

***'Poverty of the Spirit is the threshold of the upside-down kingdom life. No one enters the kingdom except that he enters on his knees.'* (Anon)**

***'...the result of having been grabbed by the gospel. Jesus did not come into the world looking for Beatitude people He could then call into His kingdom. No, He came into the world and called people to Himself, and then, as a result of the encounter and ongoing relationship with Him, these qualities began to emerge within them.'* (Darrell Johnson)**

Read Matthew 5:1-12.

(It might be helpful to get people to read verse 3 from different translations)

1. 'Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.'
 - Sit with that statement. Does it make you uncomfortable? What are some characteristics of a little child that relate to how we are 'approved of' by God?
 - In what ways does a child's incompetence and helplessness convey our spiritual need?
2. Have you ever had any circumstances or incidents that have helped you realise you were poor in spirit? Share them!
3. John Stott asks, 'In what senses do we miss God's kingdom if we do not acknowledge our spiritual poverty?'
4. Read Revelation 3:17-18. What is the answer to the Laodiceans predicament of being poor, pitiful, blind, and naked? What does this mean for us today?
5. Read Isaiah 66:1-4. God delivers a shocking message to those whose outward religiosity doesn't correlate to their inward reality. What does this tell you of being 'poor in Spirit'?
6. Darrell Johnson writes that 'the essential part of being *poor in Spirit* is to be grabbed by the gospel.' Why is 'being grabbed by the gospel' so inseparable from being poor in Spirit?
7. How should one who is 'Poor in Spirit' answer these?
 - Where do you find refuge, safety, comfort, escape, pleasure, security? On what do you depend?
 - Whose performance matters? On whose shoulders does the well-being of your world rest? Who can make it better, make it work, make it safe, make it successful?



***'If the actions of Jesus are reflective of who he most deeply is, we cannot avoid the conclusion that it is the very fallenness which he came to undo that is the most irresistibly attractive to him... The cumulative testimony of the four Gospels is that when Jesus Christ sees the fallen of the world all about him, his deepest impulse, his most natural instinct, is to move towards that sin and suffering, not away from it.'* (Dane Ortlund)**

***'Poverty of spirit is essential to the succeeding characters, underlies each one of them, and is the soil in which they can be produced alone. No man ever mourns before God until he is poor in spirit.'* (Charles Spurgeon)**

Read Matthew 5:1-12.

(It might be helpful to get people to read verse 4 from different translations)

1. We often want to avoid 'mourning' – we'd rather be here 'for a good time' and move away from the experience of mourning. How have you sense that 'avoidance' in your own life?
2. Mourning occurs when we lose something we love – it comes from the break in a relationship. The key relationship that we mourn is the break we have with God on account of our own sin. The 'mourning' Jesus speaks of, then, is particularly evident when we recognise the reality of our own loss of relationship with God, and the pain that the world suffers on account of human sinfulness – both personal and corporate. Was that a new thought to you? How is that helpful for framing Jesus promise to those who 'mourn'?
3. How is 'mourning' logically connected to 'poverty of spirit' as we looked at last week (above)? Have you experienced that for yourself? What was it like?
4. We saw in the message that sometimes we do not direct our mourning to Jesus, but instead try and console ourselves – to mend our own sense of brokenness by numbing the pain or avoiding it, or by chasing after the next thing as a distraction. In what ways are you personally tempted to move away from directing your own mourning to Jesus? How are the words of Jesus a 'blessing' to you today as a means of actually dealing with the brokenness you sense in yourself and in our world?
5. Read and discuss this quote from Dane Ortlund (above) How does this reality encourage you or lead you to worship?



***'It looks as if they would be pushed out of the world but they shall not be, 'for they shall inherit the earth.' The wolves devour the sheep, yet there are more sheep in the world than there are wolves, and the sheep, continue to multiply, and to feed in green pastures.'* (C.H. Spurgeon)**

Read Matthew 5:1-12.

(It might be helpful to get people to read verse 5 from different translations)

1. When you hear the word 'meek' what comes to mind? Do you see it as a positive virtue? Why or why not?
2. We have seen how there is a progression in the beatitudes up to this point. How would a true estimate of ourselves (5:3-4) lead us to develop into people who are 'meek' – to have a gentle and humble attitude toward others?
3. From the world's point of view, why is it surprising that the meek will inherit the earth?
4. Read Psalm 37:1-13.
 - This text seems to be in Jesus' mind, standing in background of what he says here, with Jesus quoting directly from v.11. How does the promise that the meek will 'inherit the earth', coupled with the encouragement of this Psalm not to worry about the wicked, encourage you?
 - In what ways would we need to exercise deep trust in God if we are to take on meekness as a virtue?
5. Read Matthew 11:28-30 and 2 Corinthians 10:1. Jesus describes his 'heart' as being 'meek', using the exact same word in Matt 11 as in Matt 5. Paul, likewise, appeals based on the meekness of Jesus in 2 Cor 10. This reminds us that Jesus deals gently with us, not in harshness.
 - How have you experienced the gentleness of Jesus toward you?
 - In what areas of your life – in what relationships – do you need to be asking God to help you become a more gentle person?

Prayer: Take some time to thank Jesus for his meekness toward us – his gentleness and humility of heart. Pray as group members, that you grow to deepen this trait of meekness in your life.



***'The ultimate source of that kind of righteousness is God himself...This passionate pursuit of righteousness flows from a transformed heart.'* (Michael Wilkins)**

***'The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult; and left untried.'* (G.K. Chesterton)**

Read Matthew 5:1-12.

(It might be helpful to get people to read verse 6 from different translations)

- Recall a time when you were really and truly hungry. What was it like? What was it like to finally sit down to a meal?
- 1. 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.' What initial questions or thoughts does this text raise for you?
- 2. Righteousness is best understood as right-relatedness – as the four-fold relationships between us and God, others, ourselves, and the rest of creation. To 'hunger and thirst for righteousness', then, is to long for all our relationships to be what God intended them to be, to live according to his will, which is revealed most fully in the life and teaching of Jesus. Discuss.
- 3. After reading Wilkins quote (above) Why is this important? What does it guard against?
- 4. What appetites are distracting you from Jesus and his ways? What might you need to fast from in order to awaken a deeper longing for righteousness?
- 5. What 'hunger-pangs' do you need to embrace in order to hunger and thirst for righteousness?
- 6. In what ways might you need to take steps to respond in order to pursue both personal and corporate forms of righteousness?

Prayer: Take some time to share prayer requests with your group. Pray for each other in response to your answers to questions 4, 5 and 6 above, that each person would take the steps they spoke of this upcoming week.



'Mercy is a generous attitude which is willing to see things from the other's point of view and is not quick to take offence or to gloat over others' shortcomings. Mercy sets aside society's assumption that it is honourable to demand revenge.'
(R.T. France)

'Mercy is going to spring out of me as I fix my eyes upon Jesus, looking into the perfect law that brings freedom, rivers of living water flowing out of my heart. Jesus says to us in John 15:5, "I am the vine, you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit. Apart from me, you can do nothing."'
(A Rempel)

Read Matthew 5:1-12.

(It might be helpful to get people to read verse 7 from different translations)

1. Consider a time when you were 'shown mercy'. What was it like? How did it influence how you approached opportunities to show mercy later?
2. In this series we have seen how the Beatitudes are not a 'to do' list of commands, but the 'norms of the kingdom' – a striking picture of how God's kingdom breaks open a whole new way of being. Why do you think this matters in the case of Jesus' words about mercy?
3. Read the definition of the Greek word for 'mercy' from R.T. France (above) and discuss it as a group. How might this word of Jesus be a challenge to your assumptions?
4. Mercy is never a 'transaction' that Jesus is teaching – 'If you are merciful, maybe you'll experience mercy too' – but rather the outworking of the Holy Spirit in those who have experienced God's mercy. That does not mean, however, that being merciful is not a quality that will grow in us. How might this quality grow in you?

Prayer: What a wonderful world it would be if we all joined wholeheartedly into the mercy cycle, thanking God for the mercy we receive, dispensing mercy to those in our domain, and seeing that mercy reciprocated both towards us and from the recipient to their own sphere of influence. Bearing fruit such as this is only possible when we stay intimately connected to Jesus. Jesus says, "Remain in me, and I will remain in you." (John 15:4) Pray into this thought individually and as a group and church family.



***'This is the secret to the joy Mother Teresa found in her work in Calcutta: She saw in the faces of discarded infants and discarded elders the face of the Lover of her soul.'* (Darrell Johnson)**

***'The "pure in heart" are not perfect. It is just that they know they cannot hide anything from God. So, living in sync with the really real, they bring their thoughts, their emotions, their fears and dreams into the light of God's truth and grace.'* (Darrell Johnson)**

Read Matthew 5:1-12.

(It might be helpful to get people to read verse 8 from different translations)

- What is the most awe-inspiring thing you've ever seen? Describe it for the group.
1. When you hear the phrase "pure in heart" what comes to mind?
 2. Culture often views 'purity of heart as a sort of 'inner purity', defined in our culture as 'individual self-expression.' How does this expressive individualism hurt the church?
 3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of 'outer purity' (Displayed for all to see)? Which strengths do you need to embrace?
 4. What do you think Jesus means when he promises that the pure in heart, we will see God?
 5. What does it mean to be pure in heart? How might that be lived out in your daily life?
 6. Consider Psalm 139:23-24. How might this prayer help believers to live as 'the pure in heart'? How can you incorporate that sort of prayer into your life more regularly?

Prayer: Pray for those in your group, specifically regarding some of your answers to questions 3 and 4. Spend some time simply thanking Jesus for the ways that you've seen him at work in your life or around you recently – how you've seen him in others too.



'The Hebrew word for peace is shalom – and it does not mean the absence of conflict, though it includes that.'

Shalom: 'wholeness', 'soundness', 'well-being' or 'harmony.'

'Shalom is a psychosomatic, relational, economic, racial, and spiritual wholeness.'
(Darrell Johnson)

Read Matthew 5:1-12.

(It might be helpful to get people to read verse 9 from different translations)

1. How do you typically think of 'peace'? How is the biblical vision of 'peace' – God's *shalom* – enlarge our understanding?
2. Read Matthew 5:1-12. How are these beatitudes 'connected' – how might a 'progression' be evident?
3. Why might peace-making (followed by persecution!) be so far along the end of this progression?
4. Share an example of a 'peacemaker' that you have known. What were some of the features of this person's character that stood out to you?
5. In your experience, why is peace-making 'costly'? How have you experienced that?
6. In what situations do you need to courageously engage in peace-making? What might that look like based on what we are learning in the beatitudes?

Prayer: Take some time to thank God for what we are learning about the God of peace through this study. Bring those instances of peace-making work that are before you to God together.



'...this beatitude serves as a test for all the beatitudes. Just as people must be poor in spirit to enter the kingdom, so will they be persecuted because of righteousness if they are to enter the kingdom...for if disciples of Jesus never experience any persecution at all, it may be fairly asked where righteousness is being displayed in their lives. If there is no righteousness, no conformity to God's will, how will they enter the kingdom?' (D.A. Carson)

Read Matthew 5:1-12.

(It might be helpful to get people to read verse 10 from different translations)

1. What, according to Jesus, is legitimate persecution? What isn't?
2. Why ought believers to expect persecution?
3. Have you ever been persecuted? Why was that? What did that feel like? How did you cope with it? What did you learn from it?
4. Explain a time when you experienced God's provision and presence in difficult times, maybe particularly when you were mistreated because of your Christian faith.
5. How can we support each other during times of persecution?
6. In what ways might you need to draw on other believers, and God's help in responding to persecution, particularly based on Jesus' words later in his sermon (Matt 5:38-46)?

Prayer: Take time to pray for Christians who are experiencing significant, even deadly persecution around the globe today. Our bulletin includes persecuted believers each week and consider praying particularly for believers in war torn countries who are experiencing increasingly hostile situations. Pray also for one another; that we would courageously follow Jesus, not muting the distinctiveness of our lives as we live 'for righteousness' sake'.