

The Wisdom of Jesus
Maximum Devotion
Matthew 5:6-10

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Introduction: I have issued a challenge for us for 2009. I take our challenge from Luke 2:52 that we grow as Jesus did in wisdom, in stature, in favor with God, and in favor with others. I proposed that we spend one quarter of the year in each of these growth areas. So, this morning, we continue to try to understand what it can mean to grow in wisdom. Our text of study is the Sermon on the Mount. Here's why. The Sermon on the Mount concludes with these words: "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock." (Mt. 7:24).

A few weeks ago, we dealt with the first few verses of the Sermon on the Mount—a place of Scripture that is generally called the Beatitudes. Those first three Beatitudes help us to understand that God's plan for our happiness is based on *maximum dependence* on Him. Here's wisdom—if you want to be wise, you will depend completely on Him.

The next five Beatitudes that we see in verses 6-10 help us to understand that our happiness depends on *maximum devotion to Him*.

Text: ⁶ Blessed *are* those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
For they shall be filled.

⁷ Blessed *are* the merciful,
For they shall obtain mercy.

⁸ Blessed *are* the pure in heart,
For they shall see God.

⁹ Blessed *are* the peacemakers,
For they shall be called sons of God.

¹⁰ Blessed *are* those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake,
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

What is implied in *Maximum Devotion*? In order to help us to understand this set of Beatitudes, I am going to use an old teaching device today to help us to remember hopefully some of the truths of this lesson. I want to use the word "happy" as an acrostic to help us to see one principle in every one of these 5 Beatitudes. Each of the principles has something to do with the kind of devotion that we ought to have toward God.

- **Heart that desires to be right with God.**
"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness"

First of all, to live in maximum devotion to God means that we have a heart that desires to be right with God. I think all of us have learned that most everything in life begins with desire. Notice two things about the heart that desires righteousness.

Progression: To hunger and thirst is to be in dire need of food or drink. The idea of true hunger and thirst is that you will die if you do not get what you are hungering or thirsting for. The more you have, the more you will desire. This is the same spiritual principle that applies to exercise. The more you exercise, the more you want to exercise. Good habits are habitual just as bad habits are habitual.

Product: We will be satisfied. If we hunger and thirst for righteousness, we will be satisfied. Jesus said to a Samaritan woman at the well, "Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst."

A good example of this satisfaction is found in the familiar Psalm 23. "The LORD is my shepherd I shall not want." Later the Psalmist said, "My cup runs over." I have often said that a cup running over is the absolute opposite of emptiness.

- **Able to release others from their wrongs.**

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

Second, those who want to live in maximum devotion to God will have the ability to release others from their wrongs or, put simply, to forgive. I understand that forgiveness is one of those things in life that is a lot easier to talk about than to do. But, those who want to live in maximum devotion to God are going to want to release others from their wrongs. I believe that those who are able to forgive best or those who understand two things.

Keys to Being Givers of Mercy:

- (1) Understand the full weight of my sin.
- (2) Understand the full weight of God's mercy.

This idea of forgiveness is a sermon in itself, so let me just share one brief story with you. When Bud Welch decided to meet a man named Bill he did not realize that they had so much in common. Bud had lost a daughter and Bill was about to lose his son. Bud's daughter Julie spoke five languages, graduated from Marquette University and had at the time of her death a very successful career. Bill's son had gone the military route. He had made his family proud by serving his country in the Persian Gulf War. The lives of these two young people intersected on an infamous April day in 1995 at the Federal Government Building in Oklahoma City. You see Bud had traveled across the country to meet Bill McVeigh, the father of Timothy McVeigh. He wanted to extend forgiveness to Timothy through his father. Bud Welch would say later that the moments he spent with Mr. McVeigh were the most profound minutes of his life. He said, "I've never felt God more than I did around that kitchen table." Could be because we're never more like God then when we are willing to extend the hand of forgiveness. Bud's whole world had literally exploded. You know, our world explodes sometimes too, doesn't it. Our spouse says, "He/she does not love us anymore." Our child rebels. Someone cuts us down. Someone lies, cheats, steals. The list could go on and on. What do you do when your world explodes? What do you do?

"In the final analysis, forgiveness is an act of faith. By forgiving another, I am trusting that God is a better justice-maker than I am. By forgiving, I release my own right to get even and leave all issues of fairness for God to work out. I leave in God's hands the scales that must balance justice and mercy."
[Phillip Yancey.]

- **Pursue Purity in every area of my life.**

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

Understand the Balance of Keeping Your Heart Pure!

➤ God is the only One who can make your heart pure.

➤ We need to discipline ourselves.

Some helpful Scriptures: 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, Romans 12:1-2, Philippians 4:8-9, Psalm 119:9

In the final analysis, only God can help you with this issue of purity, but we must join Him in pursuing purity.

- **Pursue Peace with all persons.**

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

This beatitude probably brings about the most questions. What if I can't make peace? That is, what if the other person won't allow for peace. Here's a couple of Scriptures for illumination.

“Pursue peace with all people” Hebrews 12:14

“If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men” Romans 12:18

We are called to be “peace-makers” not “peace-achievers.”

Another question might be, “What if my stance on a particular issue is the reason there can be no peace?” The final beatitude that we examine today seems to speak to this issue.

- **Yield life to God no matter the price.**

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

The ultimate goal of discipleship is to follow Christ!

The Missionary Society sent to David Livingstone, a famous pioneering missionary a telegram that said, “Any good roads? We'll send missionaries.” Livingstone telegraphed back, “Keep them, I don't need them if they are waiting for good roads.” It was this same Livingstone who wrote: “Lord, send me anywhere, only go with me. Lay any burden on me, only sustain me. Sever me from any tie, but the one that binds me to Your service and to your heart.”

Conclusion: I grew up going to the amusement park in Houston called “AstroWorld.” I am sure many of you have been to this theme park. Going to the amusement park is an interesting thing. You wait in these lines only to arrive in the thrill ride wondering then if you really want to ride. There was a particular ride at AstroWorld called “Sky Screamer.” It was a free fall. The thing I remember about this ride was the three short beeps that immediately preceded the fall. Once you heard the beeps, there was no turning around. Our walk with Christ ought to be like that. We have heard the beeps, there is no turning back.