

# Mount Pisgah AME Church

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Bible Study, Wednesday, February 5, 2020

## *Developing Christian Character* *Kingdom “Attitudes”*: *A Study in The Beatitudes* *Matthew 5:1-12*

### ***“Blessed are those who are Persecuted for Righteousness”***

#### **Review**

- The *Fruit of The Spirit* (Galatians 5:22-23) indicate the presence of the Holy Spirit in a person’s character and hence are evidence that a person is a believer in Christ.
- In his “Sermon on The Mount” Jesus introduces the characteristics and culture of “The Kingdom” that God is ushering in through Jesus. The culture of The Kingdom of God is fundamentally different from the culture of the existing world.
- What God esteems has very little to do with what human’s tend to esteem. “Blessedness” (i.e., what God counts as successful) has little to do with material possessions, political influence, or even popularity. “Blessedness” is achieved by walking in harmony with what GOD values.
- God values character. Jesus shares in *The Beatitudes* some of the character traits that God values.

#### ***Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God***

- When we come to Christ we are humbled to realize we are all poor in spirit and in need of Christ’s salvation. Receiving it makes us eligible to partake in the Kingdom of God.

#### ***Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted***

- Disciples mourn both personal losses and also the existence of personal and societal sin.

#### ***Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth***

- Disciples are not weak, but meek: humbled by God and surrendered to Christ: Choosing to respond in alignment with God’s mission and purpose for them.

#### ***Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.***

- Disciples long for both personal rightness in God’s sight, and justice in the world around them.

#### ***Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.***

- Disciples realize the extent to which they *have* received mercy, *are* receiving mercy, and *shall* receive mercy. They are therefore willing to have mercy on others.

#### ***Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.***

- God purifies (makes pure and wholly devoted) the hearts of disciples, first by replacement of our corrupted hearts, then through our following The Spirit throughout the ups and downs of life.

#### ***Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God***

- Peace with God comes through receiving God’s Son. Disciples have peace with God, and are at work reconciling others to God (evangelizing). Disciples also seek justice and understanding among people – when there is justice there is peace.

### ***Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for there is the kingdom of heaven.***

#### **English**

Persecute (Webster’s Dictionary)

- To harass or oppress with ill-treatment
- To bother persistently: annoy

Righteousness

- Characterized by what is just: morally right.

#### **Greek**

Persecuted: *dioko*: (1) to make run or flee, to put to flight, drive away. (2) to pursue, run after. (3) In any way whatever to harass, trouble, molest (a) persecute (b) mistreat. (4) To chase

Righteousness: *dikaioisyne*: Being in a state approved of by God: Integrity, virtue, purity of life. (2) characterized by justice or virtue in all are given their due.

Disciples are characterized by:

- A realization that we have no righteousness in and of ourselves (Isaiah 64:6, Romans 3:23, 7:18; Ephesians 2:1-3)
- A complete dependence on Christ, who is our righteousness. (2 Cor. 5:21, John 15:5)
- A desire to “be better” – more aligned with the will of God by following The Spirit and The Word (John 15:14, Galatians 5:16-18, Philippians 3:10-11)
- A hatred of the our own sin (Romans 7:21-25a, Romans 12:9)
- A grief about the sin around us (Jude 23)

Why is it that people who try to live right before God are often harassed, criticized, and often seem to get on people’s nerves?

- Our seeking the light, walking in the light exposes darkness around us.
  - John 1:5 - They don’t understand your light
  - John 3:19-21 – Darkness hates exposure
- People misunderstand our “blessed assurance” and our seeking after God as *self*-righteousness. We are just trying to live for Christ, some will think we think ourselves to be better than they are.
- Your avoidance of certain things feels like a judgment to them. (1 Peter 4:4)
- Jesus was harassed, and criticized, who are we not to be? (Philippians 3:10)

What sort of criticism have you experienced as a result of choices that you have made out of obedience to Christ?

We have to make sure it’s *righteousness* in our lives that is getting criticized, and that their criticisms are not actually justified. (1 Peter 4:14-15)

We must continually examine our motives to stay on the path (2 Corinthians 13:5, 2 Peter 1:10-11)

If our pursuit is after Jesus, righteousness will be the byproduct. Righteousness brings criticism (i.e., “suffering”). But suffering these things with Jesus *by definition* leads a promise that we will reign with him. (1 Peter 4:16, 2 Timothy 2:8-13)

**It will be worth it all! Persecution “in the now” will lead to celebration later!**