

## The Beatitudes

Jesus Says: A Series on the Sermon on the Mount Part 2

*Matthew 5:3-12*

Hilltoppers for Christ | Worship Wednesday | 8.30.17

### Desirable Difficulties<sup>1</sup>

- I want to talk with you about a concept conceived by Robert and Elizabeth Bjork, desirable difficulties.
- Desirable difficulties states that apparent disadvantages are actually advantages and can help people thrive
- David Boies grew up in a farming community in rural Illinois. When he was a teenager he moved with his family to southern California. He was a smart kid, but often struggled in school, especially with reading. As a kid, he didn't start reading until he was in the third grade. His parents, doctors, and teachers eventually learned that he has dyslexia.
- In his early twenties after the birth of his first son he decided to study law. The only problem was law school required a ton of reading.
- In law school he intentionally took the classes that required less reading and eventually developed great listening skills and memory. In classes he never took notes. He would sit there intently listening to his professors and trying to remember everything.
- Upon graduation, he became a litigation trial lawyer. He was master at it.
- Because of his great memory he could argue very quickly on his feet. Because he could not read as much as other lawyers, he had to simplify the case studies he had to learn in law school. Through that experience he learned how to simplify cases for the judge and jury. Because of his excellent listening skills, he could gauge and interpret more than others when a witness on a stand was saying something questionable.
- David Boies said he would never wish dyslexia on his children, but readily admits that he would not be as good of a lawyer if it was not for his dyslexia.

### Who is blessed?

- Some might say, even David Boies might say that he is **blessed** with dyslexia. It can be a desired difficulty.
  - A disproportionate amount of entrepreneurs are dyslexic
- What kind of person do you consider to be blessed?
- We all probably have the same vision in our heads of blessed people
  - Smart, funny, popular, beautiful boyfriend/girlfriend, wealthy
- In Matthew 5:3-12 Jesus is going to tell us who is blessed. These are commonly known as the Beatitudes (Latin word for blessed).
- Similarly, what many considered as a huge disadvantage, David Boies is considered **blessed** dyslexia, Jesus is also going to consider people blessed that the world would look at as not blessed.

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<sup>1</sup> Malcolm Gladwell, *David and Goliath: Underdogs, Misfits, and the Art of Battling Giants* (New York: Back Bay Books, 2013), chapter 4.

**Matthew 4:23-25**

- One thing that we should always remember when studying the Bible is chapter divisions were added hundreds of years after the books of the Bible were written. This means that most of the time, what was said in a previous chapter is connected to the next chapter.
- Verse 5 says Jesus saw the crowds. Which crowds? The crowds in 4:23-25.
  - Who were in this crowd?
- Jesus saw these people and said that the kingdom of God were for these people.
- The kingdom of God is not just for the spiritual elites (Pharisees, Scribes, Priests), but for everyone, especially the “sat upon, spat upon, ratted on.”<sup>2</sup>

**Matthew 5:1-12****Prescription of Description?**

- There is somewhat of a debate amongst Biblical scholars over whether the Beatitudes are prescriptive or descriptive. In other words, is Jesus telling his disciples to be like this, or is he just describing and explaining who the kingdom of God is for?
- The answer is yes.
- Some of these are what we should strive for, and some are descriptive.
  - For example, we can become more of a peacemaker, but we can not become persecuted all by ourselves.

**Blessed are the poor in Spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (5:3)**

- This refers to the people who are down and out.
- In the Old Testament in the original Hebrew this term was used to describe the people who were exiled from their land and were carried away as slaves--pathetic, pitiful, worthless.<sup>3</sup>
- This also refers to people who know that they lack goodness in and of themselves. They know that they need Jesus.

**Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. (5:4)**

- There are a lot of broken-hearted people in this world. Many of you have been broken-hearted. Many of your have been through seasons of mourning.
- The world looks at people who mourn and call them buzz kills or debbie downers or just looks down upon them.
- Jesus however says they are blessed. The kingdom is for them. They will one day get comforted by the great Comforter (2 Corinthians 1:3).

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<sup>2</sup> Simon and Garfunkel's song "Blessed." Found in Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1997), 97.

<sup>3</sup> Randy Harris, *Living Jesus: Doing What Jesus Says in the Sermon on the Mount* (Abilene, TX: Leafwood Publishers, 2012), 30-33.

**Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. (5:5)**

- I hear all the time that a lack of confidence is undesirable and unattractive. In some professions it is impossible to be successful and meek.
- However, Jesus says that meek people are blessed. The kingdom of God is for them!
- “So for those who put more stock in God than in themselves, they will inherit the earth.”<sup>4</sup>

**Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. (5:6)**

- These are people who love justice. Their hearts break at the injustices of this world.
  - Houston flooding, racial oppression, lack of clean drinking water, homelessness
- When Jesus comes back and the kingdom of God fully comes in its glory, one of the things I am looking forward to most of all is everything will be put right.
- Also for those who want to live righteous lives, the kingdom of God is for you.

**Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. (5:7)**

- This world tells that merciful people are fools because they get taken advantage of.
  - Example of Dallas Willard's' parents losing their business in the Great Depression<sup>5</sup>
- God says that those who forgive others will receive forgiveness, too (Matthew 6:14-15).

**Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. (5:8)**

- “That’s not so much about moral purity as it is about having singleness of purpose in life.”<sup>6</sup>
- These people are dedicated to Jesus and his kingdom.

**Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. (5:9)**

- Where else in the Sermon on the Mount does it refer to people being called sons of God? 5:45
- These are people who are ministers of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5)

**Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (5:10)**

- Jesus has a heart for the persecuted because he, too, was persecuted.

**Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (5:11-12)**

- This is a tough one. “Rejoice and be glad.”
- God will reward you. Like those who went before you, they got their reward.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>5</sup> Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 117.

<sup>6</sup> Harris, *Living Jesus*, 33.

## Two takeaways from the Beatitudes:

### We must know we're blessed before we can respond to Jesus' commands.

- These commands are daunting. They're hard. Last week I said that if you try to do some of these commands that they will be some of the hardest things you've done in your lives. Therefore, we need help, God's help.
- Randy Harris - "I think it is impossible to live out the commands of the Mount without first receiving this blessing. If you try to live out the commands of the Sermon on the Mount without being blessed by God, without feeling loved by God, without knowing that God is holding you close to his side, you're going to grind away and you're never going to get there. Why? Because if that's the approach you take, you are attempting God's favor by keeping a set of arbitrary commands. You're trying to make yourself loved rather than doing it out of response to the love that God has already given. Don't think it's any accident that Jesus doesn't start with commands. He starts with blessings."<sup>7</sup>
- In a lot of Paul's writings before he ever gives a command or imperative, he lays out who God is, who you are, and what Jesus has done for us.
- Practicing the Sermon on the Mount can not become another form of legalization, that is a way of earning God's love and approval.
- God already loves you. And Jesus wants more for your life.
- He wants your life to be a preview of what the kingdom will be like in its fullness.
- But you need his help. And he gives you the Holy Spirit.

### Jesus' kingdom is for everyone, especially the marginalized.

- The kingdom of God is for the sat upon, spat upon, and ratted upon.
- The sick, marginalized, Gentiles, demon-possessed, all can be a part of the kingdom of God.
- The church is not only for the religious elites and Pharisees. It is for everyone (not to say that religious people can't be in the kingdom).

Dallas Givens gives a great summary of the purpose of the Beatitudes: "They serve to clarify Jesus' fundamental message: the free availability of God's rule and righteousness to all humanity through reliance upon Jesus himself, the person now loose in the world among us."<sup>8</sup>

### "Jesus wants the Rose" by Matt Chandler

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bLgIeCL1IdY>

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<sup>7</sup> Harris, *Living Jesus*, 34-35.

<sup>8</sup> Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 116.