

**Fit For a King Series: "Gentle Giants"**  
**Matthew 5:7-12 Wednesday 5/22/19 – Jeff Lyle**

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There are two misunderstandings and misrepresentations of Christians that are stereotyped in America. The first is that Christians are pushovers who are to roll over and play dead, passive, weak and irrelevant. The other stereotype is that we are militant, dominating, suppressive and threatening. Neither of these misrepresentations are sourced in the bible. The fact is that the Church of Jesus is the mightiest people on the planet. We have strength that no other people possess because it is imparted from God Himself. Yet, with that strength, we operate in love and gentleness. We are not threatening, intimidating or operating in fleshly dominance. The last four beatitudes reveal what it means for Jesus-followers to live as gentle giants.

I. **We Are A Sheltering People (7)**

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

**Mercy = compassion for people in need, which always leads to intervention on their behalf**

**A. Merciful attitude** - As those who understand the mercy given to us, we are eager to release mercy to others. It is a Kingdom value for us to grow in to a state of lavish mercy with other people. This is an exclusively horizontal virtue. When Jesus speaks of merciful people, He is speaking of our ability to let His mercy to us flow through us into the lives of others. God needs no mercy from anyone, so we understand completely that Jesus is teaching on our relationships with each other. As those who have received past mercy, do receive present mercy and will receive future mercy, we live in a committed state of welcoming God to give us deeper levels of mercy to pour out upon others. Jesus indicates that, as we determine to release mercy upon others, we can live with the expectation of receiving mercy from God. There is also an invitation to expect a possible greater level of mercy from others when we live lives of extending mercy to others. God may very well choose to prepare us a table in the presence of our enemies when we show others mercy.

**B. Merciful actions** - Mercy is only valid when it results in action. Compassion can remain motionless and still be considered valid. Compassion is more of an inward commodity that may or may not result in immediate action. Mercy is different. Mercy moves. Often, mercy takes action on behalf of those who may not "deserve it". Mercy recognizes the helplessness of its object and moves toward that person to bring relief. Jesus extends mercy to countless people who do not deserve it. We can know that we are experiencing His life moving within us when we see the plight of others and move toward them with the desire to bring relief. The deepest level

of this is expressed when Jesus imparts mercy to us for those who may have created their own problems. When we move to help those who have created their own dilemmas, we are experiencing greater depths of Christlikeness, as He is the One who saves all who believe from the wreckage of their own willful sin.

### **Who in our lives today needs our mercy?**

**Helpless people need our mercy - those who are truly unable to deliver themselves**

**Hurting people need our mercy - those who do not see clearly through their pain**

**Headstrong people need our mercy - those who frustrate us with their pride need our patient commitment to help them**

**Hardened people need our mercy - those who refuse to acknowledge their need and resist our attempts to assist them**

## **II. We Are A Sincere People (8)**

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

**A. Internal aspect** - pure hearts are simple and sincere, devoid of deception and unnecessary complexity. In a generation and culture that feeds off of conflict, purehearted Jesus-followers are empowered to live detached from the drama. It is not that we are blissfully ignorant of the strife, conflict and hostility of our culture, it is that we are liberated from it all through the serenity of Jesus being enthroned in our lives. We keep our hearts free from all that grieves and quenches Holy Spirit. We have submitted hearts that refrain from giving our hearts to things that are unfit for the children of God. We forgive others quickly and fully when we are wronged. When we wrong others, or sin against God, we are quick to own our wrongdoings and ask for forgiveness. We do not let our internal lives live in misalignment with the heart of Jesus.

**B. Relational aspect** - pure hearts are true and transparent - you know what you are getting when interacting with pure-hearted people. Jesus empowers us to seek the good of others, sometimes at a cost to ourselves. We do not operate with agendas for other people's lives. We refuse insincerity, dishonesty or manipulation in our dealings with others. We offer others the gift of knowing who we are and what we are about. We live in a way that reassures them that we are for them, seeking their highest good. Sometimes, purehearted people have to initiate challenging conversations with others, lest there be lingering unresolved issues that might lead to relational decay or death. To be purehearted does not mean that

we are passive. In our relationships with others, being puerhearted means that we are open, transparent and seeking the best of the other person.

**C. Missional aspect** - pure hearts are selfless and sacrificial, seeking the eternal good of others. Purehearted people are here to sacrifice the time, effort and money to serve the mission of the King by aligning with His purposes to seek and save the lost. Because Jesus repeatedly called His original followers to seek first the Kingdom of God and to refuse to serve money/success, purehearted followers have given themselves increasingly to His purposes. To be pure in heart is to live in freedom from their temporary definitions of success in our culture. We have been made people of the Kingdom which operates with an entirely different agenda than the world system. As Jesus imparts to us a pure heart, we begin to look into the gaze of God, and we see in His countenance a missional love for humanity.

**D. Moral aspect** - pure hearts are contrite and clean, devoid of pride and impurity. Most of us default to thinking of moral issues when we hear the word *pure*. While this is not all that is meant by becoming purehearted people, it is certainly an important part of it. As Jesus lives His very life through our surrender, He will always lead us to increasing levels of personal holiness. He will address our thoughts, words and behaviors. He leads the purehearted by giving them new desires that are higher than those who do not know Him intimately. Jesus reorients and purifies our hearts to actually desire things that are holy. He brings our moral beliefs and behaviors into line with His own. We dread defilement of any sort, so we protect our hearts from unholy influences. The purehearted find that they arrive at a place where, just like Jesus, they delight to do the will of the Father. This process grows throughout the entirety of our faith-journey. We find ourselves cooperating with the Holy spirit's work of sanctification as we embrace more and more the pure heart of Jesus.

### III. We Are A Reconciling People (9)

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”

**A. Relational people** - Peacemakers are only content when they are right with others. We love to defuse conflict that is rooted in self-centeredness or lovelessness. Peacemakers cannot feel at rest in Jesus when they are in discord with others in the Kingdom. While we cannot always secure relational peace, as much as it depends on us, we fight for reconciliation and restoration. We love people, therefore we want the unity Jesus has given us with them to be free, full and functional.

**B. Resilient people** - Relational conflicts are not avoidable all the time. We often find ourselves differing with others. Sometimes, these conflicts become intense. Jesus does not avoid conflict, He moves to defuse it and bring truth and grace to end it. Peacemakers know how to be quiet and allow God to defend them when they are mistreated, misunderstood and misrepresented. Sometimes we are called and empowered by Jesus to love the temporary conflict in order to gain a Kingdom victory in the relationship or big-picture issue. Jesus does not call us to quit on people, reject them or give up on them. We always have His heart which always leaves room for repentance, restoration and hope. Even when the dynamics of the relationships change, resilient peacemakers leave their hearts open to a reconnecting when there has been division.

**C. Restorative people** - Peacemakers build bridges, not burn them. Jesus calls and empowers us to make the first move in restoring relationships which have not been characterized by oneness and peace. It is a human tendency to wait on the other party to initiate conflict resolution. Jesus-followers are proactive in being the ones who move to facilitate healing, forgiveness and reconciliation. We often step up to be used of the Lord to be used to bring peace to situations and conflicts in which we are not personally involved. Peacemakers are enlisted to be mediators. Jesus not only restores us to Himself and others, He may use us to restore other people to one another.

**D. Retaining people** - Peacemakers do not seek peace at the expense of integrity; they hold to truth. Jesus does not lead us into a peace-at-any-cost mindset. James 3:17 declares that God's wisdom is first pure, then peace-loving. We retain our commitment to honoring the character of God in all our commitments to advance peace. We do not sacrifice truth in order to erect a fabricated peace. Peace must have substance to it, otherwise it eventually fails. We retain our commitment to the revelation of God's character as we foster peace with others.

#### **IV. We Are A Steadfast People (10-12)**

**“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”**

**A. The reason for persecution (10a, 11b) - “...for righteousness’ sake...on My account.”**

Not all personal mistreatment is equal to persecution. Not all suffering is connected to persecution. Jesus is declaring a blessing on those who are treated wrongly due to their connection to Him. In our public commitment to live in loyalty and love to Jesus, we will eventually encounter strong opposition. When we maintain that loyalty to Him in the midst of persecution, Jesus declares that we are a blessed people.

**B. The mode of persecution (11a) - “...when others revile you and persecute you, utter all kinds of evil against you falsely...”**

The reality of persecution can be as mild as others' stinging, wounding words against us. It can also reach the intensity of being the targets of harmful actions. Christians are stripped of dignity, honor and property all around the world as they refuse to compromise their loyalty to the King who loves them. Their steadfastness costs them. Paul declares in 2 Timothy 3:12 that all who desire to live godly lives will encounter some level of persecution. We expect to revile, rejected and mistreated. As the end of the age approaches, this reality will increase. We are called and empowered to remain steadfastness.

**C. The response to this persecution (12a) - “Rejoice and be glad...”**

This cannot be achieved in the energy of human will. To truly rejoice and express gladness when we are mistreated can only become our reality through intimacy with Jesus and the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The rejoicing is not connected to some twisted love for shame and pain. The rejoicing is that we are participating in a degree of identification with Jesus that positions us for the world's hostility against Him. We are made glad because we recognize that they see enough of Him in us to treat us like they treated Him when He was on earth. We do not embrace the identity of a helpless victim. We rejoice in that we are counted worthy of experiencing the very same treatment that our Lord experienced. We are seen as being one of His own people. The joy of our identity in Jesus is greater than the pain of our rejection by the world.

**D. The precedent for persecution (12b) - "...they persecuted the prophets who were before you."**

Simply put, the people of God have always been reviled and rejected by a world that does not know Him. This is not new. This has been the case since Cain and Abel in the garden. The persecution of those who are in Christ will climax at the end of the age with countless thousands (millions probably) being slain for refusing to recant their commitment to Jesus. One of the glories of the eternal state is that there will no longer be any enemies of God, and our reality will only be that of the loving, tender care of the Father who shepherds His flock through human hostilities.

**V. We Are A Blessed People**

Notice how the notes above never unpacked the blessings that proceed from being a merciful, purehearted, peace-making, persecuted people. I saved them so that we could examine what Jesus says is awaiting those who are aligned with His

kingdom values and character. Because He lives through us and, in so doing, imparts to us His very nature, we are made to live as He lives. We are human revelations of the ways of the invisible King. When He returns to earth, He will visibly establish His kingdom with these very same values in motion. Here is what Jesus-followers will experience from Him as we live in oneness with Him:

**A. We receive mercy (7) - "...for they shall receive mercy."**

Jesus says without qualification that mercy-givers end up being mercy-getters. It's a Kingdom promise. In those hard-to-endure seasons where He calls us to lavish others with mercy, He promises that we will eventually swim in the same stream we bring to others. I want mercy from God. I need it from others. Jesus has positioned me to experience it by making me a mercy-giver. How good of Him to set me up for this blessing! He has done the same for you too. Walk in this truth...because you absolutely can!

**B. We experience intimacy with God (8) - "...for they shall see God."**

Is there a more stunning promise of blessing to us? We who were dead, spiritually blind and at an impassable distance from God will be made to behold Him. This has a present faith-aspect where the pure in heart people are empowered to see God with no impediment from sin, discord or hypocrisy. Our eyes are opened to behold Him at greater levels of intimacy and accuracy. This is a faith-vision, a spiritual understanding of who He is and seeing Him in the Spirit/spirit. Purehearted people are given eyes to see God with greater clarity as their hearts belong more and more to Him. This is the essence of knowing God by faith in this life. It is not static, and IT DOES, in part, depend on how we are living our day-to-day lives in pureheartedness. The ultimate fulfillment of this promise is when we enter into God's actual presence for all eternity. In some impossible-to-describe means, we will forever see the invisible God. There is no greater blessing that can find us. No. Greater. Blessing.

**C. We resemble and reflect God (9) - "...for they shall be called sons of God."**

The title *sons of God* is more than a title. For the peacemakers, the decreed blessing is that our hearts will so reflect the character and mission of God that we will receive the identifying title of being His sons. We are seen to be His family. In the natural, we are often delighted to see the features of parents revealed in their children's physical appearance, behaviors and passions. We know there is an invisible DNA that often reveals the parents in their children. This is also true in the Spirit. As we cooperate with Jesus' life within us, His Father is revealed through us. We have the nature of the Son who is One with the Father. Part of the heart of God is to end conflicts

and foster Kingdom peace consistent with who He is. Jesus empowers us to live this type of life and, when we do, people see the Father in us and know that we are His. Remember, Jesus declares this to be a blessing, not a presumption that we should have. It is no mere title or moniker to be called a son or daughter of God. It is the result of His life flowing through our own in streams of peace.

**D. We have great reward awaiting us (12) - "...for your reward is great in heaven..."**

This blessing, this promise, is offered to those who experience and endure persecution without opting out to choose an easier path. It is time for the Church and its messengers to embrace full honesty in declaring that the Christian life necessarily involves aspects of loss, pain and suffering. These are not arbitrary components of the Kingdom. These negative components arise from our identification with Jesus as Lord. We lose some things in the temporary realm while having it reserved on our behalf by God in the eternal realm. In this reality, we are spiritually blessed, not cursed. We are enriched, not impoverished. We are made to triumph through persecution, becoming less affixed to this earth and its systems. We become more and more aware of the treasures of Heaven when persecution relieves us of the offers of this world. We are not merely promised a reward from Jesus. We are promised a great reward from Him. Let your sanctified imagination consider what type of reward He would reserve for those who refused to distance themselves from the pain and losses that come their way, simply because they belong to Him. He is supremely worth it.

**The word BLESSED indicates that Jesus is saying, "Oh how happy are they!"**

**The reason that repentant, broken, meek, thirsting, merciful, pure-hearted, peacemaking, persecuted people are happy is because:**

**They are inheriting the Kingdom of God both now and forever (3, 10)**

**They receive their comfort from the heart of God (4)**

**They understand that all that is denied them now will one day be under their rule (5)**

**They alone are the only ones who can be completely satisfied (6)**

**They experience God's mercy (7)**

**They are experiencing intimacy with God now, and will do so forever (8)**

**They are fulfilling the will of God in that they are taking on His character so much that they are known as His children (9)**

**They are promised a great reward when their life is over (12)**