

THE THIRD BEATITUDE

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“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.”
Matthew 5:5.

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon the Beatitudes are as follows—#422, Volume 7—THE PEACEMAKER
and #2103, Volume 35—THE HUNGER AND THIRST WHICH ARE BLESSED—
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I HAVE often reminded you that the Beatitudes in this chapter rise one above the other and spring out of one another and that those which come before are always necessary to those that follow after. This third Beatitude, “Blessed are the meek,” could not have stood first—it would have been quite out of place there. When a man is converted, the first operation of the Grace of God within his soul is to give him true poverty of spirit, so the first Beatitude is, “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” The Lord first makes us know our emptiness and so humbles us. Then next He makes us mourn over the deficiencies that are so manifest in us. Then comes the second Beatitude, “Blessed are they that mourn.” First, then, is a true knowledge of ourselves and then a sacred grief arising out of that knowledge. Now, no man ever becomes truly meek, in the Christian sense of that word, until he first knows himself and then begins to mourn and lament that he is so far short of what he ought to be. Self-righteousness is never meek. The man who is proud of himself will be quite sure to be hard-hearted in his dealings with others. To reach this rung of the ladder of the Light of God he must first set his feet upon the other two. There must be poverty of spirit and mourning of heart before there will come that gracious meekness of which our text speaks.

Note too that this third Beatitude is of a higher order than the other two. There is something positive in it as to virtue. The first two are rather expressive of deficiency, but here there is a something supplied. A man is poor in spirit—that is, he feels that he lacks a thousand things that he ought to possess. The man mourns—that is, he laments over his state of spiritual poverty. But now there is something really given to him by the Grace of God—not a negative quality, but a positive proof of the work of the Holy Spirit within his soul so that he has become meek. The first two characteristics that receive a benediction appear to be wrapped up in themselves. The man is poor in spirit—that relates to himself. His mourning is his own personal mourning which ends when he is comforted. But the meekness has to do with other people. It is true that it has a relationship to God, but a man’s meekness is especially towards his fellow men. He is not simply meek within himself—his meekness is manifest in his dealings with others. You would not speak of a hermit who never saw a fellow creature as being meek. The only way in which you could prove whether he was meek would be to put him with those who would try his temper. So that this meekness is a virtue—larger, more expansive, working in a wider sphere than the first two characteristics which Christ has pronounced blessed. It is superior to the others, as it should be, since it grows out of them. Yet, at the same time, as there is through the whole of the Beatitudes a fall parallel with the rise, so is it here. In the first case, the man was poor—that was low. In the second case, the man was mourning—that also was low. But if he kept his mourning to himself, he might still seem great among his fellow men. But now he has come to be meek among them—lowly and humble in the midst of society—so that he is going lower and lower! Yet he is rising with spiritual exaltation, although he is sinking as to personal humiliation, and so has become more truly gracious.

Now, having spoken of the connection of this Beatitude, we will make two enquiries with the view of opening it up. They are these—first, *who are the meek?* And, secondly, *how and in what sense can they be said to inherit the earth?*

I. First, then, WHO ARE THE MEEK? I have already said that they are those who have been made poor in spirit by God and who have been made to mourn before God and have been comforted. But here we learn that they are also meek, that is, lowly and gentle in mind before God and before men.

They are meek before God. And good old Watson divides that quality under two heads, namely, that they are submissive to His will and flexible to His Word. May these two very expressive qualities be found in each one of us!

So the truly meek are, first of all, *submissive to God's will*. Whatever God wills, they will. They are of the mind of that shepherd on Salisbury Plain, of whom good Dr. Stenhouse enquired, "What kind of weather shall we have tomorrow?" "Well," replied the shepherd, "we shall have the sort of whether that pleases me." The doctor then asked, "What do you mean?" And the shepherd answered, "What weather pleases God always pleases me." "Shepherd," said the doctor, "your lot seems somewhat hard." "Oh, no, Sir!" he replied, "I don't think so. For it abounds with mercies." "But you have to work very hard, do you not?" "Yes," he answered, "there is a good deal of labor, but that is better than being lazy." "But you have to endure many hardships, do you not?" "Oh, yes, Sir!" he said, "a great many. But then I don't have so many temptations as those people have who live in the midst of towns, and I have more time for meditating upon my God. So I am perfectly satisfied that where God has placed me is the best position I could be in." With such a happy, contented spirit as that, those who are meek do not quarrel with God! They do not talk as some foolish people do of having been born under a wrong planet and placed in circumstances unfavorable to their development! And even when they are smitten by God's rod, they do not rebel against Him and call Him a hard Master, but they are either dumb with silence, and open not their mouth because God has done it or, if they do speak, it is to ask for Grace that the time they are enduring may be sanctified to them, or they may even rise so high in Grace as to glory in infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon them! The proud-hearted may, if they will, arraign their Maker. And the thing formed may say to Him who formed it, "Why have You made me thus?" But these men of Grace will not do so. It is enough for them if God wills anything! If He wills it, so let it be—Solomon's throne or Job's dunghill—they desire to be equally happy wherever the Lord may place them, or however He may deal with them!

They are also *flexible to God's Word*. If they are really meek, they are always willing to bend. They do not imagine what the Truth of God ought to be and then go to the Bible for texts to prove what they think should be there—they go to the Inspired Book with a candid mind and they pray with the Psalmist, "Open You my eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Your Law." And when, in searching the Scriptures, they find deep mysteries which they cannot comprehend, they believe where they cannot understand and where, sometimes—different parts of Scripture seem to conflict with one another—they leave the explanation to the Great Interpreter who alone can make all plain. When they meet with Doctrines that are contrary to their own notions and hard for flesh and blood to receive, they yield themselves to the Divine Spirit and pray, "What we know not, teach You to us." When the meek in spirit find, in the Word of God, any precept, they seek to obey it at once. They do not cavil at it or ask if they can avoid it, or raise that oft-repeated question, "Is it *essential* to salvation?" They are not so selfish that they would do nothing unless salvation depended upon it—they love their God so much that they desire to obey even the least command that He gives, simply out of love to Him. The meek in spirit are like a photographer's sensitive plates—as the Word of God passes before them, they desire to have its image imprinted upon their hearts. Their hearts are the fleshy tablets on which the mind of God is recorded. God is the Writer and they become living Epistles, written not with ink, but with the finger of the living God! Thus are they meek towards God.

But meekness is a quality which also relates largely to men and I think it means, first, that *the man is humble*. He bears himself among his fellow men not as a Caesar who, as Shakespeare says, does "bestride the narrow world like a Colossus," beneath whose huge legs ordinary men may walk and peep about to find themselves dishonorable graves, but he knows that he is only a man and that the best of men are but men at the best. And he does not even claim to be one of the best of men. He knows himself to be less than the least of all saints and, in some respects, the very chief of sinners. Therefore he does not expect to have the first place in the synagogue, nor the highest seat at the feast—he is quite satisfied if he may pass among his fellow men as a notable instance of the power of God's Grace and may be known by them as one who is a great debtor to the loving kindness of the Lord. He does not set himself up to be a very superior being. If he is of high birth, he does not boast of it. If he is of low birth, he does not try to put himself on a level with those who are in a higher rank of life. He is not one who boasts of his wealth, or of his talents. He knows that a man is

not judged by God by any of these things—and if the Lord is pleased to give him much Grace and to make him very useful in His service, he only feels that he owes the more to his Master and is the more responsible to Him. So he lies the lower before God and walks the more humbly among men.

The meek-spirited man is always of a humble temper and carriage. He is the very opposite of the proud man who you feel must be a person of consequence—at any rate to himself—and to whom you know that you must give way unless you would have an altercation with him. He is a gentleman who expects always to have his top-gallants flying in all weathers. He must always have his banner borne in front of him and everybody else must pay respect to him. The great “I” stands conspicuous in him at all times. He lives in the first house on the street, in the best room, in the front parlor—and when he wakes in the morning, he shakes hands with himself and congratulates himself upon being such a fine fellow as he is! That is the very opposite of being meek and, therefore, humility, although it is not all that there is in meekness, is one of the chief characteristics of it.

Out of this grows gentleness of spirit. *The man is gentle.* He does not speak harshly. His tones are not imperious, his spirit is not domineering. He will often give up what he thinks to be lawful because he does not think it is expedient for the good of others. He seeks to be a true brother among his brethren, thinks himself most honored when he can be the doorkeeper of the House of the Lord, or perform any menial service for the household of faith. I know some professing Christians who are very harsh and repellent. You would not think of going to tell them your troubles. You could not open your heart to them. They do not seem to be able to come down to your level. They are up on a mountain and they speak down to you as a poor creature far below them. That is not the true Christian spirit—that is not being meek. The Christian who is really superior to others among whom he moves is just the man who lowers himself to the level of the lowest for the general good of all! He imitates his Master who, though He was equal with God, “made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a Servant.” And in consequence, he is loved and trusted as his Master was, and even little children come to him and he does not repel them. He is gentle towards them, as a loving mother avoids all harshness when dealing with her children.

In addition to being humble and gentle, *the meek are patient.* They know “it must be that offenses come,” yet they are too meek either to give offense or to take offense. If others grieve them, they put up with it. They do not merely forgive seven times, but 70 times seven! In fact, they often do not feel as if anything had been done that needed any forgiveness, for they have not taken it as an affront. They consider that a mistake was made, so they are not angry at it. He may be angry for a moment—he would not be a man if he were not. But there is such a thing as being angry and yet not sinning—and the meek man turns his anger wholly upon the evil and away from the person who did the wrong—and is as ready to do him a kindness as if he had never transgressed at all! If there should be anybody here who is of an angry spirit, kindly take home these remarks and try to mend that matter, for a Christian must get the better of an angry temper. Little pots soon boil over and I have known some professing Christians who are such very little pots that the smallest fire has made them boil over! When you never meant anything to hurt their feelings, they have been terribly hurt. The simplest remark has been taken as an insult and a construction put upon things that never was intended. And they make their brother offenders for a word, or for half a word, yes, and even for not saying a word! Sometimes if a man does not see them in the street through being short-sighted, they are sure he passed them on purpose and would not speak to them because they are not so well off as he is. Whether a thing is done or is left undone, it equally fails to please them. They are always on the alert for some cause of annoyance and almost remind one of the Irishman at Donnybrook Fair, trailing his coat in the dirt and asking for somebody to tread on it, that he may have the pleasure of knocking that somebody down! When I hear of anybody like that losing his temper, I always pray that he may not find it again, for such tempers are best lost. The meek-spirited man may be naturally very hot and fiery, but he has had Grace given to him to keep his temper in subjection. He does not say, “That is my constitution and I cannot help it,” as so many do. God will never excuse us because of our constitution—His Grace is given to us to cure our evil constitutions and to kill our corruptions! We are not to spare any Amalekites because they are called constitutional sins, but we are to bring them all out—even Agog who goes delicately—and slay them before the Lord who can make us more than conquerors over every sin, whether constitutional or otherwise!

But since this is a wicked world and there are men who will persecute us, and others who will try to rob us of our right and do us serious injury, the meek man goes beyond merely bearing what has to be borne, for he *freely forgives the*

injury that is done to him. It is an ill sign when anyone refuses to forgive another. I have heard of a father saying that his child should never darken his door again. Does that father know that he can never enter Heaven while he cherishes such a spirit as that? I have heard of one saying, “I will never forgive So-and-So.” Do you know that God will never hear your prayer for forgiveness until you forgive others? That is the very condition which Christ taught His disciples to present—“Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” If you take your brother by the throat because he owes you a hundred pence, can you think that God will forgive you the thousand talents which you owe Him? So the meek-spirited man forgives those who wrong him—he reckons that injuries are permitted to be done to him as trials of his Grace, to see whether he can forgive them—and he does so, and does so right heartily. It used to be said of Archbishop Cranmer, “Do my lord of Canterbury an ill turn and he will be a friend to you as long as you live.” That was a noble spirit, to take the man who had been his enemy and to make him henceforth to be a friend. This is the way to imitate Him who prayed for His murderers, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” And this is the very opposite of a revengeful spirit. There are some who say that they have been wronged and they will retaliate. But “retaliation” is not a Christian word! “Revenge” is not a word that ought to be found in a Christian’s dictionary—he reckons it to be of the Babylonian dialect and of the language of Satan. His only revenge is to heap coals of fire upon his adversary’s head by doing him all the good he can in return for the evil that he has done.

I think that meekness also involves *contentment*. The meek-spirited man is not ambitious. He is satisfied with what God provides for him. He does not say that his soul loathes the daily manna. And the water from the Rock never loses its sweetness to his taste. His motto, is, “God’s Providence is my inheritance.” He has his ups and his downs, but he blesses the Lord that his God is a God of the hills and also of the valleys. And if he can have God’s face shining upon him, he cares little whether it is hills or valleys upon which he walks. He is content with what he has and he says, “Enough is as good as a feast.” Whatever happens to him, seeing that his times are in God’s hand, it is with him well in the best and most emphatic sense. The meek man is no Napoleon who will wade through human blood to reach a throne and shut the gates of mercy on mankind. The meek man is no miser, hoarding up, with an all-devouring greed, everything that comes to his hands and adding house to house and field to field so long as he lives. The meek man has a laudable desire to make use of his God-given talents and to find for himself a position in which he may do more good to his fellow men. But he is not unrestful, anxious, fretful, grieving, grasping—he is contented and thankful.

Put those five qualities together and you have the truly meek man—humble, gentle, patient, forgiving and contented—the very opposite of the man who is proud, harsh, angry, revengeful and ambitious. It is only the Grace of God, as it works in us by the Holy Spirit, that can make us thus meek. There have been some who have thought themselves meek when they were not. The Fifth Monarchy men, in Cromwell’s day, said that they were meek and that they were, therefore, to inherit the earth—so they wanted to turn other men out of their estates and houses so that they might have them—and thereby they proved that they were not meek! For if they had been, they would have been content with what they had and let other people enjoy what belonged to them. There are some people who are very gentle and meek as long as nobody tries them. We are, all of us, remarkably good-tempered while we have our own way. But the true meekness which is a work of Grace will stand the fire of persecution and will endure the test of enmity, cruelty and wrong—even as the meekness of Christ did upon the Cross of Calvary.

II. Now, in the second place, let us think of HOW THE MEEK INHERIT THE EARTH.

Jesus said, “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.” This promise is similar to the Inspired declaration of Paul, “Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” So first, it is the meek man who inherits the earth, for *he is the earth’s conqueror*. He is the conqueror of the world whenever he goes. William the Conqueror came to England with sword and fire, but the Christian conqueror wins his victories in a superior manner by the weapons of kindness and meekness. In Puritan times there was an eminent and godly minister named Mr. Deering, who has left some writings that are still valuable. While sitting at a table one day, a graceless fellow insulted him by throwing a glass of beer in his face. The good man simply took his handkerchief, wiped his face and went on eating his dinner. The man provoked him a second time by doing the same thing—and he even did it a third time with many oaths and blasphemy. Mr. Deering made no reply, but simply wiped his face and, on the third occasion, the man came and fell at his feet and said that the spectacle of his Christian meekness, and the look of tender, pitying love that Mr. Deering had cast upon him, had quite subdued him. So the good man was the conqueror of the bad one! No Alexander

was ever greater than the man who could bear such insults like that! And holy Mr. Dodd, when he spoke to a man who was swearing in the street, received a blow in the mouth that knocked out two of his teeth. The holy man wiped the blood from his face and said to his assailant, “You may knock out all my teeth if you will permit me just to speak to you so that your soul may be saved.” And the man was won by this Christian forbearance! It is wonderful what rough natures will yield before gentle natures. After all, it is not the strong who conquer, but the weak. There has been a long enmity, as you know, between the wolves and the sheep. And the sheep have never taken to fighting, yet they have won the victory and there are more sheep than wolves in the world today. In our own country, the wolves are all dead, but the sheep have multiplied by tens of thousands. The anvil stands still while the hammer beats upon it, but one anvil wears out many hammers. And gentleness and patience will ultimately win the day. At this present moment, who is the mightier? Caesar with his legions or Christ with His Cross? We know who will be the victor before long—Mohammed with his sharp scimitar or Christ with His Doctrine of Love. When all earthly forces are overthrown, Christ’s Kingdom will still stand. Nothing is mightier than meekness! And it is the meek who inherit the earth in that sense.

They inherit the earth in another sense, namely, that *they enjoy what they have*. If you find me a man who thoroughly enjoys life, I will tell you at once that he is a meek, quiet-spirited man. Enjoyment of life does not consist in the possession of riches. There are many sick men who are utterly miserable and there are many poor men who are equally miserable. You may have misery or you may have happiness according to your state of *heart* in any condition of life. The meek man is thankful, happy and contented—and it is contentment that makes life enjoyable. It is so at our common meals. Here comes a man home to his dinner. He bows his head and says, “For what we are about to receive, the Lord make us truly thankful.” And then opens his eyes and grumbles, “What? Cold mutton again?” His spirit is very different from that of the good old Christian who, when he reached home, found two herrings and two or three potatoes on the table and he pronounced over them this blessing, “Heavenly Father, we thank You that You have ransacked both earth and sea to find us this entertainment.” His dinner was not so good as the other man’s, but he was content with it and that made it better! Oh the grumbling that some have, when rolling in wealth, and the enjoyment that others have when they have but little, for the dinner of herbs is sweeter than the stalled ox if contentment is but there! “A man’s life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses,” but in the meek and quiet spirit which thanks God for whatever He pleases to give.

“Oh!” says someone, “but that is not inheriting the earth—it is only inheriting a part of it.” Well, it is inheriting as much of it as we need and there is a sense in which the meek do really inherit the whole earth. I have often felt, when I have been in a meek and quiet spirit, as if everything around me belonged to me. I have walked through a gentleman’s park and I have been very much obliged to him for keeping it in such order on purpose for me to walk through it! I have gone inside his house and seen his picture gallery—and I have been very grateful to him for buying such grand pictures and I have hoped that he would buy a few more so that I might see them when I came next time. I was very glad that I had not to buy them and to pay the servants to watch over them—and that everything was done for me! And I have sometimes looked from a hill upon some far-reaching plain, or some quiet village, or some manufacturing town, crowded with houses and shops, and I have felt that they were all mine, although I had not the trouble of collecting the rents which people, perhaps, might not like to pay. I had only to look upon it all as the sun shone upon it and then to look up to Heaven and say, “My Father, this is all Yours and, therefore, it is all mine, for I am an heir of God and a joint-heir with Jesus Christ.” So, in this sense, the meek-spirited man inherits the whole each.

He also inherits it in another sense—that is to say, *whatever other men have, he is glad to think that they have it*. Perhaps he is walking and gets weary. Someone comes riding by and he says to himself, “Thank God that man does not need to walk and get tired as I do. I am glad there is somebody who is free from that trial.” He works very hard and perhaps earns very little, but he lives next door to a workingman who has twice his wages and he says, “Thank God that my neighbor does not have such a pinch as I have. I should not like to see him in such a plight as I am in.” Sometimes, when I am ill, someone comes in and says, “I have been to see somebody who is worse than you are,” but I never get any comfort out of such a remark as that. And my usual answer is, “You have made me feel worse than I was before by telling me that there is somebody worse even than I am.” The greater comfort for a meek man is this, “Though I am ill, there are plenty of people who are well.” Or this, “Though I am blind, I bless God that my dear Brothers and Sisters can see the flowers and the sun.” Or this, “Though I am lame, I am thankful that others can run.” Or this, “Though I am depressed

in spirit, I am glad that there are sweet-voiced singers.” Or this, “Though I am an owl, I rejoice that there are larks to soar and sing, and eagles to mount towards the sun.” The meek-spirited man is glad to know that other people are happy—and their happiness is his happiness! He will have a great number of heavens, for everybody else’s Heaven will be a Heaven to him! It will be a Heaven to him to know that so many other people are in Heaven, and for each one whom he sees there, he will praise the Lord. Meekness gives us the enjoyment of what is other people’s, yet they have none the less because of our enjoyment of it!

Again, the meek-spirited man inherits the earth in this sense—if *there is anybody who is good anywhere near him, he is sure to see him*. I have known persons join the Church and after they have been a little while in it, they have said, “There is no love there.” Now, when a Brother says, “There is no love there,” I know that he has been looking in the mirror and that his own reflection has suggested his remark. Such persons cry out about the deceptions and hypocrisies in the professing church—and they have some cause for doing so—only it is a pity that they cannot also see the good people, the true saints who are there! The Lord still has a people who love and fear Him, a people who will be His in the day when He makes up His jewels. And it is a pity if we are not able to see what God so much admires. If we are meek, we shall the more readily see the excellences of other people. That is a very beautiful passage, in the second part of “The Pilgrim’s Progress” which tells that when Christiana and Mercy had both been bathed in the bath and clothed in the fine linen, white and clean, “they began to esteem each other better than themselves.” If we also do this, we shall not think so badly as some of us now do of this poor present life, but shall go through it thanking God and praising His name—and so inheriting the earth.

With a gentle temper and a quiet spirit, and Grace to keep you so, you will be inheriting the earth under any circumstances. If trouble should come, you will bow to it as the willow bows to the wind and so escapes the injury that falls upon sturdier trees. If there should come little vexations, you will not allow yourself to be vexed by them, but will say, “With a little patience, they will all pass away.” I think I never admired Archbishop Leighton more than when I read a certain incident that is recorded in his life. He lived in a small house in Scotland and had only a manservant beside himself in the house. John, the manservant, was very forgetful and, one morning when he got up before his master, he thought he would like to have a day’s fishing, so he went off and locked his master in. He fished until late in the evening, forgot all about his master, and when he came back, what do you think the bishop said to him? He simply said, “John, if you go out for a day’s fishing again, kindly leave me the key.” He had had a happy day of prayer and study all by himself. If it had been some of us, we would have been fuming, fretting and getting up a nice lecture for John when he came back—and he richly deserved it—but I do not suppose it was worthwhile for the good man to put himself out about him. The incident is, I think, a good illustration of our text.

But the text means more than I have yet said, for the promise, “They shall inherit *the earth*,” may be read, “they shall inherit *the land*,” that is, the promised land, the heavenly Canaan! These are the men who shall inherit Heaven, for up there they are all meek-spirited. There are no contentions there! Pride cannot enter there. Anger, wrath and malice never pollute the atmosphere of the Celestial City. There, all bow before the King of kings and all rejoice in communion with Him and with one another. Ah, Beloved, if we are ever to enter Heaven, we must fling away ambition, discontent, wrath, self-seeking and selfishness! May God’s Grace purge us of all these, for as long as any of that evil leaven is in our soul—where God is, we cannot go.

And then, dear Friends, the text means yet more than that—we shall inherit this earth by-and-by. David wrote, “The meek shall inherit the earth and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.” After this earth has been purified by fire. After God shall have burned the works of men to ashes and every trace of corrupt humanity shall have been destroyed by the fervent heat, then shall this earth be fitted up again, and angels shall descend with new songs to sing and the New Jerusalem shall come down out of Heaven from God in all her glory! And then upon this earth, where once was war, the clarion shall ring no more! There shall be neither swords nor spears and men shall learn the arts of war no more. The meek shall then possess the land and every hill and valley shall be glad, and every fruitful plain shall ring with shouts of joy, and peace, and gladness throughout the long millennial day! The Lord send it and may we all be among the meek who shall possess the New Eden, whose flowers shall never wither and where no serpent’s trail shall ever be seen!

But this must be the work of Grace. We must be born-again, or else our proud spirits will never be meek. And if we have been born-again, let it be our joy, as long as we live, to show that we are the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus with whom gracious words I close my discourse—“Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.” So may it be, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 5:1-12.

Verse 1. *And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain.* For convenience and quietude and to be out of the way of traffic He went up into a mountain. Elevated Doctrines would seem most at home on the high places of the earth.

1. *And when He was set.* For that was the mode of Eastern teaching.

1. *His disciples came unto Him.* They made the inner ring around Him and others gathered around them.

2. *And He opened His mouth and taught them.* Chrysostom says that He taught them even when He did not open His mouth! His very silence was instructive. But when He did open His mouth, what streams of wisdom flowed forth! He “taught them.” He did not open His mouth to make an oration, He was a Teacher, so His aim was to teach those who came to Him. And His ministers best follow their Lord’s example when they keep to the vein of teaching. The pulpit is not the place for the display of oratory and eloquence, but for real instruction—“He opened His mouth, and taught them.”

2, 3. *Saying, Blessed.* The Old Testament closes with the word “curse.” The New Testament begins here, in the preaching of Christ, with the word, “Blessed.” He has changed the curse into a blessing. “Blessed.”

3. *Are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.* This is a paradox that puzzles many, for the poor in spirit often seem to have nothing—yet they have the Kingdom of Heaven, so they have everything! He who thinks the least of himself is the man of whom God thinks the most. You are not poor in God’s sight if you are poor in spirit.

4. *Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.* They are not only poor in spirit, but they are weeping, lamenting, mourning. Worldlings are frivolous, frolicsome, light-hearted and loving everything that is akin to mirth—yet it is *not* said of them, but of those that mourn, that “they shall be comforted.”

5. *Blessed are the meek.* Not your high-spirited, quick-tempered men who will put up with no insults—your hectoring, lofty ones who are always ready to resent any real or imagined disrespect. There is no blessing here for them! But blessed are the gentle—those who are ready to be thought nothing of.

5. *For they shall inherit the earth.* Some say that the best way to get through the world is to swagger along with a coarse impudence and to push out of your way all who may be in it. But there is no truth in that idea. The truth lies in quite another direction—“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.”

6. *Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.* The course of these Beatitudes is like going downstairs. They began with spiritual poverty, went on to mourning, came down to gentle-spiritedness and now we come to hunger and thirst. Yet we have been going up all the time, for here we read, “They shall be filled.” What more can we have than full satisfaction?

7. *Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.* “The merciful” are those who are always ready to forgive, always ready to help the poor and needy, always ready to overlook what they might well condemn—“they shall obtain mercy.”

8. *Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.* When the heart is washed, the dirt is taken from the mental eyes. The heart that loves God is connected with an understanding that perceives God. There is no way of seeing God until the heart is renewed by Sovereign Grace. It is not greatness of intellect, but purity of affection that enables us to see God.

9. *Blessed are the peacemakers.* Not only the passively peaceful, but the actively peaceful who try to rectify mistakes and to end all quarrels in a peaceful way.

9. *For they shall be called the children of God.* They shall not only be the children of God, but men shall call them so! They shall recognize in them the likeness to the peace-making God.

10. *Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.* They have it now, they are already participating in it for, as Christ was persecuted and He is again persecuted in them, as they are partakers of His sufferings, so are they sharers in His Kingdom.

11, 12. *Blessed are you when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in Heaven: for so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you.* You have an elevation by persecution—you are lifted into the peerage of martyrdom, though you occupy but an inferior place in it, yet you are in it. Therefore, “rejoice and be exceedingly glad.”

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

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