



A NEW HUMANITY: BLESSINGS

Aloha everyone! I'm Mark if we haven't met and I want to welcome you to our service. We are continuing our brand new series, *A New Humanity*, where Jesus is showing us what it looks like to be truly human. Because let's be honest, humanity fails at being human. We don't know what it's supposed to look like!

A young ventriloquist was touring all over Hawaii and one night he was doing a show in a small club in Waikiki. With his dummy on his knee, he started going through his usual Podagee jokes. But all of a sudden, this Podagee guy in the fourth row stood up on his chair and started shouting!

"I've heard enough of your Podagee jokes! What makes you think you can stereotype us that way? What does being Podagee have to do with someone's worth as a human being? It's guys like you who keep guys like me from being respected at work and in the community and from reaching our full potential. Because of guys like you who discriminate us all in the name of comedy!"

Embarrassed, the ventriloquist began to apologize but the Podagee guy cut him off and said, "You stay out of this mister! I'm talking to that little brat on your knee!"

We don't know what it looks like to be human! Everyday, people encounter little things that cause them to question their faith in humanity. You see them posting all the time, #Faith_in_humanity_lost. But how many of us know, we don't put our faith in humanity but in the One who redeems humanity! Without Jesus, humanity is a lost cause. We saw this last week. Where Adam and Eve failed, where God's people failed, and where all of us fail, Jesus prevails! Where humanity fails, Jesus prevails!

Last week we saw how Jesus is our perfect example of what it means to be human because He passed the tests that all of us fail. He came to demonstrate perfect dependence and trust in the Father and show us how to overcome the dark powers of this world. This week we are going to dive into Jesus' introduction to the greatest sermon ever told – the sermon on the mount. Throughout this collection of teachings, Jesus is going to show us what it means to be truly human. He starts by showing us nine quality traits that attract God's blessing.

Jesus' Followers

Last week we concluded with Jesus passing 3 trials – 3 tests in the wilderness. We read about this in Matthew 4. After the wilderness Jesus went into the region of Galilee and it says,

"From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near," (Matthew 4:17).

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So Jesus has begun His ministry in Galilee and it's here that He starts to call certain individuals to follow Him. In the next few verses He calls Simon Peter and his brother Andrew as well as James and John, all of who were fishers. But very quickly, word about Jesus begins to spread and chapter 4 ends with Jesus amassing this huge following.

²³ "Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. ²⁴ News about Him spread all over Syria, and people brought to Him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed; and He healed them. ²⁵ Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed Him," (Matthew 4:23-25).

So word about Jesus began to spread quickly and it says that people began flocking to Jesus from all over the place. But who exactly was coming to Jesus? The Bible says it was the sick, the hurting, those in pain, and the poor. These are the people who were flocking to Jesus. As we launch into the sermon on the mount, I want you to keep in mind who Jesus is speaking to.

¹ "Now when Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to Him, ² and He began to teach them," (Matthew 5:1-2).

Who were His disciples? The twelve? He hasn't appointed the twelve yet. So who are His disciples? Those who are following Him. So Jesus goes up on a mountainside and begins His teaching by pronouncing nine blessings over the people.

The Beatitudes

As we go through these nine blessings, many of them may sound familiar to you. Pastor Lori did a great overview of the sermon on the mount in our last series when she talked about the *Righteousness of the Kingdom*. But before we examine these blessings, what is going on here? It was not uncommon for teachers and leaders to pronounce blessings over their listeners. Blessings, commonly referred to as 'beatitudes' from the Latin, were common throughout scripture.

*¹ "Blessed is the one
who does not walk in step with the wicked
or stand in the way that sinners take
or sit in the company of mockers,
² but whose delight is in the law of the Lord,
and who meditates on his law day and night," (Psalm 1:1-2).*

To say someone was blessed was to hold them up as a model and say this is something everyone should strive for. But these people weren't just esteemed in man's eyes, they were blessed by God. To be blessed meant that you were in right relationship with God and experiencing the fruit of it. To be blessed meant that God was for you and with you.

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¹ *"Blessed are those whose ways are blameless,
who walk according to the law of the Lord.*

² *Blessed are those who keep his statutes
and seek him with all their heart—" (Psalm 119:1-2).*

So when Jesus began His teaching on the mount with blessings, the people would not have been surprised. They were probably thinking, "Oh He's going to show us who the blessed ones are and how we can be like that." Think about the people our society would consider blessed. Today, we might say, "Blessed are the influential, because they shape the world. Blessed are the beautiful, because they are admired. Blessed are the rich, because they lack nothing. Blessed are the motivated, because they achieve success." But who does Jesus hold up as the models of His Kingdom?

OG DISCUSSION QUESTION: *What attributes would our society consider "blessed" today?*

He said blessed are the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who are persecuted. To their amazement, as Jesus went through the list of blessings, each person saw themselves in His words. These people who were poor, broken, overlooked, rejected, outcast, marginalized, were the very ones Jesus said were blessed. And each of these nine blessings were different facets of the same diamond – they were forming a bigger picture that Jesus was trying to reveal about His Kingdom.

Poor in Spirit

He starts with the poor in spirit and this would have been nearly everyone listening that day. These were the people who were not just economically poor but spiritually bankrupt as well. Because of their social status or their physical ailments, many of these people wouldn't be able to make it to Church. No one was turning to them for spiritual wisdom. And what does Jesus say to them? "You are blessed! The Kingdom is yours!" The very qualities that the world saw as a curse Jesus said were a blessing. Why? Because those who have nothing to lose are often more open to following Jesus. Those in the most difficult circumstances are often the ones more open to receiving help outside of themselves. But when we're comfortable, rich, self-reliant, we don't look for help.

"Then Jesus said to His disciples, "Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven," (Matthew 19:23).

OG DISCUSSION QUESTION: *Why do you think Jesus considers the poor blessed? On the flip side, why is being rich a challenge?*



Remember the parable of the great banquet feast? Jesus said there was a man who was throwing a great banquet feast. But all of the honored guests he invited made excuses as to why they couldn't come. "I just bought a field, I just bought five yoke of oxen, I just got married," and so on. Remember what the master did? He told his servant to go into the streets and alleys and invite the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame. Who are the ones who inherit the Kingdom? Those who recognize their need for a savior. Those who know they won't make it on their own – they need help outside of themselves. If you've reached the end of your rope today Jesus is saying, "You're blessed! Now you're ready to inherit My Kingdom!"

Mourn, Meek, and Hunger & Thirst for Righteousness

God is looking for people who are desperate and hungry for Him. He is looking for people whose hearts break for what breaks His heart. He is looking for people who are moved into action for His Kingdom's sake. To mourn means you grieve over the things that break God's heart. You look at the state of our world and it moves you to action. How many of us know it is so easy to be indifferent towards the pain in this world. It can seem so overwhelming at times the temptation is to just distract ourselves or medicate the pain so that we don't have to address it but God is looking for men and women who will embrace the pain in order to bring healing – to bring change. Not in a forceful way, not by might, nor by power, but by God's Spirit – through meekness and humility that transformation comes. To be meek means that you're unimportant. How many of us know, God isn't looking for extraordinary people? He's looking for ordinary people who trust in Him to do extraordinary things.

What does it mean to hunger and thirst for righteousness? How many of you can remember the last time you were super hungry or thirsty? My wife says I get "Hangry". When you hunger or thirst it's because you haven't eaten or drank anything. There is a deficit. It isn't there. To hunger and thirst for righteousness means that you see the lack of God's righteousness in the world. You see the deficit and you long for God to make things right. You can't sit idly by but it continues to grow inside of you until you are moved to action.

OG DISCUSSION QUESTION: What are the things in this world that move you to action? What are the greatest obstacles to us stepping out in action?

Merciful, Pure in heart, Peacemakers

⁷ Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

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As your heart breaks for the brokenness around you, opportunities will arise for you to show small acts of mercy. You don't have to be important in the world's eyes or hold a position of influence in order to demonstrate small acts of mercy. What does it mean to show mercy? If grace is giving someone something they don't deserve, mercy is not giving someone what they do deserve. God is both gracious and merciful. He is full of mercy and grace. In His grace He gives us what we don't deserve – adoption into His family, the right to be called His children, the gift of His Holy Spirit, we don't deserve these things but by His grace we have received them. He gives us what we don't deserve. But God is also merciful in that He doesn't give us what we do deserve – eternal separation from Him, the penalty for our sins, the weight of guilt and shame for all we've done. We deserve those things but He doesn't give them to us. As God is merciful, He says we are to be merciful. "Yea but Mark you don't know what people have done to me. They deserve punishment. They deserve to feel the pain they caused me." How many of you are happy God doesn't treat you the way your sins deserve? The Bible says vengeance belongs to the Lord. God alone is the perfect judge, we don't see the full picture. Our judgment is flawed and skewed.

Blessed are the pure in heart. This is what we are going to be spending this series talking about. Living according to a new humanity doesn't mean living according to a new set of rules or following a new moral code. At the root of it, Jesus is saying we need an entirely new heart. Our old heart is broken and God needs to do a heart transplant for each of us. Stay tuned in the weeks to come to see what our new heart looks like.

Blessed are the peacemakers. Notice it doesn't say blessed are the peacekeepers (Big difference). Peacekeeping is passive. Peacemaking is active. These beatitudes are not a call to passivity. Being merciful does not mean letting people walk all over you. Being a peacemaker does not mean avoiding conflict (On the contrary). Peace does not happen when we accept trouble, flee from conflict, evade issues, or turn a blind eye toward injustice. We can't bury our heads in the sand wishing the problems away.

"Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification,"
(Romans 14:19).

Peace requires effort. It requires getting into the midst of conflict at times and helping to bring reconciliation. Jesus is called the Prince of Peace but if you look at His life, it was anything but peaceful! He inserted Himself right in the middle of conflict between the Romans and the Jews, the Jews and Samaritans, the Gentiles, He would call out the religious leaders, He would challenge His own disciples. But through it all, He was showing people the way to peace. He was helping many to be set free. Jesus came to bring peace between God and man.

OG DISCUSSION QUESTION: *What are the biggest challenges in being a peacemaker? Why is it easier to be a peacekeeper than a peacemaker?*

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¹⁸ "All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God," (2 Corinthians 5:18:20).

Jesus brought peace to mankind by reconciling us to God. He stared into the darkness and tackled it head on. Now we have been given the ministry of reconciliation by reconciling others to God and bringing true peace to their lives. Peace is not the absence of conflict, it is standing next to the Prince of Peace in the midst of conflict.

Persecuted

Jesus knew, if you live this way, these last two were for you.

¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹ "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you, (Matthew 5:3-11).

The Bible says not to be surprised if the world hates you for your faith. If you live like this, expect collisions. Matthew Henry said, "Whom Christ blesses the world curses." Whose blessing do you want more, the world's or God's? God said there would be enmity between the children of God and the children of the devil, (Genesis 3:15).

So Jesus gives us these nine character traits of a Kingdom person. This is our introduction to a new humanity. I told you earlier that these nine characters traits paint a bigger picture. Tim Mackie helps us connect the dots. Who do you know who was,

- Poor and from insignificant circumstances
- Mourned over the state of His world
- Was important but didn't see Himself as important
- Wanted to see God's world set right
- Performed many small acts of mercy to His neighbors
- Inserted Himself into dangerous situations in order to reconcile hostile parties
- Persecuted unto death

Once again we see how Jesus is showing us the way to true humanity. He embodies all of these attributes and shows us the way to a blessed life.

OG DISCUSSION QUESTION: *Why would following Jesus open you up to persecution? Why do you think Jesus faced so much persecution in His day?*