

The Kings's Constitution Part 2

Matthew 5:4-6

Introduction

The Sermon on the Mount is more than a great message by the greatest teacher who ever taught. It is a blueprint and Constitution for life in the Kingdom. Jesus is teaching us the meaning of true righteousness. The religious leaders of Jesus day believed and taught that true righteousness was something external, visible; and was reflected in the external observances of the Law. Jesus teaches that true righteousness with God goes way beyond religion and religious observances. In verse three we are invited to consider the question; “what do you believe about yourself?” The answer Jesus gives is that citizens in the new kingdom have the right to be humble. Now Jesus asks what do you believe about your sin? The Lord will bless those who realize they need help from God and forgiveness from God.

Jesus wants his followers to know the difference between true righteousness and false righteousness; Jesus will now describe the laws of his Kingdom and the spiritual principles that will govern in that kingdom. Many Bible teachers and scholars have referred to these eight principles as “beatitudes”. The word means blessing and comes from the Latin word to be blessed. The verses deal with attitudes—what we think in our hearts, our outlook on life. We might think of the beatitudes as our disposition, our attitude, our frame of mind, or in law; our mental state. This internal condition effects our demeanor, our bearing, our lives.

We might think of these as the character traits or characteristics of true followers of the Lord Jesus. What is our attitude about ourselves? We recognize we are spiritually bankrupt and have NO spiritual resources apart from God, Christ, the Gospel and His love. What is our attitude about sin? We recognize its horror and power in our lives and sorrow over its presence in our lives and this world (v.4). Since we admit our need for Jesus and sorrow over sin we adopt a teachable spirit—a willingness to learn from God and His Holy Spirit; a willingness to learn from others and refuse to defend ourselves in our sin (v.5). Look how the words of Jesus build—since we feel our need and admit our need for God (v.3); true sorrow over sin (v.4); are reachable and teachable (v.5) we hunger and thirst for the Lord; we long for His righteousness by faith—we seek it; we ask for it by faith; all the rest of the beatitudes show the results of our new life of faith in Christ—lived out in the life of the believer; we are merciful (v.7); that is we have a loving and forgiving spirit; we are pure in heart (v.8); that is we keep our lives clean, pure; holiness becomes happiness and we despise any substitutes for holiness. We become peacemakers instead of troublemakers; we want peace in our home, in our church, in this world; we make peace by proclaiming the Gospel of Peace (v.9). Purity and peace will invariably lead to persecution (v.10) because all who live godly lives will suffer persecution (v.10).

Happy While Mourning (v.4)

Matthew 5:4 (NKJV) Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted.

On the surface the statement might seem like a contradiction. What in the world do mourning and happiness have in common? Jesus speaks of a kingdom; but doesn't speak of anything that we usually associate with kingdoms; ethnic borders, military support, material wealth or resources! Jesus ignores political theory or philosophies of sovereignty. He goes right into the character of its citizens! G. Campbell Morgan: Character creates conditions which result in happiness” (*The Gospel According to Matthew; p.42*).

The word translated mourn (*penthountes*) is the strongest possible word to express deep sorrow, profound grief, a broken heart. It is the deep wailing and unending tears that comes when someone we love dies! It's a kind of desperate and helpless sorrow.

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What is it that we are mourning? Our sin and the sins of others!

Conviction of sin (we are poor in spirit) brings contrition for sin (we mourn over our sin).

The person who is poor in spirit (v.3) is truly willing to be subject to the King; governed by the King—not rebellious, not a troublemaker—not contentious. **Only a life willing to be ruled can be ruled.**

The person who mourns sorrows over sin. This is the person aware of failure, aware of limitations, aware of what it means to be broken. This is the person conscious they are not able to take upon themselves the ideals of the king. Jesus says they will be comforted.

We struggle to have a sincere sorrow for our sin and the sins of others. What is it that we are mourning? We live in a broken world. In the Old Testament the people of Israel longed for a Messiah, a redeemer, a deliverer. Isaiah 6:1-2 spoke of the coming Messiah who will “comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion.”

What is it that we are mourning? It is the sorrow that we experience because of our fellowship with God in Christ? We share our Savior's outlook about the pain and sorrow that sin brings!

The problem in part lies in our refusal to accept God's revelation about sin. God hates it. We excuse it.

Who mourns over sin? The person who sees sin in all of its terrible manifestations!

There is true and false mourning. There is godly sorrow and worldly sorrow.

Paul warns about false sorrow; 2 Corinthians 7:8-10; “For even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not regret it. For I perceive that the same epistle made you sorry, though only for a while. (9) Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. (10) For godly sorrow produces repentance to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.”

The world has its own way of dealing with sorrow, grief and pain. The chief strategy is avoid it; numb it; mask it; deny it; defy it. What do people in the world want? Happiness. People in the world hide from their pain and hide from reality! But lying about your pain and sorrow does not make it go away!

The repentance that Paul speaks of is a change of heart and mind “not to be regretted”. He contrasts that with the sorrow of the world—regret—but it is the kind of regret that doesn't produce a heartfelt change or a fundamental shift in thinking.

Peter mourned over his sin when he betrayed Jesus. Judas regretted his sin and killed himself.

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What in the world is Jesus asking us to do? The way to true happiness must come in a radical shift in thinking; the human problem is sin; we must see ourselves in proper light; we must see the world as it really is—and mourn. When we understand our sin and the sinful circumstances of this world—we can invite comfort. The presence of Jesus provides comfort and hope.

The poor in spirit submits to both King and throne.

The Christian anticipates comfort. The comfort comes from Christ, the comfort provides relief, consolation, peace. Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world gives, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

The Christian knows there is a God who will right wrong; the Christian knows that God will wipe away our tears (Rev.21:4). We do all our mourning in this life; but as William MacDonald so eloquently wrote; "for unbelievers, today's grief is only a foretaste of eternal sorrow".

Our comfort is imbedded in the assurance of our forgiveness and acceptance by God in Christ.

Happy While Meek (v.5)

5Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth.

Meek is perhaps one of the most misunderstood words in the New Testament.

The statement relates to Psalm 37:11 which says; "But the meek will inherit the land. . .". The Psalm contrasts the meek with those who are evil and wicked. The Psalm itself gives us the definition of those who are meek; "Trust in the Lord and do good. . .Commit your way to the Lord and trust in him. . ."

The contrast is between the meek and the proud. The meek are those with a submissive spirit in true humility.

The Old Testament uses the adjective meek to describe Moses (Numbers 12:3). Jesus describes himself in Matthew 11:29; ". . .for I am gentle and humble in heart".

What do the spiritual characteristics of gentleness and humility produce? The ability to trust God.

Both Moses and Jesus were willing to confront sin.

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Meekness does not mean weakness. Both Moses and Jesus stand for the rights and privileges of others and all the while refuse to assert their own will apart from God's revelation. Both Moses and Jesus live for the glory of God and to fulfill God's will.

Both Moses and Jesus do not use violence to force God's will on the people.

Meek means strength under control. It is the opposite of undisciplined.

Meek means trust with confidence. It is the opposite of personal pride.

This is important for everyone who has ever said, "I find it difficult to trust people or to trust God." It is an admission of pride and self-sufficiency.

What does the world say and what does the world believe? The proud inherit the earth. The rich and the strong and the mighty seize the planet and its resources! The clever and the self-confident are the ones fit to rule! In this fallen world self-sufficiency is a virtue and meekness a vice!

Zephaniah 3:11-12; "...because I will remove from this city those who rejoice in their pride. . .but I will leave within you the meek and humble, who trust in the name of the Lord".

Why are the meek (humble) happy? Because they trust the Lord. Why will they inherit the earth? In the Old Testament Abraham is promised a place! In the New Testament that place includes "a new heaven and a new earth" (Revelation 21:1; 2 Peter 3:13). The believer in Jesus will inherit a new heaven and a new earth.

There is a sense in which the meek inherit the earth in the here and the now; that is they enjoy and experience goodness in this present world.

No wonder Christians are to exercise meekness and humility (Ephesians 4:1-2); "I, therefore the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to have a walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with long-suffering, bearing with one another in love,"

Titus 3:2; "to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men".

My failure in this area of life is a revelation of just how self-willed I am.

The meek person exercises patience, self-control; not easily provoked. The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle with all me, apt to teach, patient" (2 Tim.2:24).

The meek person is quick to forgive, not looking for revenge. "Forgive men their trespasses, and your heavenly Father will forgive you" (Mark 6:14). The meek person is *quiet*; that is studies to be quiet—"stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be

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still" (Ps.4:4). Quiet and surrendered before God; quiet before men; controlled in speech and behavior.

The meek inherit the land (earth). The meek know where they are going; are teachable and have nothing to prove. They have purpose, meaning, significance. The meek are self-controlled rather than controlled by circumstance.

Happy In Hunger (v.6)

6Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.

How can you be happy in hunger? It all depends on what you are hungry for.

In the broken world real poverty leads to real hunger. In the spiritual world of the King spiritual poverty leads to hunger and thirst for righteousness. Jesus is speaking of those who really desire God's rule in their lives and in this world.

What does Jesus mean by the word righteousness? Does it have something to do with goodness, or morality or purity? The Old Testament spoke of righteousness in terms of legal relationships; courts, judges, or in terms of ethical or fair behavior. It also described a covenant relationship between individuals or groups; but it also came to mean God's relationship towards His people; and their relationship towards Him. In the New Testament Paul expands the legal concept and applies it to the person and work of the Lord Jesus. The death of Jesus on the cross (he died in our place) provides the basis of a whole new covenant.

In order for sinners to be righteous (right with God); God must justify the sinner (Romans 4:5).

"But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness." What does Paul mean when he says God makes right (justifies the ungodly" based on those who believe in Him? God applies Christ's righteousness—his perfect obedience and guiltlessness—to us and become legally (judicially) acquitted of the penalty of sin, which is death.

So what does Jesus mean by righteousness? Does he mean the covenant relationship between God and His people—established by God? Does this anticipate the restoration to wholeness between God and man and between man and God's creation and how human beings will relate to each other in the coming Kingdom? Whatever it means—it must mean in the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Heaven people relate to one another rightly—by doing what is right in relationship!

The Lord Jesus promises satisfaction for those who cultivate a deep desire for God and the things of God.

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“A true Christian has an appetite for spiritual things. Ask people what they desire and you will know what they are like” (Warren Wiersbe; *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament*; p.29).

What is your passion? What do you long for in your life? Do you long for honesty in your life, in your dealings with God and others? Do you long for integrity? How about justice in society?

The non-Christian can desire change. The non-Christian can even hope for honesty and integrity and social justice. The non-Christian can wage war against poverty, hunger, homelessness, and social injustice. They envision a world of equality and justice—apart from the forgiveness of sin; apart from the gospel; apart from God. They long for a peace they cannot have—and will never have—because they deny **the truth; satisfaction rests with God. Peace is found in God through the Lord Jesus Christ. Forgiveness is found in God through Christ.**

Gamaliel Bradford wrote about people who have “a thirst no no earthly stream can satisfy, a hunger that must feed on Christ or die”.

The people who are starving for righteousness will be satisfied.

The danger lies with those who stress being righteous and neglect doing righteousness. It leads to the error of false assurance; the error that believing in Jesus exonerates us from ever doing good! A right belief does not result in wrong behavior.

But what about the people who deny God or ignore God or refuse to live according to God's will? Instead of blessing there are curses. How can we be numbered among those who are blessed? We must join ourselves to those who long for the person of Jesus and the place where righteousness reigns.

In one sense righteousness involves the mind; the Scripture speaks of being “renewed in the spirit of your mind” (Eph.4:23) and being “renewed in knowledge” (Col. 3:10).

Righteousness will reign.

Corruption will cease.

“for they shall be filled”

“full of goodness, filled with knowledge” (Rom.15:14)

“filled with all the fullness of God” (Eph.3:19)

“filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18)

“filled with the fruits of righteousness” (Phl.1:11)

“filled with the knowledge of His (God's) will” Col.1:9

“filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 13:52)

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Conclusion

'glad in grief' (v.4)

'happy in humility' (v.5)

'satisfied while starving' (v.6)

The Lord Jesus knows that those who are conscious of their spiritual need; "poor in spirit" (v.3) and are willing to express that spiritual need; they "mourn" or sorrow (that is a meaningful expression of sorrow); they are willing to **prove that spiritual need (meekness; humility)**. Littleton of Eton paraphrased verse 5; "Blessed are the gentle, for them the victory will ultimately be given."

There is a kind of mysterious strength that resides in the spirit of gentleness.

Sometimes the only choice we have is the choice of what we believe or how we feel about our circumstance. Sometimes we have uninvited mourning. Enforced humility. Unexpected deprivation. Chuck Swindoll writes; "The longer I live the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude to me is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than success, than what others think, or say, or do. I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it."

Jesus knew that the way you see yourself, the way you see God, the way you see sin, will determine the way you see life.

The most courageous decision you will ever make is the decision to see yourself and God and sin the way God sees you, the way God reveals Himself in the Bible; the way the Bible reveals the problem of sin and the solution for sin.