

19 February 2023

Becoming Like Christ

Dear Sisters and Elders,

This week in my Come Follow Me study, I learned something about the Beatitudes that was new to me, and I thought it would be worthwhile to share it with each of you. I want to credit our friend Tyler Griffin for sharing this concept with me in his Come Follow Me Insights video for this week. The word Beatitude is interesting. Its origin from Latin, means “blessed.” The Oxford Dictionary defines it as “Supreme Blessedness”.

There are 8 Beatitudes in Matthew 5:3-10 and again in 3 Nephi 12:3-10. I think we are all familiar with them.

- Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.
- Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.
- Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.
- Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.
- Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.
- Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.
- Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

What is new for me is how each of these statements can help us evaluate ourselves, work to improve, and then move on to become more like our Savior. Since the Beatitudes recorded in the Book of Mormon add new insights, I have included the changes found in the Book of Mormon using italics and underlines to highlight the additions.

Blessed are the poor in spirit who come unto me. The opposite of poor is rich. Who are the poor in spirit? It is anyone who recognizes the gap between their “poor” spirit and the Savior’s “rich” spirit. When we are humble enough to recognize that we are not complete and that we are lacking spiritual strength and power, then we begin the journey to become like Him. Without the recognition of our current state, we never begin movement towards the Savior. The Book of Mormon addition of “*who come unto me*” just reinforces this concept of moving in the direction of the Savior’s perfection.

Blessed are ALL they that mourn. There are two kinds of mourning. One is like that of the Nephites who in Mormon 2:13 mourned “*because the Lord would not always suffer them to take happiness in sin*”. The other mourning is described in 2 Nephi 32:7 where Nephi is “*left to mourn because of the unbelief, and the wickedness, and the ignorance, and the stiffneckedness of men...*”. When we mourn our own unbelief, wickedness, ignorance, and stiffneckedness, it becomes a motivator to repent and become better.

Blessed are the meek. Once we are motivated to repent, we then need to become submissive to the will of the Father. We need to learn to do things “His” way rather than our own. Meekness means having spiritual receptivity to learning from others, and

especially those we perceive as being less capable than ourselves. Jesus' meekness is exemplified in his washing of the feet of his disciples, His disciplined self-restraint as He was spat upon and persecuted, and His ultimate condescension to fulfill the Father's will by taking upon Himself our sins and infirmities. It is letting go of OUR own will and taking upon ourselves HIS will that defines this meekness.

Blessed are ALL they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness. Once we have realized the gap between us and the Savior, begin to feel bad (mourn) about it, and willingly say to the Father, "I will do anything you want me to do", then we must actually go and seek His will. How do we do that? We hunger and thirst after righteousness. The concept of being good and doing good will then completely consume us. Powerful scripture study and meaningful prayer become our greatest desires because we know they will help us change.

Blessed are the merciful. The very next step after seeking the Father's will, is to show mercy to those around us. Mercy is a word that is related to the Old Testament Hebrew word "hesed" which means loving kindness. "Hesed" can be compared to Charity. This is the love that God has for us, and the expectation God has of us is that we will show this kind of love to those around us. It is interesting that the latest scholarship on the word Mormon indicates that it comes from two Egyptian words: Mor – which means "love" and Mon – which means "enduring". This is one of the reasons that the Book of Mormon is so powerful in our own covenant path progress because it teaches us about God's enduring love for all His children and more importantly, how we can develop this "enduring love" for others.

Blessed are ALL the pure in heart. This sixth step appears to be a bit of a pause in the process. It can be considered a reality check as we ask ourselves, why am I doing what I am doing? Why am I going to Church? Why did I come on a Mission? Why do I want to go to the Temple? Is it because I want the honors and respect of others or is it because I love God? The question we should each ask ourselves is this, "Is my heart pure?" Do I want to be a missionary and disciple of Jesus Christ or do I just want to be a returned missionary? I love the reward for a pure heart: "They shall see God".

Blessed are ALL the Peacemakers. This step has much to do with our role as missionaries although it includes all who are on this path of discipleship. Mosiah 15:14-15 sums it up best. *"And these are they who have published peace, who have brought good tidings of good, who have published salvation; and said unto Zion: Thy God reigneth! And O how beautiful upon the mountains were their feet!"* If we really want to become like our Savior, seeking the Father's will as the Savior sought it (and do so for the right reasons), then the very next expectation is that we share the peace that we have found with those around us. It is not only an expectation, but it becomes our deepest desire because we have come to love God so much.

Blessed are they which are persecuted for my name's sake. It is inevitable as we become more like the Savior, we will suffer greater persecution. Many of you have experienced this as missionaries. When you try to be good and keep the mission rules and work hard, there are some who will mock you and claim you are being self-righteous or just trying to impress the Mission President. Just know that when that happens, if your heart is pure, you are in a

very good place. And for those in the great and spacious building mocking those who are partaking of the fruit of the tree? It doesn't end well.

These 8 steps are powerful reminders of the things we can do to become more like our Savior. I might also add that I love that the Book of Mormon account adds the word "ALL" to many of these Beatitudes. I am grateful that these blessings are available to ALL who pursue this path. Our God is a God of abundance, not scarcity. I hope each of you will evaluate your own progress on this "Beatitude staircase".

One last insight. Isn't it interesting that the blessing for being "poor in spirit" and the blessing for being "persecuted for my name's sake" are the same? The blessings for step 1 and step 8 are identical! "For theirs is the kingdom of heaven". Perhaps one reason is that this, much like the doctrine of Christ, is an iterative process. We don't go through it one time and then we are done. It takes years of recognizing sins and shortcomings, years of repenting, years of hungering and thirsting after righteousness, years of extending mercy and love to others, and years of blessing the lives of others by publishing the peace of the Gospel to EVERYONE around us. This is just one way that the Beatitudes, these "Supreme Blessings" can help us become like Christ.

All my love,

President Kunz