TRUE VINE MINISTRIES
BIBLE STUDY ALIVE Zoom Edition

Sermon on the Mount
Citizens of the Kingdom
Matthew 5:1-16

The Beatitudes, according to Matthew, mark the beginning of Jesus' public teaching ministry. They are the first things that Jesus emphasized as he proclaimed the Gospel of the Kingdom. Unlike Moses at Mount Sinai, Jesus began his Sermon on the Mount, not with commandments, but with promises of God's blessing on heart attitudes. He began focusing on the heart, doing heart surgery, wanting to reconstruct our hearts and bring our hearts in tune with His. The Beatitudes describe the foundational character qualities and family characteristics Jesus wanted to be at work in His people.

Sadly, it often seems that Christians today easily forget the foundational importance of the Beatitudes. Going by the evidence of public interactions between "Christians" on social media, blogs, public debates, publications, it's hard sometimes to see active evidence of the Beatitudes. But since these are the foundational teachings of Jesus, they are the heart attitudes that should govern, guide, and be evident in all our interactions. As citizens of the kingdom, we need to regularly give ourselves to meditation and application of the Beatitudes as the foundation for Christian living.

As citizens of the kingdom, we are called to positively impact the world, not isolate ourselves from it. In order to have a direct influence on others, we need both proximity and differentiation. We must be close to people, while also being different from them. This can prove to be a great challenge. Jesus uses two metaphors to highlight the dangers of losing proximity or differentiation. Losing our saltiness refers to not being different from the world. Hiding our light means we don’t allow people to get close to us. Therefore, we lose out on the chance to influence others for Christ.

Conclusion

In Jesus’ day, temptations would’ve been very prevalent for His followers. Persecution would come from the people at the top, as these leaders would feel threatened by Jesus’ countercultural teachings. Today, we are still tempted to “blend in” with the world, or to isolate ourselves from people who are different than us. We can seek so much comfort in the world that we ultimately lose our influence. This passage should motivate us to stretch out of our comfort zone and look for opportunities to do the same for others as we live up to our responsibilities of being Citizens of the Kingdom.