

The Gospel of Matthew

Session 1: Overview with Pastor Lose

Scripture: Matthew 5:1-12, The Beatitudes (also recommended reading the whole of Chapter 5)

The fifth chapter of Matthew shares the beginning of Jesus Sermon on the Mount, which runs for the next two chapters as well. Jesus' Sermon, additionally, is the beginning of Matthew's division of Jesus' teaching into five main parts, corresponding with the Torah, often called the five books of the law or the five books of Moses. In this section, Matthew's Jesus offers a distinctively Christian ethic, directing our attention to the "least of these" (a phrase from Jesus' final parable in Mt. 25).

As you read the Beatitudes and the beginning Jesus' most famous sermon, consider these questions:

- 1) When you slow down to notice who Jesus calls blessed – which means, most literally, those whom God favors – what surprises you about this list? What might have surprised Jews, Romans, and Christians reading it in Matthew's day, and what might surprise people who don't necessarily go to church today?
- 2) If these are the people whom Jesus calls blessed, how does that change how we look at them? What does it mean with regard to how we treat people who fall into these groups and others like them? What does it tell us about God's regard for us and God's expectations of us?
- 3) If you were re-writing Matthew's Gospel today, and were asked to expand on the list of those Jesus calls blessed, what kinds of people and conditions would you add to the beatitudes? Why? How do your choices reflect your understanding of who shares God's favor?

The Beatitudes

5 When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. ² Then 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.