

MATTHEW
Chapter 5:1-12

Technical Notes of Matthew Poole

(1-2) And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:

The last chapter concluded with telling us that a great multitude followed Christ (which he noticed), and so that he might with more convenience to himself and advantage to them speak what he had to say, *he went up into a mountain*. And sitting down, after the manner of the Jewish doctors (to show their authority, which our Savior also at other times observed, Matt. 26:55; Luke 4:20; John 8:2), *his disciples came unto him*; both those strictly so called and others also, viz., the multitude mentioned in the last chapter, or some of them. And he began to speak to them with freedom, so that the multitude might hear. Christ thought it as lawful to preach in the mountain as in the synagogues. Nor did his disciples doubt the lawfulness of hearing him wherever he thought fit to speak.

(3) Blessed *are* the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Happy are they who, though not rich in this world's goods, have a spirit suited to their state and condition. They are not looking for their consolation here, but having a poor and low opinion of the world and all that is in it, are looking after more excellent riches. And in order to [obtain] it, they are of broken and contrite spirits for their manifold sins and cannot entertain any proud opinion of their own righteousness, but flee unto the free grace of God and the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not the great, and rich, and proud men of the world who are happy. But these are the blessed men; for true happiness lies not in worldly possessions, but in the favor of God and a right to the kingdom of heaven, which these men have (Ps. 34:18; 51:17; Isa. 66:2).

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

The world is mistaken in accounting the jocund [jolly] and merry companions the only happy men. Their mirth is madness, and their joy will be like crackling of thorns under a pot. But those are rather the happy men who mourn. Yea, such are most certainly happy who mourn out of duty for their own sins, or of the sins of others, or who mourn out of a choice rather to suffer afflictions and persecutions with the people God than to enjoy the pleasure of sin for a season. Though such sufferings do excite in them natural passions, yet it is a blessed mourning; for those are the blessed tears which God will wipe at last from his people's eyes. *They shall be comforted*, either in this life with the consolations of the Spirit, or with their Master's joy in the life that is to come (Isa. 61:3; John 16:20; James 1:12). This promise and declaration of blessedness is not to be extended to all mourners, but only to such as God has made so; or who in duty have made themselves so by obeying some command of God, sympathizing with God's glory or with his afflicted people (Rom. 12:15), or testifying their repentance for their sins. There is a mourning which is a mere natural effect of passion, and a worldly sorrow which works unto death, as well as a godly sorrow working repentance to salvation (2 Cor. 7:10).

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

Men count the hectors of the world happy. They cannot be provoked, but expect as good as they

bring, *an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth*. But I tell you, these are not truly happy. They are tortured with their own passions. As their hand is against everyone, so every man's hand is against them. Besides, there is a God who will revenge the wrongs they do. But *the meek*, who can be angry but restrain their wrath in obedience to the will of God, and will not be angry unless they can be angry and not sin, nor will easily be provoked by others but rather use soft words to pacify wrath, and give place to the passions of others--these are the blessed men. For though others may by their sword and their bow conquer a great deal of the earth to their will and power, yet they will never quietly and comfortably inherit or possess it. They are forcible possessors, and they will enjoy what they have as rapacious birds enjoy theirs--noisily, everyone having his gun ready against them. But those who are of meek and quiet spirit, though they may not take so deep root in the earth as others more boisterous, yet there will be no worm at the root of what they have, and they shall enjoy what God gives them with more quiet and certainty. God will provide for them; truly they shall be fed (Ps. 37:3,11).

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

You see many men and women hungering and thirsting after sensual satisfactions, or after sensible enjoyments. These are unhappy, miserable men; they often hunger and thirst but are not satisfied. But I will show you a more excellent way, a more excellent object of your hunger and thirst--that is, *righteousness*. It is both a righteousness wherein you may stand before God, which is in me (Jer. 23:6) and is *revealed from faith to faith* (Rom. 1:17), and the righteousness of a holy life. Those are blessed men who *first seek the kingdom of heaven and the righteousness thereof*. God will fill these men with what they desire (Isa. 55:1,2; Luke 1:53). There are some who understand this text of a hungering for acquittal before men, which is natural to just and innocent persons falsely accused and traduced [maligned], and they have a promise of being filled (Ps. 37:6). But I see no reason to conclude this to be the sense of this text.

(7) Blessed *are* the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

The men of the world bless themselves if they can take care of themselves, let others do what they will and as well as they can. But I tell you that those alone are the blessed men who, not out of a mere goodness and tenderness of nature but from a true sense and feeling of the needs and miseries of others, and out of a true obedience to the will of God and a sense of his love to them and faith to his promises, are moved not only to pity and compassion, but extend their helping hand in a way suitable to their miseries. These men *shall obtain mercy*, and that not only from men, if they come into straits and distress, but from the hand of God (Ps. 37:26; 112:5,6). He does not say they shall merit mercy at God's hand, but they shall be mercified--they shall obtain mercy.

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

The men of the world bless those who appear pure and holy to men and put on a vizard [disguise] and mask of purity, though they are but painted sepulchres and their hearts are cages of all unclean birds. But those alone are blessed who, being washed from their filthiness by Christ's blood, are of a sincere and upright heart, though they are not legally pure and free from all sin. Yet they are so pure that God accepts them, the bent of their hearts being after holiness. They have no doubleness of mind, but are persons in whom is no guile. For though no mortal eye can see and comprehend the essence of God, yet these men shall by an eye of faith *see and enjoy God* in this life, though in a glass more darkly, and in the life to come face-to-face and as he is (1 Cor.

13:12; Heb. 12:14; 1 John 3:2).

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

The world blesses the boisterous, noisy party that can never be still, which is continually thinking of more worlds to conquer and blowing up the coals of war, division, and sedition. But they are blessed indeed who study to be quiet, seeking peace and pursuing it. They are so far from sowing the seeds of discord or blowing those coals that their great study is to make peace between God and man and between a man and his neighbor, doing this in obedience to God and out of a principle of love to God and men. Those that do so shall approve themselves like unto God, to be his children, and so they shall be called. "*To be called*" and "*to be*" is much the same: so what Moses said (Gen. 21:12) is interpreted by Paul (Rom. 9:7,8); what is said by Matthew (21:13) is interpreted by Luke (19:46), and what was said by St. John (1:12) is interpreted in 1 John 3:1; for God is the God of peace (1 Cor. 14:33).

(10) Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

The men of the world judge those men to be very unhappy and miserable whom their rulers make the objects of their wrath and malice, and who are pursued violently to the loss of their estates, liberties, or lives, never considering the cause for which they are so pursued. But they are quite mistaken. That man who is pursued by such violence and hunted upon this account--because he dares not sin against God in order to please men but labors to keep a *conscience void of offense toward God and toward men* (Acts 24:16)--is a blessed man. And if he be hunted out of the kingdoms of the earth, yet he shall be hunted but to heaven, for to such men belong the kingdom of God in glory (James 1:12; 1 Pet. 3:14; 4:13).

(11) Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.

Reviling and speaking evil of persons falsely, because of their profession of Christ and because they dare not sin against God, is a species of persecution (Gen. 21:9; Gal. 4:29), though the lowest degree of it. It has been the constant lot of God's servants. David said that *false witnesses did rise up and laid to his charge things that he knew not* (Ps. 35:11). Thus John and Christ were served [treated] (Matt. 11:18,19; Luke 7:33,34). Nor is it to be wondered that those whose consciences are so seared that they cannot feel the guilt of persecuting others for righteousness' sake, should not feel the guilt of lying and false swearing. But, says our Savior, you are blessed when these things happen to you (1 Pet. 4:13).

(12) Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Be so far from being troubled as to count it all joy when you fall into these trials (James 1:2). Let it be music in your ears to hear that the drunkards make you their song. Rejoice in your hearts, express it in your lips and behavior, *for great is your reward*--a reward not of debt, but of grace. Our light and momentary afflictions are not worthy to be compared with an eternal and exceeding weight of glory; where there is no proportion there can be no merit, especially when it is given to us to suffer on behalf of Christ (Phil. 1:29). Peter upon this argument said, *The spirit of glory and of God rests upon you* (1 Pet. 4:14). Our Savior adds, *for so persecuted they the*

prophets before you. The magistrates and the rulers of the Jews persecuted Elijah, Micaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, and the rest of the prophets, whom you succeed not in time only, but in the same office of revealing the mind of God to the people.