

*Matthew 5:13-16 NLT - 13 "You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it salty again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless. 14 "You are the light of the world--like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. 15 No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.*

In Jesus' day, salt was a preservative, used to protect food products. So being salt of the earth refers to the power we have to influence the corruption of the world around us.

*In a world of other kingdoms ruled by power, wealth, pleasure, beauty and intellect how does living in God's kingdom as described by the beatitudes influence corruption?*

We are also the light of the world and called to shine in such a way that God is praised.

*What makes the difference between doing good deeds that bring praise to ourselves and those which bring praise to the Father? Where do you have an opportunity to shine for others to see?*

## Wrap Up

Jesus ushered in the Kingdom of Heaven where He reigns. It is nothing like the upside-down kingdom we live in. This is a Kingdom where God blesses the outcast, the depressed, the unpopular and the broken. It is both now and it is future, being advanced against the kingdoms of this world. And we are the evidence of God's Kingdom when we choose to live as salt and light in this world.

## Memory Verse

*"God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs..."* Matthew 5:3 NLT

## PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: \_\_\_\_\_

Pray for your group members' needs. \_\_\_\_\_

*Challenge- Have you chosen to be part of the Kingdom of God and live differently from the world. Are there areas you may be compromising to "fit into" the world around you?*

## "Beatitudes" Upside Down Kingdom- #2

### INTRODUCTION

As news of Jesus and His new kingdom spread, the number of Jesus' disciples grew. In Matthew chapter 5 He took an opportunity to teach them about the Kingdom of Heaven in what has been called the sermon on the mount. As this passage begins, we find eight blessings which were pretty unexpected. They are known as the Beatitudes and they are Jesus' invitation for us to understand how different His Kingdom is from the upside-down kingdom of this world we live in.

### Ice Breaker (Optional—8 min)

Complete this sentence, "Happiness is \_\_\_\_\_."

### STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)

#### 1. What the Kingdom has come to do

*Matthew 5:3-6 NLT - 3 "God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. 4 God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted. 5 God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth. 6 God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will be satisfied.*

You have probably heard this passage quoted from the King James version- "Blessed are..." Each verse in the Beatitudes begins with the word *makarios* which can be translated blessed, happy or fortunate. On the surface these statements certainly seem contradictory. Is Jesus saying poor people are happy, or that we should mourn to be blessed?

This is not actually a list of virtues. Jesus is not telling his disciples they should strive to be poor, humble, or any of the conditions listed here.

*What are the reasons listed "for" blessedness at the end of each verse? How does each of these counter the character trait with which*

*it is paired? For example, how does having the Kingdom of Heaven counter our spiritual poverty?*

The beatitudes declare the grace of God, and the first four specifically declare how the kingdom has come to give us what we need and long for. They are not virtues we must attempt to attain, but rather the display of God's grace offered before we deserve it and because Jesus has come near.

*Which of these four blessings are in the present tense (is) and which in the future tense (will be)? What do you think that tells us about how God's kingdom is being advanced; has it begun, is it complete? What did Jesus say about resistance to the kingdom in Matthew 11:12?*

*Matthew 11:12 NLT - 12 And from the time John the Baptist began preaching until now, the Kingdom of Heaven has been forcefully advancing, and violent people are attacking it.*

The Kingdom of God continues to spread and overcome the darkness of this world.

*Do you recall finding yourself in any of these conditions at some point in your life; poor in spirit, mourning, humbled, hungering and thirsting for justice?*

*If so, how did God and His Kingdom address your need?*

## **2. Our Participation in the Kingdom**

The next four beatitudes shift our perspective from what the Kingdom of Heaven does for us, to how we can participate in the Kingdom.

*Matthew 5:7-10 NLT - 7 God blesses those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy. 8 God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God. 9 God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God. 10 God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.*

In these four scenarios the blessing follows our participation in God's kingdom by reflecting His character.

*In these verses what are the four qualities of those God blesses?*

The verses below demonstrate that these are qualities of God being emulated in His followers.

*Ephesians 2:4 NLT - 4 But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much,*

*1 John 3:3 NLT - 3 And all who have this eager expectation will keep themselves pure, just as he is pure.*

*2 Corinthians 13:11 NLT - 11 Dear brothers and sisters, I close my letter with these last words: Be joyful. Grow to maturity. Encourage each other. Live in harmony and peace. Then the God of love and peace will be with you.*

*John 15:20 NLT - 20 Do you remember what I told you? 'A slave is not greater than the master.' Since they persecuted me, naturally they will persecute you. And if they had listened to me, they would listen to you.*

If we were to choose, we would probably prefer to be merciful rather than persecuted. However, Jesus specifically addresses those who are persecuted for their faith.

*Matthew 5:11-12 NLT - 11 "God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers. 12 Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted in the same way.*

*Is our blessing for persecution in the present or future? Are there ways that you have personally experienced or observed believers persecuted for their faith?*

## **3. Salt and Light**

The Gospel is the Good News of Jesus and the Kingdom of Heaven come to earth. As citizens of the Kingdom we display the evidence of the reality that God's Kingdom is at hand in the midst of many other kingdoms. The sermon on the mount gives us a picture of what living in God's Kingdom looks like, and it is very different from the way the world lives.