

BEATITUDES

One day, Jesus and his followers climbed up on a hillside.

Jesus began teaching them more about God's kingdom. He said:

"The humble, gentle, poor, and merciful are blessed by God.

The kingdom belongs to you who realize your need for God.

Those who are grieving and in pain are blessed by God. God will bring you comfort.

Those who have a pure heart are blessed by God. You see God more clearly.

Those who desire what is right and work for peace are blessed by God. You are truly God's family.

Those who are mocked, hated, and excluded for following me and doing what is right are blessed by God. Be glad and know that God is with you.

You are God's brilliant light—like a city on a hill that shines brightly for everyone to see.

No one lights a lamp and then hides it under a basket. A lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. Just like this, let your life shine for all to see, so everyone will see God reflected in you."

Jesus continued teaching the crowds about God's ways. He said:

"It might sound like I've come to get rid of the laws given to Moses and the writings of the prophets. No; I've come to fulfill the purpose of these laws—to show you how to live in God's ways as true children of God. If you want to be great in God's kingdom, follow God's laws—live generously and purely, and love your enemies without exception."

People were amazed by Jesus' teaching. They saw that his words were backed by his actions, unlike many of the teachers in that day.

PARABLES

Jesus often taught through short stories, called parables, that used word-pictures from everyday life. Many of the parables explained what God's kingdom was like.

Jesus said, *"The kingdom of God is like a tiny seed that's planted in a field. This seed may be small at first, but it grows into a large tree where birds can rest and find a home."*

Jesus told dozens of stories like this to the crowds. He said the kingdom is . . .

"Like a hidden treasure buried in a field—worth diligently searching for.

Like a yeast spread in a ball of dough—just a little will raise a lot.

Like a precious pearl—worth trading everything for.

Like a great feast—where all of the poor and the outcasts are welcomed."

People were in awe of Jesus' teaching and wisdom. Some understood his parables.

But for others, God's kingdom remained a mystery.

At one point, a religious leader asked Jesus, *"So, when is this 'kingdom' you're teaching about going to come?"*

Jesus replied, *"The kingdom of God isn't something out there to look for; the kingdom of God grows within us."*

Later, some of Jesus's disciples asked, *"Which one of us will be given the most important role in your new kingdom?"*

Instead of answering right away, Jesus asked one of the children in the crowd to come over to him.

As the child came close, Jesus said to his disciples, *"If you want to be great in God's kingdom, humble yourself and become like this child."*

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

One day, an expert in Jewish law tried to test Jesus by asking him, *"What must I do to gain eternal life?"*

Jesus replied, *"What does the law of Moses say? How do you read it?"*

The expert answered, *"Love God with all of your heart, soul, strength, and mind. And love your neighbor like you would love yourself."*

"Exactly. Do this and you will find life!" Jesus said.

The expert pressed Jesus further, asking, *"And who is my neighbor?"*

So Jesus replied, as he did many times, with a story:

"A Jewish man was traveling down a narrow, dangerous road and was attacked by thieves. They took his clothes, beat him, and left him to die on the side of the road."

Before long, a Jewish priest came down the same road. When he saw the man there dying, he crossed over to the other side of the road and continued on his way."

(Jewish laws required those who came in contact with a dead body to go through a lengthy purification ritual.)

"Then, a Levite came by and looked at the man lying there."

(The Levites were Jews who helped take care of the Temple.)

"The Levite also crossed to the other side of the road and walked by."

Finally, a Samaritan man came along . . ."

(For centuries, there was deep ethnic hostility between Samaritans and Jews. Though they had common ancestors and religion, they detested one another.)

"When the Samaritan saw the man, he was filled with compassion for him. So he bandaged up his wounds and took him to an inn, where he took care of him."

The next morning, the Samaritan gave the innkeeper extra money and said, 'Please take care of the man I brought here. If it costs more than what I've given you, I will return and pay whatever is owed.'

After telling the story, Jesus turned and asked the expert in the law, *"Which of these three would you say was a 'neighbor' to the man who was attacked?"*

The expert replied, *"I suppose the one who showed the man mercy."*

"Yes," Jesus said. "Now go and do the same thing."