“BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT”

Matthew 5:1–16

Key Verse: 5:3

1. From where had the crowds come, and what kind of people were they? (4:23–25) How did Jesus integrate his disciples into his ministry? (5:1,2) Skim the beatitudes in verses 3–10. What does it mean to be “blessed”? According to these verses, in what basic ways are God’s people different from the people of the world?
2. Read verse 3. What does it mean to be “poor in spirit”? (Isa57:15) How does it change the way we relate to God? To others? What is God’s reward for them? (3b; Jas2:5) What does it mean to “mourn”? (4; 2Co7:9,10) To be “meek”? (5; Eph4:2) How did Jesus exemplify meekness? (11:29) How can we be meek like him? (Php2:1–5)
3. What does it mean to hunger and thirst for righteousness, both personally and in society? (6a; Ps63:1; 119:136) How does God bless those who have this kind of hunger and thirst, and what does this mean? (6b; Isa32:17)
4. What does it mean to be merciful? (7a) Why is it so important (23:23b), and why is mercy shown only to the merciful? (7b; 6:14,15; Jas2:13) What does it mean to be “pure in heart,” and how does God bless such people? (8; Ps24:3,4) How are peacemakers like God himself? (9; 2Co13:11)
5. Why would people who embody the qualities in verses 3–9 be persecuted? (10a) (What does this tell us about the world we live in?) What is their reward? (10b; 3b) Note how he addresses people more personally (“you”) in verses 11–16. What did he predict would happen to his followers? (11) How should we respond to such treatment, and why? (12)
6. When we try to live by the beatitudes, even suffering persecution, what do we become in the world? (13–16) What does it mean to be “salt” and “light”? How might Christians lose their saltiness and hide their light? How can we not succumb to these tendencies?