

Dear fellow travelers through this journey of “Fixing Our Eyes on Jesus,”

I am so glad to have you join me in this study of some of Jesus’ core teachings. This week we begin by reading the Beatitudes. In Matthew, they are from the Sermon on the Mount. In Luke, the Sermon on the Plain. Since this first week has readings that are short, I suggest you read these two versions on different days. Perhaps Matthew for two days, skip a day, then read Luke for two days. Try to hear these words separately from one another, do not try to merge them together. Let them speak on their own.

Let me say that I am fairly certain that Jesus would have taught these ideas on numerous occasions, and I am fairly certain that there would be some variance in his choice of words from presentation to presentation. That should not be troubling to us. It actually reinforces the understanding that Jesus met people where they were and spoke to them the words that would open for them a Kingdom kind of life.

As you read Matthew, remember that Matthew is writing directly to Jewish followers of Jesus.

How might that shape the words we hear Jesus use in conveying these truths?

As you read Luke, remember that Luke is writing as a Gentile from a Gentile perspective To Gentiles.

How might this shape the words we hear Jesus use in conveying these truths?

As you read, use the questions that follow to assist in your reflection.

Matthew 5:1-12

Who do you think made up the crowd on the mountainside that day? What kind of people came to hear Jesus?

As you read these verses, how do they fit with your experience of life? Do you feel “blessed” when poor in spirit? When grieving? When committed to being a gentle person in a power obsessed world? When feeling hungry and thirsty deep down to the soles of your feet?

Is Jesus describing the way the world looks at life and at people?

How might Jesus trying to turn our understanding of life upside down?

What kind of world is Jesus describing?

Luke 6:17-36

What is different from Matthew in regard to where Jesus is standing in Luke's telling of the "Blessings and Woes"?

What is Jesus doing in this reading prior to teaching the beatitudes?

Do these words seem more generalized or more personal than Matthew's version?

What impact does it have on you to hear the contrast of the "blessings" to the "woes"?

If Jesus loves all and calls all, how are we to hear the harsh words of woe?

### General Questions

In your reflections, what is the purpose of the Beatitudes?

Are they speaking of this world and this life or of the world to come?

How do these words of Jesus speak to you if you are in a place where:

You feel unworthy?

You feel heartbroken?

You feel downtrodden?

You are challenged by those in your life who need forgiveness from you?

You are struggling to stay committed to your faith?

You feel defeated by the ugliness and disappointment in the world?

You feel you are paying a price for your convictions?

Happy reading and may you find meaning in these reflections that will help you fix your eyes on Jesus today and every day.

Pastor Barry

