

Matthew: The Upside Down Kingdom

Matthew 5:1-16 | The Beatitudes

→ *Survey: Let's understand the background and context of the passage.*

#Blessed. You see it on those Instagram posts when 'all is well' - usually it's a photo of someone on vacation, or displaying their academic & athletic achievements, or even boasting a new relationship. But we must ask ourselves - is the purpose of the Christian life to seek after those blessings? Too often we equate being blessed with divine favor, as if God's satisfaction with us is directly dependent on the 'blessings' that we receive. Which often leads us to believe that if we don't have, then God must be disappointed with us. But is that really what it means to be blessed?

The Bible tells us that those who follow Jesus are blessed - so what exactly does that mean? What are the qualities and characteristics of those who are blessed? Tonight we'll learn what it means to be blessed from Jesus as we look at the Beatitudes, the first part of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus invites those who hear his words to be Kingdom people. Yet, in order to be Kingdom people, we must know the King. And King Jesus demonstrates for us what it means to be light & love as he laid down his life, taking on the sins of the world, yet rising again victorious!

Before we look at tonight's passage, let's quickly learn a bit more about the book of Matthew. It was written by a former tax collector and one of Jesus' twelve disciples. The book is meant to show that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah promised in the Old Testament. Since Matthew is writing primarily to a Jewish audience, he emphasizes Jesus' connection to Abraham and David, his fulfillment of prophecy, and his role as the true King of Israel. In the first 4 chapters, Matthew establishes Jesus' identity through his genealogy and miraculous birth, shows how John the Baptist prepares God's people for repentance, and highlights God's public affirmation of Jesus at his baptism. In Chapter 4, we see Jesus' victory over temptation and the beginning of his public ministry as he calls his first disciples. By his teachings & miracles, Jesus demonstrates what the kingdom of heaven should look like, and invites readers to recognize him as the true Messiah and respond by following him. So ask yourself - will you follow Jesus and be a Kingdom builder?

Read: Matthew 5:1-16 (NIV)

→ *Observe: Let's take a close look at what the text is saying.*

1. Paint the picture from the start of Matthew 5 - who, where, what (v. 1-2)?
2. As Jesus talks to the crowds starting in verse 3, what word do you see repeated?
3. Let's look at each blessing closely - we need 8 groups to look at verses 3-10.
Who is it that is blessed? And what is their reward?
4. Let's look at verse 11 together. When else are people blessed (v. 11)? What should be a Christian's response to this (v. 12)? Why?
5. What metaphor does Jesus use next (v. 13)? What happens to bad salt?
6. What last metaphor does Jesus use (v. 14)? What is the purpose of light (v.15)? What are followers of Jesus supposed to do with their light (v. 16)? Why?

→ *Interpret: Let's seek to understand the meaning of this text in its original context.*

1. Let's talk about being blessed. How would the world define being blessed? *Split back into your group & look at your verse* - what do you notice about the attributes of those who are blessed? How do they compare/contrast to how the world would define blessing? Why might Kingdom people display these attributes?
2. What is the purpose of salt? What does Jesus mean in verse 13 that his followers are the salt of the earth? What does he want those listening to him to hear (v. 13)?
3. What does Jesus want those listening to him to hear about being the 'light of the world' (v. 14)?

→ *Apply: Let's explore where the text intersects with our lives and our world.*

1. Which beatitude (v. 3-12) do you exhibit most naturally? Which one do you want to grow in? Why? How can that beatitude be your attitude this week? How does reading verses 3-12 affect how you see complications and difficulties in your life?
2. Where are some of the places you have an impact at SRU? What would it look like for you to be salt & light in those places? Practically, what might that look like this week? How can the beatitudes help you think through living faithfully in those spaces?
3. Why would Jesus say it is a blessing to be insulted & persecuted (v. 10-12)? Is all persecution good? Or would you say there are right and wrong reasons for which a Christian might be persecuted? What key distinctions are made in verse 10 & 11 about why we should be persecuted? How does this help you when you think of being salt and light to campus? If you're honest with yourself, are you willing to be persecuted for the Kingdom? Why or why not?