

20250202-Sermon-Beatitudes and Sheep and Goats
Prepared for ADK Alliance Church
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Reading the Beatitudes is like reading a refreshing poem.

What happens when we read those words? Certainly, people different people react differently when they read those verses, and we can react differently each time we read it. I think that happens to me: each time I read passages from the Bible I hear differently and I respond differently. God's Word in the Bible is timeless, right? What God tells us in scripture is what we need to hear then and there, right?

Let's go back to reading the Beatitudes.

For me they paint a picture ... a vivid picture of life in God's Kingdom, where true blessing is found not in worldly success but in the baring of our hearts before God.

Each statement begins with “blessed,” a not-so-subtle invitation to pay close attention and consider what Jesus is revealing about the values of His Kingdom. These blessings challenge common assumptions, lifting up the poor in spirit, the meek, the merciful, and those who hunger for righteousness as the ones who are truly favored by God. They call us to self-reflection, urging us to ask whether our lives align with these Kingdom values. Do we seek humility over power? Mercy over judgment? Peace over division?

Jesus' words are not just comforting but compelling—they invite us to step deeper into His way of living, shaping our character in a way that reflects God's heart to the world. The Beatitudes show us how things should be, urging us to both embody and advance God's Kingdom in our daily lives.

Here's the approach that I'm taking: We don't just read the Beatitudes and stop...

[Read this verbatim] Matthew 5:1–12, the Beatitudes, and Matthew 25:31–46, the Parable of the Sheep and Goats, provide clear guidance on what it means to live as followers of Christ. Christians from every denomination are united by

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a common call: to follow Jesus faithfully, grow in His likeness, and share His love with the world. These passages offer a roadmap for aligning our lives with God's Kingdom.

The Beatitudes give us the “what” of Christian living.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.” – from the Beatitudes

The Beatitudes describe the attitudes and values that define a life rooted in God's will—humility, mercy, purity of heart, a hunger for righteousness, and peace-making. These qualities shape our character, helping us become more like Christ in our thoughts and intentions. ... and ultimately our actions.

The Parable of the Sheep and Goats provides the “how.”

“I was a stranger and you welcomed me.”

This parable shows us how to live out these values through practical actions—feeding the hungry, clothing the needy, caring for the sick, and visiting those in need. Together, these passages challenge us to both embody the heart of Christ and express that heart through service.

Here is what Jesus has told us about the character of the Kingdom of God in the Beatitudes

Let's go one by one and identify these “kingdom characteristics”:

- Blessed are the poor in spirit: Dependence on God's grace.
- Blessed are those who mourn: Compassion for the brokenness of the world.
- Blessed are the meek: Humility and gentleness.
- Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness: Pursuit of justice and godliness.
- Blessed are the merciful: Living out forgiveness and kindness.
- Blessed are the pure in heart: Sincerity and single-minded devotion to God.
- Blessed are the peacemakers: Bringing reconciliation in relationships and communities.

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- Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake: Endurance in faith and courage to uphold truth.

What is the Connection to the Parable of the sheep and goats?

You've probably heard someone say this at one time or another: "when you volunteer at [list places like food bank, soup kitchen, thrift store] ...you will see the face of Jesus in those people you serve."

The Beatitudes prepare us to recognize Christ in others and serve them with humility and love.

Here is how the parable of the sheep and goats calls us to action.

[as well go through these, reflect on them as calls to action]

- First and Above All - The Hidden Presence of Christ – remember that Jesus is present in the people we often overlook, reminding us that serving others is serving Him.
- When we See Jesus in Others: The sheep are commended for feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and visiting the sick and imprisoned.
- Warning to the Goats: Failure to act reflects a lack of alignment with Kingdom values.
- Faith Expressed Through Works: Faith manifests itself in love and action.
- The Call to Compassion – Jesus identifies with the least and teaches that genuine faith is marked by active care for the vulnerable.
- Judgment Based on Love in Action – The final judgment is not based on knowledge or status but on how we have lived out God's love through service.
- The Urgency of Obedience – The parable challenges us to act now, emphasizing that neglecting to help those in need has eternal consequences.

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- The Inseparability of Faith and Justice – True discipleship involves both personal faith and a commitment to justice, as shown in caring for those who suffer.

These two passages – the Beatitudes and the parable – are a framework for living a Christian life, AND they also guide us in spreading the Good News. By embodying the values of the Beatitudes and demonstrating love through action, we reflect Christ to the world. This witness, expressed in both word and deed, invites others to experience the hope and grace of the gospel. This framework is both a call to personal discipleship and a blueprint for sharing the good news – evangelism - with a world that longs for God’s love.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

We come before You with hearts humbled by Your Word and grateful for the calling You have placed upon us. Through the teachings of Jesus, You have shown us what it means to live as citizens of Your Kingdom—walking in humility, mercy, righteousness, and love. You have reminded us that true faith is not just what we believe but how we live, how we serve, and how we care for those in need.

Lord, open our eyes to see You in others, especially in those who are hurting, hungry, and forgotten. Give us hearts that long to act with compassion, hands that are ready to serve, and voices that boldly share the hope of the gospel. Help us to live out the Beatitudes and follow the example of the sheep in Your parable, faithfully responding to the needs around us as an act of love toward You.

May our lives reflect Your grace and truth, drawing others into Your presence. Strengthen us to be faithful disciples, living out Your will in both word and deed. And as we go forward, may we do all things for Your glory.

In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.