

The Eight Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3–11)

Some background from the Hebrew Scriptures

The Greek word translated “**blessed**” in Matthew 5 is *makarios*. It can describe someone who is *fortunate, privileged, or in an enviable condition*. In the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint, LXX), *makarios* frequently translates the Hebrew word *‘ashrê*. This Hebrew expression is especially important because it appears in passages that are remarkably similar to the Beatitudes:

Consider Psalm 1:1:

“**Blessed** is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked.”

Or Psalm 32:1:

“**Blessed** is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.”

And Psalm 119:1:

“**Blessed** are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD!”

The Hebrew expression carries the sense of “**How fortunate!**” or “**How enviable is the condition of this person!**” *It is an exclamation recognizing the favorable position of someone whose life is aligned with God’s purposes*. It is not merely describing a person’s emotional condition. *It makes a declaration about the person’s true circumstances as viewed from God’s perspective*.

1. Blessed are **the Poor in Spirit** (v. 3)

The poor in spirit are those who recognize their complete dependence upon God, acknowledging their need for His mercy, grace, and saving power rather than trusting in their own righteousness or resources. They reflect the humble and contrite people of the Old Testament upon whom God promises to look with favor and with whom He promises to dwell (Psalm 34:18; Isaiah 57:15; 66:2; Zephaniah 3:12).

2. Blessed are **those Who Mourn** (v. 4)

Those who mourn grieve over the brokenness of the world, the suffering caused by sin, and their own failures to live according to God’s purposes. They are blessed because God promises to comfort His grieving people, bringing forgiveness, restoration, and ultimately the removal of sorrow through His saving work (Isaiah 40:1–2; 61:1–3; Psalm 51:17).

3. Blessed are **the Meek** (v. 5)

The meek are those who submit to God, refusing to assert themselves through pride, aggression, or retaliation, while entrusting their lives and futures to His care. Their promised inheritance echoes Psalm 37, where those who patiently trust the Lord rather than resorting to wickedness or violence are promised possession of the land (Psalm 37:3–11; Numbers 12:3; Zephaniah 2:3).

4. Blessed are **Those Who Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness** (v. 6)

Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness deeply desire to live according to God's will and long for His justice, faithfulness, and righteousness to transform the world. Their longing reflects the Old Testament expectation that God will establish righteousness, vindicate His people, and satisfy those who seek Him (Psalm 42:1–2; Isaiah 51:4–8; 55:1–3; Amos 5:24).

5. Blessed are **the Merciful** (v. 7)

The merciful demonstrate God's compassion through forgiveness, kindness, generosity, and practical care for those who are suffering or in need. Their lives reflect God's own character as the compassionate and gracious Lord who delights in mercy and calls His people to extend that same mercy to others (Exodus 34:6–7; Proverbs 14:21; Hosea 6:6; Micah 6:8).

6. Blessed are **the Pure in Heart** (v. 8)

The pure in heart are those whose inner lives are characterized by sincere devotion to God, integrity of character, and undivided loyalty rather than outward religious performance alone. They reflect the Old Testament vision of those who may stand in God's holy presence because their hearts and actions are devoted to Him (Psalm 24:3–6; 51:10; 73:1; Jeremiah 24:7).

7. Blessed are **the Peacemakers** (v. 9)

Peacemakers actively seek reconciliation, healing, justice, and restored relationships, reflecting God's own purpose to establish *shalom*—the wholeness and flourishing of His creation. They demonstrate the character of their Heavenly Father, who calls His people to pursue peace and promises to establish a kingdom characterized by righteousness and lasting harmony (Psalm 34:14; Isaiah 9:6–7; 52:7; Zechariah 8:16–19).

8. Blessed are **those Persecuted for Righteousness** (vv. 10–11)

Those persecuted for righteousness remain faithful to God and His ways even when their allegiance brings rejection, suffering, false accusations, or opposition from the world. They stand in continuity with God's faithful prophets and servants who suffered because of their obedience, trusting that the Lord will ultimately vindicate and reward those who remain loyal to Him (Psalm 37:12–20; Isaiah 51:7–8; Jeremiah 20:7–13; Daniel 3:16–18).

The unifying theme: The Beatitudes describe the character and circumstances of those who belong to God's kingdom, revealing that the truly blessed life is one of humble dependence, faithful allegiance, and confident hope in God's promises. Jesus announces that such people are blessed not because their present circumstances are necessarily favorable, but because they belong to the kingdom He has inaugurated and will one day bring to completion.