







## TEACHING PLAN

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**Have someone read James 1:2-4. Why should we rejoice about endurance? List some figures in Scripture who model this endurance.**

Jesus understood that persecution would be a part of the lives of His people because of Him and His message. They would be reviled “on his account.” He wanted them to rejoice in suffering because it was evidence that they would receive an award far greater than anything the world offered.

**> HAVE A FINAL VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 5:13-16.**

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In verses 13-16, Jesus explained the impact a kingdom attitude can have on the world. He did so with two word pictures—salt and light. Jesus calls His followers “the salt of the earth.” Salt’s primary function in Jesus’ day was to help preserve food (especially meat), an act that was particularly important in the Middle East due to hot temperatures and arid climate.

**What is the church’s role in serving and preserving culture? What part do you play in that picture?**

**How is the command to be salt and light related to the Beatitudes in verses 3-10?**

As believers, we act as a preservative in the culture around us by maintaining high moral and spiritual standards that counteract the sin and decay of the world. Salt also serves to add flavor, which is the way we use it today. Salt is distinctly different from the things with which it’s mixed. Jesus’ disciples likewise are to be different from the world.

**How does the message of God’s kingdom add flavor to your life? to the world?**

**Why must God’s people be distinctly different from people who don’t know Him?**

By referring to salt, Jesus was making a statement about what it really means to be part of the kingdom of God. People who understand their need for God and have realized His mercy toward them, who seek righteousness even amidst persecution, must not lose their saltiness. Those who follow Him can’t keep that hidden, which sets up verse 14 nicely. If we’re part of God’s kingdom, the world can’t help but notice we’re different.

**How have you noticed a specific change in another person’s life because of his/her relationship with God? How has He made a difference in your life?**

**In addition to salvation, what other positive effects can God’s kingdom have on the world?**

The result of living out the kingdom attitudes described in Scripture is that Christ’s light will shine from within us and pierce the darkness in the world. When Peter and John are told by the Jewish leaders to stop preaching, their response in Acts 4:19-20 shows the impact of Jesus’ teaching: “Whether it’s right in the sight of God for us





# BRENTWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH

BUT I SAY: HOW JESUS TAUGHT US TO LIVE—WEEK 1

BLESSED TO GLORIFY (MATTHEW 5:1-16)

JANUARY 20, 2013

## COMMENTARY



Brentwood Baptist  
MAKING THE CONNECTION

### MATTHEW 5:1-12

5:1-2. Matthew 4:23-25 sets the stage for Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. People from all over Galilee and surrounding areas flocked to see and hear Him as well as to seek healing. On a particular day, when He saw the crowds, He went up to a place on a nearby mountain. Teachers of that day customarily spoke from a seated position, so He sat down with His disciples gathered around Him. Then He began to teach them (v. 2). Although His disciples and the crowd could hear Jesus (7:28), His message seems targeted mainly to those He had singled out to follow Him. Still, His words certainly reveal to all His hearers the real meaning of following Him.

5:3. Jesus declared people who exhibit particular characteristics to be divinely blessed. He was not saying that people should strive to attain those characteristics so they could earn the right to tap into God's blessings. Rather, those characteristics identify people who by God's grace are citizens of the kingdom of heaven. This designation does not imply they are perfect, fully mature believers. It does indicate they have begun to follow the Lord.

The first four Beatitudes (vv. 3-6) reflect inner attitudes, the first of which is poor in spirit. This is opposite the attitude of being arrogant and self-sufficient, a trait prized and admired by the world. No one can earn God's blessing. People who think they can please God on their own are blind to their sins and ignorant of God's high standards. Poverty of spirit is the prelude to the riches of salvation. Jesus pronounced the poor in spirit to be blessed because, as followers of Jesus, the kingdom of heaven is theirs ("kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of God" are used interchangeably in the Gospels). While this citizenship is a present possession of believers, the full benefit of kingdom citizenship awaits Christ's return.

5:4. Those who mourn are blessed, for they will be comforted. Jesus did not specify what sort of mourning He had in mind, so it could include all mourning. In the context of the other Beatitudes, mourning over our sins of commission and omission probably should receive emphasis. When we honestly repent of our lapses into sin, we are comforted anew with the assurance our sins all have been atoned in Christ. Mourning over sin also can include the sinful attitudes and actions in cultures throughout the world and around us. We mourn sins' destructive effects on multitudes. Part of God's comfort in that arena lies in the assurance that in the end, His scales of justice will be balanced.

5:5. The next attitude is gentleness. The word translated **gentle** conveys the notion of being meek, humble, sensitive, considerate, and courteous. Gentleness puts the focus on others rather than self. Being gentle does not mean being a pushover. This inner attitude stems from a spiritually educated awareness of our own spiritual poverty. Scripture indicates Jesus' followers will reign with Him (2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 5:10). That promise will be fulfilled when He establishes His kingdom in the new heavens and earth. Ruling with Him implies our attitudes will parallel His. The blessing Jesus pronounced won't be centered in ownership but in serving Him (in ways not yet revealed).

5:6. The fourth attitude is a hunger and thirst for righteousness. This righteousness is not the righteousness of Christ through which God views us believers (justification). Rather this is the inner desire to make right choices, say right words, and do right actions, which is part of God's work to make us more like Christ. We who seek to follow Christ know we don't measure up to His standards, but we want to do so. As

## COMMENTARY

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we walk faithfully with Him over time, He instills in us more and more the purpose and the power to please Him (Phil. 2:13). Admittedly, though we grow in right living, in this life we will never be absolutely righteous. So we are called blessed as we long for righteousness in the sense that we have the sure hope that we will be filled with righteousness (Matt. 5:6). The process has begun, and our limited progress brings encouragement. That process won't be completed, however, until Christ's second coming (1 John 3:2).

**5:7.** While the first four Beatitudes focus on inward attitudes, the last four concern outward relationships. Being merciful involves forgiving, but it also includes a loving response to the miserable and helpless. As God's children we have received mercy, and this equips us to extend mercy to others. The merciful will be shown mercy. Showing mercy to others demonstrates we have received God's mercy.

**5:8.** Jesus then described as blessed those who are pure in heart. The Pharisees were scrupulous about performing washing rituals that made them ceremonially clean. Jesus stripped away their pretense, saying that they were as beautiful tombs on the outside but filled with impurities within (23:27). **Heart** indicates the core of our being—our thoughts, our feelings, our intentions, our values, our longings. The word **pure** includes sexual purity but much more. It describes those whose hearts are cleansed by Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Such hearts lead us away from acting with any kind of deceit, meanness, or selfish motives.

**Will see God** is future. We will see the Lord when He returns (1 John 3:2). This hope motivates us to act with pure hearts until then (v. 3). Now, however, we see Him with eyes of faith. When our hearts are clean, we see Him more and more clearly (meaning we better understand Him, His ways, His purposes).

**5:9.** Peacemakers are blessed, for they will be called sons of God. Sons of God is a way of saying "like father, like son." God is the supreme Peacemaker, making peace between sinners and Himself through Christ. He also leads redeemed sinners to help others be reconciled to God as well as to one another.

**5:10-12.** The final Beatitude seems paradoxical. Mixing persecution and blessing seems akin to mixing oil and water. Perhaps this is the reason Jesus added comments in verses 11-12. He shifted to the second person, you, apparently addressing His chosen disciples in particular. Notice first that the persecution is for righteousness, and in verse 11 Jesus defined that as **because of Me**. People who willfully reject Christ are prone to reject those who live for Christ. This can include insults, false accusations, slanderous gossip, and, in extreme cases, death.

In what sense are the persecuted Christians blessed? They are citizens of His kingdom. Jesus never encouraged His followers to hide their faith in Him when facing persecution, but rather to be glad and rejoice. He added that their heavenly reward would be great. He placed persecuted believers in the same category as God's persecuted prophets. Jesus wasn't giving us a list of qualities to strive for in order to be blessed. We are blessed because these qualities demonstrate that we are His followers.

### MATTHEW 5:13-16

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**5:13.** Jesus stressed believers' influence in the world by declaring, "You are the salt of the earth." Salt has several uses, but the most prominent are to preserve and to flavor.



