



## WEEKLY STUDY July 9-1, 2023

(Use this guide to individually or with a group dive deeper into this week's sermon.)

### Beatitudes – Week Two

**Our sermon series for July is: Beatitudes: A Series on the Blessed Practices of Jesus. These statements in Matthew and Luke call us to remember who is blessed in the kingdom of God. Pastor Sam has invited all the read in entire sermon on the mount in Matthew, chapters 6 and 7. We are to consider how the nine statements of blessing reveal to us the characteristics of kingdom people.**

### Our scripture this week is:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” **Matthew 5:3**

“Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God” **Luke 6:20**

- 1) It's always interesting when we have similar – but different takes on the words of Jesus in different Gospels. Pastor Sam reminded us on Sunday that Luke's beatitudes speak to real socioeconomic conditions people were facing and declare God's commitment to the poor and oppressed. Matthews beatitudes speak to spiritual conditions or attitudes. To get a feel for these differences, read Matthew 5:1-11, then read Luke 6:20-26

**Question: What differences do you notice? Which version do you prefer? Why?**

- 2) In looking at Luke's Gospel, Pastor Sam reminded us that in chapter 4, Jesus had read from the scroll, the reading from Isaiah 61 saying, “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor...”  
**Question: Consider what would be Good News to those who are literally poor in our community. What do you feel we need to not only proclaim, but do for those who are poor in order to fulfill the message of Jesus?**

- 3) Pastor Sam then led us in looking at Matthew's version where Jesus says, ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit.’ She reminded us that we our faith is about social holiness (addressing issues of the literal poor and other social ills) and personal holiness (enriching our spiritual lives in prayer, study, and habits that help nurture our faith). She used the analogy of going to the doctor and being asked to tell our doctor our pain level on a

scale of 1 to 10. And Sam asked us to rank our spirit level at this moment from 1 (low in spirit) to 10 (filled with spirit).

**Question: At this particular moment in life, where would you rank your spirit level? Why?**

- 4) Sometimes different versions of scripture speak to us in a way that makes a concept more understandable. *The Message* can often do that for us with Eugene Peterson's use of contemporary English to rephrase something that sound somewhat remote to today. Pastor Sam quoted this translation in her sermon: 'You're blessed when you're at the end of your rope. With less of you there more of God and his rule.' For me, that's still hard because I like to be in control. But as Sam told about watching her 4-year-old Lewis being taken to surgery for his tonsils and her feelings at that moment, it took me back to when my son Ben was taken to have tubes inserted in his ears when he was eighteen months old. I knew he needed those tubes. I knew he had good care. But I couldn't be with him and all I could do was trust. And to be honest, that's not my strength. But it was the only answer. As Sam said to us, "...you are blessed when you realize God is there to hold you and care for you when the task is too heavy or the job is beyond your scope or power." For me, the struggle is real to realize when I have to "let go and let God."

**Question: Did you think of times when you have had to do a trust fall into God's arms? What was happening? How did you feel? How do you strengthen that ability to trust that God is there for you?**

**Prayer:**

*"Gracious God, as we are reminded by the scripture, your blessings come to us in all of the ways of life. And just as some days are days of joy, some are days of mourning and sadness. Some days we feel filled with your spirit, and easily lift our voices in praise. And some days, we feel so low, all we can do is whisper, "I need your strength God right now." Help us to trust that you are there for us. Help us to accept that we are blessed. Help us open our eyes to the presence of your kingdom on earth and join in seeking to live as your kingdom people each day. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen"*

**Weekly Challenge: This week once again read chapters 5-7 in the Gospel of Matthew. Add to that reading, Luke 6:17-49. And last week I suggested prayers for our VBS but I was a week off. Trusting that those prayers sustained those preparing and this week praying for the 100 children attending Vacation Bible School. May our church be a**

*(Weekly study guide prepared by Rev. MaryJane Pierce Norton)*