

(Note: Resource for message: Skip Moen, *The Lucky Life*.)

Introduction:

- *"Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God."* (Matthew 5:7-8, NKJV)
- First beatitude we looked at was blessed are the poor. Two words for poor. The first word is the description of a person who is surviving. They have enough for today, almost. The second word is poor as in homeless. They know they are not surviving. They are dying. And unless they lose their pride and begin begging they shall surely die. That is the picture of the person who realize just how poor/bad off they are without Christ. They are not surviving...they are dying. So they lose their pride and cry out to God for mercy. When they do...The Kingdom of Heaven is Theirs!
- The second beatitude, blessed are those who mourn. Sets us up at the grave side of death where life leave us most vulnerable, weak, and surrounded by grief, despair and helplessness. Jesus calls them lucky! Whats He saying? The man who faces God and realize he, himself, is spiritually dead suddenly sees how vulnerable he is, weak, and distraught. He grieves, despairs, and finds himself helpless. He therefore gives up the delusion of control, power and protection mourning overtakes him and he is comforted by God.
- The Third beatitude, the humble/those who have been tamed. They experience the condition of happy, blessed, lucky, because they have submitted to God's control/been tamed. Those will give a portion of the kingdom on earth.
- The fourth beatitude, hunger and thirst. Happy are you who know that you can do nothing to supply your most basic need before God, righteousness. For that is exactly what He will give you.
- These are the lessons...the introductory comments to Jesus' sermon on the mount. Which is all on the theme found in Mt 5:20 *unless your righteousness is better than the teachers of the law you will not be getting into heaven.*

I. The Key to the "B!"

- A. Once again the the key to understanding the nine beatitudes is knowing:
 1. Each one of the 'beatitudes' begins with an adjective describing the state of a person already having received something.
 - a) It is not a verb! Verbs inform us that we must do something. The "B" describes people.
 - b) The key to the beatitudes is knowing that Jesus starts each beatitude with a description of a man who has already received something from God.
- B. Second key to understanding the beatitudes is: The power of paradox is shocking. They are like 'brain teasers.' IE. "Less is more." "Spend money to make it." They are contrary to expectations and perceived opinions. Each of the beatitudes is stated in such a way that it is a paradoxical presentation. Jesus does this to shock His hearers into listen carefully for the purpose of thinking and of discovering truth.
 1. These paradoxes carry a message which no one wants to look for. Ie. *Blessed are you when you are persecuted...* who is going to seek after that! *Blessed are those who mourn.*

2. The beatitudes are not a manual or handbook that teach us how to receive blessings rather they are about the state of/description of an individual that has come into relationship with God.
 3. The paradox leads the listener to the place where they experience Zoe (Life) in the midst of life no matter how it comes.
- C. Understanding the key word, or recognizing the key of the "B".
1. The Word 'blessed' that Jesus uses is makarioi /μακαριοι. It is an adjective not an action word.
 2. Makarioi - means to live in the state of blessedness, to be free from all cares and worries. Fullness of life. To live in the place of divine fortune/favor...luck! It is unforeseen success! It is like you getting the call that you have won the lottery with a ticket you never bought. You are not lucky...because you did not win. But you are living a lucky life because of the favor you have received.
 3. Makarioi became little sayings, like proverbs, that carry wisdom which results in this blessed state/favor or state of constant luck. This unforeseen success.
 4. This inner happiness is based on those whose actions express the character of God. They describe the 'kind of person' who experiences something about God's character as they realize something about themselves.

II. Blessed are the Merciful.

- A. The obvious
1. This beatitude sure seems obvious. So much so we hardly see the paradox. With our understanding of the Christian faith, this appears to be a very commonsense statement.
 2. Because it appears to be commonsense, we have to look closer for the paradox. To take this at the commonsense level tells us we are missing something.
 3. What it is not:
 - a) It is not a conditional command. Jesus is not commanding us to do something.
 - b) It is not a statement that we should be merciful so that we will receive mercy.
 - c) It is not just another way of stating the 'golden rule.'
 - d) Jesus is declaring a statement of fact not a call to action.
- B. What are we to understand about mercy?
1. Our picture of mercy is usually one of courtroom. A person is found guilty and he looks to the judge for mercy. ***Therefore mercy becomes a hope that punishment will be removed. Ie. We see this in children all the time. They do something wrong. They know that punishment is coming but they want the punishment removed. They beg for mercy. Ie. When our boys were little Joshua was tormenting his brother. There is screaming, crying fighting, name calling. Joshua had done something to his brother and he knew there would be punishment. I called them in we talked it through. And now it was the dreaded time. Tears were forming before the pain. But I asked Caleb, "How many whacks should your brother get?" His eyes lit up...he looked at his brother. And before he said, 100! He realized this could be him before the end of the day. He let his brother walk.

2. The Greek word for mercy is *ελεος*. It means compassion, mercy, pity.
 - a) To the Greek mercy was an emotional word. Mercy had to be feeling that came upon you. It was not a moral or legal consideration.
 - b) And in the Greek understanding mercy was always connected to fear. That fear was that what has happened to this person who has stirred my feelings of mercy might also happen to me.
 - c) NOTE: Mercy is not a passion that is aroused when we see someone suffering because they deserve it. We have to see this. We see mercy as something we feel in hopes that punishment is removed. But when a person deserves what they are getting we feel no mercy. ***It is undeserved suffering that births mercy in our souls. That is why we fear it because it could be us that needs it next.
 - d) Justice deserves punishment. The only way of escape from that punishment for a law broken is mercy.
3. The OT word for mercy is *hesed*. And the OT understanding of mercy was connected to covenant relationship. The stronger blessing, loving, caring for the weaker. Mercy meant giving help to one in need. God was giving us great promises/help before He had our hearts (when we were in greatest need.) Obedience comes out of heart touched by mercy.
 - a) Grace and mercy
 - (1) grace is about God's free gift of redemption and forgiveness of our rebellion.
 - (2) mercy is God's removal of the consequences of our sin. Mercy follows grace!
 - b) Mercy made life possible with God because without everyone would be punished.
- C. Lucky are the merciful! Who is Jesus talking to? ...Those who need mercy? ...He is talking to those who give mercy, the ones who are on the right side of justice. We usually read this beatitude as if it were speaking to sinners who deserve punishment. But Jesus is talking to the ones who right now at this moment are giving mercy. They are not the guilty ones.
 1. I can only give mercy if I am worthy of justice. I have to be the offended party if I am going to grant release from punishment. God is merciful!
 2. People who show mercy have to put aside their just reward. In other words what I deserve to get (justice) I lay aside. That is mercy.
 3. What justice demanded I set aside because I now understand how mercy has affected me! Ie. This is why MT 18 is so big. They man who had been forgiven a debt could not see how mercy affected him therefore even though he was forgiven he could not forgive others! WOW!
 4. Mercy is about me giving up my right to justice! Mercy costs you! It means that the justice you deserved is no longer applied.
 5. Mercy is giving up what is mine because I realize that mercy is valuable all by itself!
- D. Putting it together.
 1. *hoti* - because, for. Hoti is a conjunction that connects two thoughts. If we translate it 'because or for' then we almost force it to read that we show mercy to get mercy. But Jesus is not doing this. Remember, he is describing a man who has already received something.

2. A better translation is 'seeing that' or 'in view of the fact that.' The beatitude takes its perspective from the eyes of a justified man...he doesn't need mercy because he is in the right.
3. Mercy leads to happiness or the 'lucky life' (in view of the fact that) mercy is the requirement of my own need.
4. I don't show mercy in order to be rewarded with mercy. I show mercy as a result of knowing why mercy is essential for me. Therefore, mercy is not my reward it is my obligation.
5. If mercy is a reward then it is earned or deserved. Hoti 'seeing that' tells us that we are no different than the one standing guilty before us.... 'seeing that' we know our unworthiness, we must now show mercy to the unworthy.
6. This beatitude tells us that our essential unworthiness has been acknowledged and annulled, cancelled, abolished! Happy Happy Happy is that man who knows God's mercy.
7. *"Oh so lucky you merciful one seeing that you know know God is also merciful!"*

III. Blessed are the pure in heart.

- A. *"Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God."* (Matthew 5:8, NKJV)
1. καθαρος - katharos which is translated 'pure' is best translated purged or cleansed like our english word catharsis. Pure works but it is the result of something... having been cleansed.
 - a) If the word is translated pure then we think that there is no further need of improvement.
 - b) If the word is cleansed we immediately assume that it was once not clean or acceptable but it has now been altered. So the emphasis/focus become the process that brought about the condition called cleansed.
 - c) Katharos has as its background ritual cleansing. This makes Pharisees happy! Ritual. Everyone could relate to ritual, observance, checklist.
 - (1) It is so much easier to have clean hands than a clean heart. That is why people see themselves as basically good people.
 - (2) It is so much easier to have a checklist rather than a moral inventory.
 - d) So why does Jesus choose this word? To drive home the point that something has to be cleansed. Something has to be done about the state of ones heart. Yet no one can change the heart with his clean hands and lists.
 - (1) Jesus was always stressing that purity does not come about by outer observance but now He is saying "Happy are the ritually cleansed/purged for they shall see God."
 - (2) The distinction between clean and unclean could not be separated from belief in God. This is why the religious leaders stressed so hard the keeping of the law. If you wanted to worship you had to be clean. 'Clean' was your checklist to measure purity. Keep it all and God is obligated to give spiritual credit.
 2. The shocker in this verse is 'ritually cleansed in heart.' The Jew would say, "I can cleanse the cup, my feet, my speech, my house. But no one can cleanse the heart!"

- a) Jesus starts out connecting really well with the term pure (ritually cleansed) but what rules were there for being clean of heart? This is the paradox.
 - (1) The concept wasn't new. Ps 24:3-4 David declare that those with clean hands and pure heart would stand before God.
 - (2) The Hebrew words clean hands means 'free from guilt' and pure heart means 'relieved of all obligation of blame.' Who fits that description? Jesus' point!
 - (3) Genesis, Isaiah, Jeremiah all proclaimed every man's heart is evil.
 - (4) We all are dirty and there are no rules to cleanse a heart. Impossible situation!
3. Then Jesus goes on to say, that the ones who are free from guilt and blame would see God! Seeing God... another impossibility - you can't see God and live.
4. Two Impossibilities in the same announcement! Clean heart and Seeing God
- B. Who are the lucky ones/the happy ones?
 1. The lucky ones can only be those who have experienced the creation of a new/clean heart. They will see God because God saw them first.
 2. A beatitude is not the bestowal of favor, it is not a blessing we go and get. It is the description of or the state of a person who is living the lucky/happy life.
 3. Jesus is not saying you are blessed because you have a clean heart and that gives you a ticket to see God. He is saying, 'You happy people who have clean hearts. You are going to see God.'
 4. 'See God'. Opthanomai - you will see for yourself! Jesus is now talking about a heart that will come into the presence of God without blemish now!
 - a) Opthanomai does not mean 'to see'. It means to understand what is being seen. To see and understand.
 - b) Those with a cleansed heart, their inner spiritual eyes have been changed so that their perception discovers God in what they observe. They recognize God

Conclusion:

- Jesus really gives a great introduction to the sermon on the mount with the beatitudes. He literally gives the state of being of a man who has been born again. Though he does not use those words.
- Anyone who is listening to that message wants what Jesus offers! That is the purpose of the beatitudes to create a desire for God and to know the King of the Kingdom!
 - *Oh so lucky you merciful ones seeing that you know God is also merciful!*
 - *Lucky those with cleansed hearts. Their eyes see God.*