



Loving Jesus, Loving People, Plowing a Counter-Culture

SERMON TEXT: Matthew 5:1-12

KEY POINT(S): The values of Christ’s Kingdom turn our world on its head.

FOR LEADERS

- **Welcome!** *We’re so excited to be kicking off a new season of Communities and walking in discipleship together! Make it a point to have some time to fellowship together for this first week and be sure to remind everyone of the purpose, vision, and expectations for your time together.*
- **Leadership Essentials:** *The second module for Leadership Essentials is now available for all of our leaders who are currently apprenticing someone. If you have any questions, or need help getting set up with your apprentice, shoot us an e-mail at Communities@emergencenj.org*

GETTING STARTED

{1} Icebreaker – “Name one great highlight and one challenge that you faced over the holiday break.”

{2} Communities Video - Watch this week’s Communities video!

{3} What were some things that stood out to you from the sermon this week? Was there anything you found particularly impactful or eye-opening?

THE “HAPPY” LIFE

In our passage this week we are presented with the Beatitudes, or as pastor Ryan explained in his sermon this week, Jesus’ directions on how to live a “happy life.” As is usually the case with Jesus, the 9 beatitudes He lists are not at all what we might expect.

{1} In your own words, how would you define what it means to be “happy?”

{2} How is happiness typically viewed in our culture today? *(Ask a volunteer to google search “How to live a happy life” on their phone!)*

{3} How does this definition compare to what Jesus offers us in our passage this week?

⇒ **Ask for a Volunteer to read Matthew 5:1-12**

{4} Consider this list of values and attitudes that, according to Jesus, will truly make us happy and blessed. Which of these do you think is the most counter-cultural? Why?

{5} Do you think that the “happiness” that Jesus speaks about here is achievable in this life, or should we only expect this level of happiness in Heaven? Explain.

Leaders: *This first address from Jesus’ Sermon on the mount is radically counter-cultural – He holds up a number of character traits and attitudes that, at least by the world’s definition, we would consider weaknesses and then explains, for each, how and why they are strengths in the Kingdom of God. Often, this passage is used to refer to Jesus’ Kingdom as the “Upside-down” Kingdom, where the values are Heaven are nearly the exact opposite of the values of the world. However, take careful notes of Jesus’ explanation. The blessed are not those who are poor, mourning, or hungry simply because they are so, but rather because of their recognition of their position. As Ryan mentioned in the sermon, this entire list hinges around the first beatitude. Those who are poor in spirit are they who have come to*



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recognize the true reality of their sin, and their own brokenness and imperfection before just and perfect God. Proverbs refers to this also when it says that “fear is the beginning of wisdom.” Jesus is not addressing circumstances so much as He is addressing our posture. Therefore, we should define happiness not by our position in the world, but rather our position in Heaven. And, if what the Bible promises is true, and Jesus’ words are trustworthy (and they are), then true happiness can surely be found right here, right now.

THE BEATITUDES

In the sermon this week, Ryan explained how all the beatitudes essentially stem from the first one, and that Jesus is not addressing circumstances so much as He is addressing our posture before God and others. Let’s read through this list one more time, examining each one in detail:

- [verse 3]** In what way(s) does the culture we live in make it challenging to maintain an attitude of spiritual poverty?
- [verse 4]** What does it look like to mourn over our own spiritual poverty? How does this mourning help us to be “happier?”
- [verse 5]** What does it mean to be “meek?” What does it look like, practically, and where do we see meekness in our culture today?
- [verse 6]** What does it feel like to hunger or thirst for righteousness? Name a time where you have experienced this in your own life?
- [verse 7]** In the sermon, Ryan explained that today our society is crying out for “Justice!” but, in many ways, the cry for the Christian is “Mercy!” Share your own opinion about the values of justice and mercy in the context of our culture today.
- [verse 8]** Most of us will find Jesus’ challenge to be “pure in heart” particularly convicting. What is Jesus asking of us here? How do we pursue being pure in our hearts before Christ and before others?
- [verse 9]** In the sermon, Ryan drew a distinction between “peace-keepers” and “peace-makers.” How would you describe the difference between these two things, and why is it more important to be a peace-maker?
- [verse 10]** Where have you seen someone persecuted for the sake of righteousness? Have you ever experienced this in your own life? What does persecution look like in our culture today and how does that compare to other cultures around the world?
- [verse 11]** Why is it significant that Jesus’ disciples are persecuted for His sake? What value does this have in your own personal context?

Leaders: Again, much of these things are directed at the heart. Bear this in mind as you work through this list! Jesus’ point here is that our hearts are fickle, and they become self-absorbed and greedy. Blessed are those who know this, realize it, and it leads them to mourn over their own brokenness—for they will know Christ, and find true life, true happiness, in His name.

PRAYER

- [1]** Pray that God would give you a sincere desire to live out the values that characterize His kingdom, instead of your own. Pray also that God would give you a heart that exemplifies these things, both before God, and before others.