Lessons From Our Lord

Jesus Teaches with the Beatitudes and Parables
What are the Beatitudes?

From the time we are born, we begin to learn. We learn from our parents, our grandparents, our friends and families, even our brothers and sisters. As we get older, we go to school and learn from our teachers. We have many to learn from and many teachers.

We also had many teachers to teach us about God and the Kingdom of Heaven. Many men from the Old Testament brought us messages from and about God that helps us work toward reaching Heaven. Before Jesus was born, Moses was considered “The Greatest Teacher”. He was such a special helper for God that God delivered the ‘Ten Commandments’ to him. These Commandments are the rules God gave us to live good, Godly lives. The most important teacher we ever had was Jesus.

Jesus spoke to the people in a gentle and kind way so that they would understand. His words taught them how to reach the Kingdom of Heaven. Through Jesus’ teachings He gave us all a way to live with Him eternally. Jesus taught through stories and examples. He began His teachings with the Beatitudes. Simple words to help the world understand.

In the Beatitudes, God gives us an idea of what we need to do to be good people and to earn the privilege of living in the Kingdom of Heaven for eternity.
“Blessed are the Meek, For they shall inherit the earth.”

Matt. 5: 3

Memory Verse:

“Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony.”

Often, many of us seek to be wealthy, powerful and important. Sometimes, these people are bullies and push weaker people around. These people brag and make fun of those who are not as strong or important as they think they are. What they don’t realize is that if they brag about themselves, God won’t have to brag about them. Those who need to be important all the time here on earth don’t realize that they are trying to earn their reward from God now. Those who work hard and are patient and good don’t always get the credit they deserve here on earth. The important thing to remember is that those who are patient and suffer will be rewarded in Heaven for all of eternity. These same people place all their hope in God and wait for His goodness. God repays their patience in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Jesus taught the people about this patience in the parable of “The Rich Man and Lazarus”. Jesus told of the rich man who wore the latest fashion in clothes, ate rich meals and lived in a luxurious house. He had all of the treasures of the earth and wanted for nothing.

There was also a very poor man named Lazarus, who had sores all over his body. He would come to the door of the rich man’s house and beg for food. He would eat whatever was thrown away by the rich man. The rich man’s dogs would lick his wounds. Soon, the poor, suffering man dies and was carried the embrace of Abraham by the angels. Abraham is he who will greet us in heaven. Lazarus was taken into Abraham’s embrace and treated kindly. He feasted at Abraham’s table and was grateful for his hospitality.

When the rich man died, he was buried and found himself suffering and in great pain. He no longer had the greatness he enjoyed on earth. He would suffer for eternity for his selfish ways and unkind heart. He looked up and saw Abraham, with Lazarus at his
side. He called out, “Father Abraham, please take pity on me and send Lazarus to dip his fingers into some water and cool off my tongue. I am in great pain in this fire?” Abraham told the rich man that this could not happen. The pit between where the rich man was and where Lazarus resided was too wide. Lazarus would not be able to reach the rich man. Abraham said, “Remember, my son, during your lifetime on earth, you lived like a king. You wanted for nothing. You were given all the good things on earth and Lazarus was given all the bad things. He endured much suffering. Now, he is enjoying all the good things heaven can offer, while you are suffering.

The rich man then begged Abraham to send Lazarus to his father’s house to warn his five brothers. “Let him warn them, so at least they will not come to this place of pain”. Abraham told the rich man, “Your brothers have Moses and the prophets to listen to. They should listen to the wise words of these men of God”. The rich man said, “That is not enough. They need to have someone rise from death and go to them so that they turn from sinning.” But Abraham said to the rich man, “If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, then they will not listen even if someone were to rise from death”.

This parable lets us know many things. The most important of those things is that those who suffer the pains of life on earth, but suffer in patience with hope in God, will inherit all the good things that Heaven has to offer.

*Teachers, the “Parable of the Laborers” is also a good story to share with the children.*
“Blessed are the Meek, For they shall inherit the earth.”

Matt. 5: 3

Questions:

1. How did the rich man live when he was on the earth?

2. How did Lazarus live?

3. After each man died, what happened to him?

4. What did the rich man want Lazarus to do?

5. Why could the rich man’s request never happen?

6. How did Abraham respond to the request of the rich man?
Blessed are the Merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.

Matt. 5: 5

Memory Verse:
“Inasmuch as ye have done this for the least of my people, ye have done this for me.”

Jesus taught the Beatitudes to the people to help them understand their responsibilities to each other and how they could attain the Kingdom of Heaven. Just as we have rules and suggestions in our homes and school, Jesus had taught the people the rules and gave them suggestions. Because many were uneducated and needed help knowing the right thing to do, Jesus talked to them in stories. These stories were called parables. They help give examples of just what Jesus meant when He taught.

Jesus especially loved to teach the children because they were willing to learn from Jesus and not ignore His words. When Jesus taught about God and the Kingdom of Heaven, many listened and enjoyed his stories. Many would ask Jesus questions and He would answer their questions with a story. These stories were example of the teachings of Jesus and taught us the right things to do.

Jesus taught about God’s blessings on us and He created eight ways to happiness with God. These are called the Beatitudes and they describe the blessings sent to us by God. There are eight Beatitudes which describe the types of people Jesus called blessed. Jesus taught us the Beatitudes so that we could be like these people.

The fifth Beatitude tells us that “Blessed are the merciful for they shall inherit mercy”. In this beatitude Jesus explains that when we are tender and kind with others, then we shall receive tenderness and kindness in return. When we are kind to others, or help others or are considerate of others, then we are showing the gift of mercy that God has given us. When we show mercy for others, then God blesses us with His mercy.

In the “Parable of the Sheep and the Goats”, Jesus taught us to care for one another. He told us of the time to come when we shall receive our final judgment. We will be separated on either side of God. There will be the side for the sheep and the side for the goats. The sheep shall be on His right and the goats on the left. To the sheep on the right
God will say, “You are the righteous, come into the Kingdom of Heaven and live forever.”

God will tell the sheep, “You saw me hungry and you gave me something to eat; you saw me thirsty and you gave me something to drink; I was a stranger, but you welcomed me into your house; I had no clothing and you gave me your clothes to wear; you saw me sick and you took good care of me; and when I was in prison, you came and visited me. The righteous will look at God and they will say: “When did we see you hungry, God, and gave you something to eat; or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we welcome you as a stranger into our house, or give You our clothes? when were you in prison and we came and visited you?” At this time, God will say to the righteous, “When you did this for one of my people, you did this for Me!”

In this way, God is thanking the people who helped others without asking for praise or credit or anything in return. These people were good and kind to others because this is what God expects of us. They did these things without question because it is the right thing to do. Because God is in all of us and we are His creations, whenever we help those less fortunate that ourselves, then God feels we’ve been good to Him.

After God speaks to the sheep on His right, He will turn to those on His left and He will say: “Go away from Me, for you are not welcome in the Kingdom of Heaven! There is another place prepared for you with the Devil. For I was hungry and you didn’t give me food to eat. I was thirsty and you didn’t give me anything to drink. I was a stranger and you didn’t welcome Me into your own home. I had no clothes and you refused to give me clothes to cover myself. I was sick and you didn’t help take care of Me. I was in prison and you didn’t come to visit Me”! Then the goats will look at God and beg: When did we see You hungry or thirsty, Lord and did not give You food or drink? When did we not welcome You into our home as a stranger, or clothe You with our clothes? When were You sick and we did not help take care of You or visit You in prison?” At this time God will tell them: “When you didn’t help one of my people and your neighbor, you did not help Me!"

This is the way we will be judged. God is always looking to see if we are merciful to one another. Whenever we do something to help someone, without asking for credit, then God feels that we are doing this for Him.
Blessed are the Merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

Matt. 5: 5

Questions:

1. When Jesus spoke of the sheep and the goats, who was He referring to?

2. What deeds were the sheep and the goats judged for?

3. When we act good and merciful toward one another, whom do we serve?

4. What will be our reward for being merciful toward one another?
“Blessed are the pure of heart, For they shall see God.”

Matt. 5: 6

Memory Verse:

“I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.”

This Beatitude tells us of those people who God has blessed and given them pure hearts. These are people who love others and see only the good things that people do and overlook the mean things that people do. Jesus is the most blessed of all people with a pure heart, for He loved us even though we do not always follow His rules. He loves us with all His heart. Even on the cross, when He was crucified, He asked His Father to forgive us. He only thought of us and not of Himself. This is true love. In this Beatitude, we see that those who love with a clean heart are very lucky because they see beauty in everything around them and they are able to see God and His goodness in everything around them. They refuse to see or acknowledge the ugliness and evil around them. These people are truly blessed for they are able to see God. They know that God deals with us fairly and truthfully, always. Jesus taught us parables to teach us to love one another in this same way.

One of the parables that teaches us about the pureness of heart is the parable of the Good Shepherd. Jesus lived in a time when there were many shepherds who tended their flock of sheep. The shepherd was very caring of every one of his sheep and made sure that nothing happened to them. If a sheep wandered off, the shepherd would guide it back to the flock so no harm would come to it. If the sheep wandered toward danger, the shepherd made sure that nothing would hurt it. If a sheep became lost, then the shepherd looked for it until it was found. In this way, the shepherd knew that all in his care were safe. The shepherd made sure that his flock went to the best land to graze and feed on the sweet grass. The shepherd made sure that his flock was protected from the heat and poor weather. The shepherd cared for all of his flock, not only the most beautiful or friendliest. He most especially looked out for the sheep in the flock that the others had nothing to do with. The shepherd was careful that no thief came in the night to steal his precious sheep. He was a very loving, careful and thoughtful guardian. He saw only the good in the flock he
tended and loved all in his care. When the shepherd looked at his flock, he saw all the good that God had created and nothing evil. The flock in turn, recognized the good in the shepherd who cared for them and loved him for his goodness and pureness of heart.

Jesus shared this message with His followers to help them understand that this is the way our Heavenly Father loves and cares for us. Jesus is our good shepherd. He looks at us and sees only what God has created and not all the evil that man can be and all the bad things that man can do. Jesus protects us from harm and makes sure that we are not harmed by evil. Jesus guides us to goodness with His example. He takes care of us when we are sick in spirit. He listens to our prayers and answers them in their correct time. When we become ‘lost’ from the goodness of God, Jesus waits for us with patience to return to His flock. When we do return, Jesus welcomes us back as He did the ‘Prodigal Son’.

Jesus loves us all, no matter if we’re tall or short, thin or fat, young or old, and He sees us all as beautiful, no matter what we look like. Jesus looks into our hearts. to find the true person. He can see God’s work within us. Jesus especially loves the children, for they are pure in their hearts. Jesus said “Let the children come unto Me and do not stop them, because the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these”. He knows that children see God clearly and that their hearts are pure. Jesus taught that if we could always see the world through the eyes of a child then our hearts would always see only the good things that God has given us and not the evil things that exist in the world.

Our shepherd gives us so very much. All He asks in return is that we love one another and are good to one another. If we do this than God will be waiting for us in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Blessed are the pure of heart, For they shall see God.”
Matt. 5: 6

Questions:

1. How were we able to tell that the man in our parable was a ‘good shepherd’?
   List four ways.

2. What sacrifices will a ‘good shepherd’ make for his sheep?

3. Why was the shepherd so good to his sheep?

4. How did Jesus show that He cared for His ‘sheep’?

5. Why did Jesus choose to care for us as His “flock”?
“Blessed are the Peacemakers, For they shall be called the children of God.”

Matt. 5: 7

Memory Verse:

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.”

In the Bible, Jesus tells many stories that explain to us how to be merciful to each other. These stories are called parables and these parables are lessons to help us earn eternal life in the Kingdom of Heaven.

One of the parables which show an example of being a peacemaker and loving our enemy is the parable of the Good Samaritan:

Have you ever had someone you really didn’t like and so you decide to have nothing at all to do with him? This happens with all of us, even though we know that Jesus has taught us to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. This is not always easy. Often, this is a rule we do not follow. However, if the Samaritan had acted in this way, a man would have lost his life.

Once, a man was traveling alone when a gang of men beat him up, robbed him and left him to suffer all by himself. They left him in the road, all alone. The man lay there on the ground and was in a great deal of pain. He was barely able to keep his eyes open and he prayed to God to help him. Soon, he looked down the road and saw a priest who was from his own faith. He raised himself up and tried to call out to the priest. The priest saw the injured man from afar, but looked at him fearfully and rushed off, without stopping to help the man. The man could not believe the priest totally ignored his pleas for help. He was shocked that the priest had not come over immediately to help him. Again, the man was all alone. Again he prayed to God and asked for help.

The man was growing weaker and he could tell he would not last much longer out on the road, so badly bruised and beaten. As he lay there suffering, he looked down the
road and noticed a Levite neighbor coming toward him. He waved his arm, as best as he could. The Levite saw him, but did not come to help him. Instead, he crossed the road to walk on the other side. The Levite would not look at the man. He hurried on his way, not even looking back or giving the injured man a second thought. He was not a good neighbor. He and the priest did not act with mercy toward the man who lay dying from his wounds, in the road. The man wept and thought he would surely die out on the road all alone.

The man started to lose consciousness and could no longer keep his eyes open. His wounds caused him such pain, that he prayed desperately to God. He thought maybe God was not listening to his prayers. He closed his eyes to take away his suffering.

The injured man lay in the road. He had given up expecting help. Suddenly, he felt gentle hands wiping his hot face with cooling water. Then he felt those strong and gentle hands checking his arms and legs, searching for broken bones. The man was sure the priest or his neighbor, the Levite had turned back to help him. He very carefully opened his sun-blistered eyes to see who was offering him such kindness. He was shocked and very surprised to see who his rescuer was. It wasn’t the priest or the Levite. Instead he recognized the man as an enemy. He was from another tribe. He was a Samaritan! Samaritans and Levites were not friendly to one another, they stayed away from one another. The man was not sure how to act, or what to do or say. The man is a Jew and he has been taught, from a small child to have nothing to do with a Samaritan. Why would this man stop to help him? Suddenly, the man forgets all the bad things he has been taught about Samaritans and takes the Samaritan’s hand in his. He cries as he thanks him for stopping to help him, when his own neighbors had not cared enough about him to stop. The Samaritan takes his hand and calls him “Neighbor”. The Jewish man calls his new friend “Brother”. The two men embraced as friends and both realized what God expected of them.

This is unselfish caring and tenderness. It is very easy to help those we like, it is almost impossible to help those who are supposed to be our enemies. Jesus teaches us that we are all neighbors and that ‘we are to love our neighbors as we love ourselves’. The Samaritan did just as God wished. He was a better neighbor than the man’s friends.
God has created all of us. He tries to show us that we are all children of God and He wants us to care for each other. God expects us to love one another as He loves us. While this is a difficult task, we should all try to follow this Beatitude. We need to be tender and kind to each other because when we are merciful to others, then God will be merciful to us.

*Teachers, also remember the wonderful parable from Matthew 25: 31-46. It is also an excellent example of mercy.*
‘Blessed are the Peacemakers, For they shall be called the children of God.”

Matt. 5: 7

Questions:

1. Why did the man expect his priest and neighbor to help him?

2. Why do you think the priest and Levite didn’t help their neighbor?

3. Why was the Jew so surprised when the Samaritan helped him? Why did the Samaritan help him?

4. Who is our neighbor and how does this parable fit in our lives today?
Bibliography


