

“The Beginner’s Guide to the Kingdom of Heaven”
by Rev. John C. Tittle

Scripture: Matthew 5: 1-12 NRSVue

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. ² And he began to speak and taught them, saying: ³ “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. ⁵ “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. ⁶ “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. ⁷ “Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. ⁸ “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. ⁹ “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. ¹⁰ “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹ “Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Discussion Questions:

1. Many have said the Beatitudes are the most influential spiritual teaching ever given. Why do you think that is?
2. Which of the beatitudes jumps out at you the most?
3. Commentators say that the Beatitudes are at the very heart of Christianity and Jesus himself. Why do you think that is?
4. What do you think of author Kurt Vonnegut’s pointed and sarcastic question of Christians: You want the 10 Commandments posted in public places, *but why don’t you want the 8 Beatitudes plastered everywhere?* How would you respond to him?
5. How would the American church be different if we took the Beatitudes seriously? How would Immanuel be different? How would you be different?
6. Do you think it’s possible for us to live out the Beatitudes? Why or why not? If so, how can we do it?
7. How are the Beatitudes different from the world’s way of operating?
8. In the original language of the NT (Greek), the word for "blessed" is ***makarios***, which can also be translated ***happy, flourishing, fortunate, praiseworthy, or blissful***. What is your preferred definition of these?
9. What do you think it means to be blessed?