Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in fifteen minutes or less. No teacher or preacher has ever packed more truth into such a brief period of time. For centuries, these words from Matthew's gospel have been scrutinized by millions of Bible students, authors, pastors, and missionaries. Yet, no one has even come close to exhausting Jesus' message.

Our hope in this study is to glean a few fresh, practical insights that will enable us to stay on course in living lives that are distinctively different. For as we shall be periodically reminded, the underlying challenge of this sermon is: *be different!* With this primary theme woven throughout, it's no surprise that our Lord began His famous sermon with a list of character qualities unheard of in a dog-eat-dog society.



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1. Initial Observations of Jesus' Sermon (Matthew 5:1–2)

When approaching a sermon like this, it helps to glean some context about the setting and delivery of the message. How something is delivered is often just as important as the actual content and words of the speaker. In bringing context to the Sermon on the Mount, we can better understand the thrust of Jesus' message.

In particular, we can observe four interesting qualities about Jesus' most famous sermon. First, He delivered it outside, not inside. Second, He sat down instead of standing up. Third, He "taught" rather than "preached." And fourth, He blessed them rather than rebuked them.



Quotable

*No more humble
servant ever
preached than
Jesus of Nazareth.
Absolute authority
and humility.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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2. Fresh Examination of the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3–12)

Understanding this passage of Scripture requires us to ask and answer two general questions before analyzing the specific beatitudes.

First, what does it mean to be blessed? Second, are the blessings of the Beatitudes available to us today?

We can claim the blessings of the Beatitudes today, even if we know that these blessings will fully arrive only in the future. That Jesus spoke in the present tense regarding possession of the kingdom (Matthew 5:3, 10) suggests that even the Lord expected that there were those whom He considered part of God’s kingdom in the present, even though His kingdom had not yet come completely.

We have to recognize that the blessings of all the Beatitudes have not yet been fully inaugurated. The full comfort of God has yet to come to the mourners of this world, though many have received God’s comfort in some measure. Therefore, as we think about these blessings, we should see them as available in part in the present and available in full when Jesus returns to inaugurate the fullness of His kingdom.



A CLOSER LOOK

“Blessed Are Those Who Mourn”: Living with Grief

Death was an intimate part of first-century life. People lived with death; they touched it, smelled it, and witnessed it. Families served as their own undertakers, preparing their deceased members for burial. They were fully aware of death’s finality.

Grieving was an important part of Jewish burial practices—so much so that they hired professional wailers to announce a death to the community by playing flutes, beating their breasts, and letting out wavering, shrill cries.

Grieving also customarily included saving tears in a “tear bottle” or lachrymatory, a tradition based on Psalm 56:8. Jewish mourners filled these small glass vials with tears and placed them in tombs as symbols of love and respect. First-century Christians would have participated in such grieving customs; however, they grieved with hope—their loved ones would one day “awake.”



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LET'S LIVE IT

We can take two practical steps in making the Beatitudes more of a reality in our lives:

- *Apply one beatitude per day.* Trying to make all of the Beatitudes a reality in your life *right now* is probably not realistic. So instead, take them one at a time. Over time, the Beatitudes will become more of a reality in your life.
- *Start noticing the contrast between the world's message and Christ's philosophy.* See the world around you through the lens of the Beatitudes, so you can avoid those common pitfalls where the world doesn't measure up to the truth of Christ's teaching.

How do you think an increased practice of the Beatitudes would change your life? Pick one or two beatitudes and be specific.



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