

Pastor's Bible Study  
March 20, 2019  
Beatitudes Background  
P. Amerson

- I. Preparation:
  - a. Pray, Read
  - b. Observe, Interpret, Apply (Inductive Study)
  - c. Discuss, Discern, Be mindful of others.
  
- II. The Audience, The Purpose, The Setting, The Great Themes
  - a. Core Audience – Disciples;
  - b. Purpose – Metanoia (Repentance/Transformation)
  - c. Setting -- Mountain (Moses) – Teaching (Seated)
  - d. Themes:
    - i. Exodus and Easter,
    - ii. A bias toward the bottom,
    - iii. No correlation between gifts and worthiness,
    - iv. Letting go. (Rohr, p. 124, *Jesus' Plan for a New World*)
  
- III. The Purpose, The Stairway, The Vision, The Options:
  - a. The Purpose: *The Beatitudes are not about high ideals, but about God's gracious deliverance and our joyous participation. We believe that people have put too much emphasis on the virtues (poverty of spirit, purity of heart, peacemaking, and so on), and not enough emphasis on what Jesus was emphasizing – God's presence, God's active deliverance, God's giving us a share in that deliverance, and so blessedness and joy. (David Gushee and Glen Stasson, Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context, p. 24)*
  
  - b. The Stairway: *The first seven Beatitudes are the steps into the kingdom, the stairway to spiritual life. They are not disconnected "sayings," but a definite whole with each step, or Beatitude, arranged progressively in order... We see, then, that these are not blessings pronounced upon different kinds of people – the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart, and so on. Rather, they are stages in the experience of only one class of people – those who are entering the kingdom and who at each stage are blessed. The kingdom, of course, is the blessing. This blessedness comes with the taking of the step and is not postponed as a future reward. (Clarence Jordan, Sermon on the Mount, p. 9).*

- c. The Vision:
- i. *A new image of reality that challenges conventional wisdom;*
  - ii. *Diagnosis of the human condition (diagnosis is not the answer – Jesus lives the answer.*
  - iii. *How transformation happens (transformation is not the same as change. Change is when something new begins. Transformation is the opposite – when something old falls away – often after a crises (Marcus Borg, Jesus a New Vision).*
- d. The Options:
- i. *The old self on the old path: Non-conversion or non-enlightenment.*
  - ii. *The old self on a new path: Where most religion begins and ends: new behavior, new language and practices that are sincere, but that underlying myth/worldview/motivation and goals is never really changed. My anger, fear and ego are merely transferred to now defend my idea of God or religion.*
  - iii. *The new self on a new path: The total transformation of consciousness, worldview, motivation, rewards and goals that characterizes one who loves and is loved by God. This is conversion according to Jesus. (Rohr, Jesus' Plan for a New World, p. 98.)*

IV. Comparative look at Verses 1-2 Matthew 5:1-2

**The Message (MSG)  
You're Blessed**

5 <sup>1-2</sup> When Jesus saw his ministry drawing huge crowds, he climbed a hillside. Those who were apprenticed to him, the committed, climbed with him. Arriving at a quiet place, he sat down and taught his climbing companions. This is what he said:

**New Revised  
Standard Version  
(NRSV)**

**The Beatitudes**

5 When Jesus<sup>[a]</sup> saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him.  
<sup>2</sup> Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

**New International  
Version (NIV)  
Introduction to the  
Sermon on the Mount**

5 Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, <sup>2</sup> and he began to teach them.

**The Beatitudes**

He said:

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Table 2.1 *The Beatitudes echo Isaiah 61*

"61: 1, 2 good news to the oppressed  
. . . the year of the Lord's favor

61: 1, 2 to bind up the brokenhearted  
. . . to comfort all who mourn

61: 7 They will inherit a double  
portion in their land.

61: 3 They will be called oaks of  
righteousness.

61: 11 So the Lord God will cause  
righteousness and praise to spring  
up before all nations.

5: 3 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for  
theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

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

5: 5 Blessed are the humble, for they  
shall inherit the earth.

5: 6 Blessed are those who hunger  
and thirst for righteousness.

5: 10 Blessed are those who have  
been persecuted for . . .  
righteousness, for theirs is the  
kingdom of heaven."

From: *"Kingdom Ethics: Following  
Jesus in Contemporary Context"* by  
David P. Gushee and Glen H.  
Stassen.