

1-3-21 Character

Matthew 5:1-14; Ephesians 5:1-21

When Jesus began His public ministry, He started by preaching, **“Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 4:17)**. The salvation Jesus gives introduces us into a new kingdom, and we learn to live according to its values. Kingdom living requires changes in our character.

Peter heard Jesus proclaim this and years later, he wrote to Christians, **“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;” (1 Peter 2:9)**.

Jesus Himself lived out of a strong identity, and He taught it to His disciples. In the sermon of the Mount Jesus answers the questions:

What kind of people are we to be?

How do we act as members of God’s kingdom on earth?

How do God’s children act when we are angry with someone?

How do we treat a person when we see a flaw in their character?

Jesus knew God’s will perfectly and left us an example. **“No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.” (John 1:18) ESV**

It is tough to live God’s character in today’s world. Even though it is tough, as believers our identity is in Jesus Christ.

Galatians 2:20, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

2 Corinthians 5:17, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”

I know many of us feel insecure at times in life. (I’m one of them!) But that’s because we keep trying to find our worth and security in the wrong things. In Christ, we are firm and secure in Him.

Hebrews 6:19, “This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil,”

If 2020 has taught us anything, we know there will be times of insecurity, our old nature will rear its ugly head, something out of the blue will smack us in the back of the head. We need to be reminded that our identity is in Jesus, our character was changed the minute the Holy Spirit took up residence in our hearts.

So, when we slip up, when we fall into sin, which we all will, we must return to our identity, in Jesus. God’s word shows us what it is, means to repent, to turn away from our desire to claim ownership over a throne that has been redeemed by the one true God.

The general opinion of the world today is **Psalms 10:3, “The wicked in his pride persecutes the poor; Let them be caught in the plots which they have devised. 3 For the wicked boasts of his heart’s desire; He blesses the greedy and renounces the Lord. 4 The wicked in his proud countenance does not seek God; God is in none of his thoughts.”**

Today's motto could be: Blessed are they that are rich, great, and powerful.

Read Matthew 5:1-12

8 Characteristics of blessed people; 8 Characteristics we must repent of.

I. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (v.3)

- Everything comes from God; every good and perfect gift is from Him.
- Those who consciously depend on God, not on themselves; they are "poor" inwardly, having no ability in themselves to please God (**cf. Rom. 3:9–12**).
- Characteristic to be repented of, blessed are spiritually self-righteous.
- Can't be poor in spirit and be proud, murmuring, complaining, and blaming others.
- In 2021 we cannot be spiritually proud or content of where we are. God is great, He is Holy!

We must be empty before we can be full. The opposite of this is self-sufficiency. Our sufficiency is not of ourselves (2 Cor. 3:5). The world promotes self-sufficiency, yet God dwells with the person whose heart is broken (Isa. 57:15). This does not mean false humility or cowardice; it means a proper attitude toward self, realizing how weak and sinful we are apart from Christ -Warren Wiersbe

II. "Blessed are those who mourn For they shall be comforted." (v.4)

- Mourn over our sins to bring us to the place of repentance.
- Recognize their needs and present them to the One who can assist.
- Characteristic to be repented of, blessed are those who ignore, justify, compare, for they will be comforted, while in their sin.

This is sincere sorrow for sin, our sin and the sins of others. How careless we are about sin! We excuse it, yet God hates it, and sin breaks God's heart. Beware of the sorrow of this world (2 Cor. 7:8–10). Peter mourned with godly sorrow and was forgiven; Judas had remorse—the sorrow of this world—and he took his life. -Warren Wiersbe

III. "Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth." (v.5)

- We are to be known for humility.
- Our attitude toward others; we are teachable; we do not defend ourselves when we are wrong.
- Jesus demonstrated how to be obedient to the God the Father.
- The Meek quietly submit themselves to God, His Word, His direction.

Titus 3:2, "to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men."

- Characteristic to be repented of, blessed are the spiritually arrogant.

James 4:6, “But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: “God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.”

- We do not earn mercy, but we must have hearts prepared to receive it.

IV. “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.” (v.6)

- We must make sure we are more concerned with standing right before God, not man.
- We must have a spiritual appetite, a continuing desire for personal righteousness.
- Characteristic to be repented of, blessed are those who hunger and thirst to provide for their desires.
- Rather than being concerned with their standing for God, they inflate their stand with God.
- Instead of God being Lord of their lives he tends to be just an advisor.
- A true Christian has an appetite for spiritual things. Ask people what they desire, and you will know what they are like.

V. “Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.” (v.7)

- We must be known for being merciful. Not giving what is deserved.
- We have a forgiving spirit and love others. Extend mercy to others, thus demonstrating God’s mercy which has been extended to them.
- Characteristic to be repented of, blessed are those that seek revenge, hold grudges and pay back.

Colossians 3:12, “Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering”

- Being merciful when someone doesn’t deserve it.

Matthew 6:14, “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.”

VI. “Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God.” (v.8)

- Godly courage to be clean. We keep our lives clean; holiness is happiness to us, and we want no substitutes.
- Those who are inwardly clean from sin through faith in God’s provision and a continual acknowledging of their sinful condition. The
- Characteristics to be repented of, blessed are the outwardly pure in heart.
- They are more worried about how they appear to others than to God.

- Not sinlessness (1 John 1:8) but the truth within (Ps. 51:6). It means a single heart, not divided between God and the world.

VII. “Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.” (v.9)

- Will you move on from a wrong/situation to keep peace? Will you look to be at peace with all mankind?

Romans 12:18, “If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.”

- Characteristics to be repented of, blessed are those ready to cause division.
- Christians should bring peace, between people and God and between those who are at odds with each other. We share the Gospel of peace.
- This is not “peace at any price,” for holiness is more important than a peace based on sin (see James 3:17; Heb. 12:14). Compromise is not peace, but Christians should not be contentious as they contend for the faith.

Psalm 120:6-7, “My soul has dwelt too long with one who hates peace. 7 I am for peace; But when I speak, they are for war.”

VIII. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (v.10)

- We will be persecuted for doing right, for standing up for God. All who live godly lives will suffer persecution.
- Continue to read **verses 11-12**
- Characteristic to be repented of, blessed are those who won’t stand up for God’s truth. Who shrink and afraid of what others will think?
- Note that we should be accused “falsely.” We should never be guilty of deliberately asking for persecution. If we live godly lives, suffering will come!

These qualities contrast sharply with Pharisaic “righteousness.” The Pharisees were not “poor in spirit”; did not “mourn” in recognition of their needs; were proud and harsh, not humble and gentle; they felt they had attained righteousness and therefore did not have a continual appetite or desire for it; they were more concerned with “legalities” of God’s and their own laws than with showing mercy; were pure ceremonially but not inwardly; created a rift, not peace in Judaism; and certainly did not possess true righteousness.

Read Matthew 5:13-14

Galatians 5:1-21

We are a people who...

- Take God's commands seriously.
- Reconcile as quickly as possible.
- Are careful to obey God.
- Remain faithful to our family, His people and God.
- Keep our word.
- Love our enemies and pray for them.
- Seek to be rewarded by God instead of by people.
- Forgive others because we have been forgiven so much by our Father.
- Walk in love, just like Christ.
- Are careful with our words.
- Use our time carefully here on earth, making the opportunity of every moment.
- Be more concerned with being filled with the Spirit over anything else.
- Encourage one another.
- Always give thanks to God for everything.

As we begin 2021 I have so much that I need to repent of. I need to be more thankful. Use my words more carefully. Love my enemies/Christians that I don't like. Obey God and use my time and opportunities to glorify God.

What do you need to work on? We can't begin to do this, to see the face of God, to experience salvation until we humble ourselves. Humility is a big step for all of us. The longer I walk with Jesus the more I realize my struggle with humility is harder. In our culture the longer you do something the more experienced you become. So, the longer you are a follower of Christ, the better you are at it than someone that just became a new believer, right? Wrong! I have realized it's quite the opposite.

As we prepare to take communion, what is it you need to get taken care of today?