

ATTITUDES FOR HEAVENLY HAPPINESS

Adapted from Sunday School Materials

Reading: Matthew 5:1-16

The “Sermon on the Mount” is the longest single speech by the Lord that has been recorded. It takes up three chapters in Matthew and contains a summary of the entire doctrine of Christianity. In order to give the sermon, the Lord ascended a mountain, which represents elevating one’s mind from worldly or natural things to spiritual things. If we wish to be taught by the Lord, we must ascend the mountain with Him.

The sermon opens with the Lords telling who the “blessed” are. To be blessed means to be happy. So these ten statements give a summary of the various states or attitudes that we need in order to receive heavenly happiness.

1. “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:3). The poor in spirit does not mean those who are ignorant or lack education. “Spirit” is used here in the sense of pride and self-righteousness. True spiritual poverty involves humility before the Lord, and a willingness to be led by His hand. Such people can be removed from their worldly interests and led to spiritual goals. Therefore, “theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.”

2. “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted” (Matthew 5:4). Religion is a joyful thing, and the Lord came on earth so that people might “have life, and that they might have it more abundantly,” meaning that they might enjoy the very fullest blessedness for which they were created. Therefore, this blessing does not glorify a mournful and sad external life. The mourners the Lord blesses are those who mourn over their past and present evils—those who are sorry for their weakness. No one is entirely free from falsity and evil. Part of wisdom is to recognize and mourn over that aspect of our nature. Such “mourners” will receive strength from the Lord to remedy their defects, and thus will they “be comforted.”

3. “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5). Meekness toward the Lord means accepting His Providence with patience and faith, and submitting to His will without sulking or rebellion. Meekness toward the neighbor means exercising self-control, even under annoyance or injury. Such people control their external feelings, and so triumph over “the earth”—the natural world—because they remove those things in themselves by which the earth holds dominion over them. Consequently, they “inherit the earth.”

4. “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled” (Matthew 5:6). Natural hunger and thirst are the craving of the body for life-giving food and drink. Spiritually, they represent the most intense desire of our souls for spiritual life. The desire for Divine Truth from the Lord and for good will toward our neighbors is what distinguishes those who are trying to lead a heavenly life. “Righteousness,” or “justice,” is the union of good and truth, and all happiness comes from this union. Consequently, those who hunger and thirst after this spiritual life “shall be filled.”

5. “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy” (Matthew 5:7). Mercy is love working for the good of those who are in need, or in trouble, or even those who have done wrong. It removes from our hearts antagonism, grudges, and unworthy suspicions. Genuine mercy wishes to deliver people from their evils, not merely from the *consequences* of evil. The Lord in His mercy is always forgiving us, but we are unable to enjoy that blessing unless we also forgive one another; for only thus can we “obtain mercy.”

6. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8). Real purity is in the heart—in our desires, motivations, affections, and thoughts. Purity is simplicity, single-mindedness, and cleanness. It is not two-faced, crooked, or mixed with untruth, wrong-doing or self-seeking. Purity of heart brings with it genuine sincerity and innocence. The Heavenly Doctrine for the New Church tells us that the most innocent angels are nearest to the Lord in heaven, and they see Him face to face. Therefore, it is said that the pure in heart “shall see God.”

7. “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God” (Matthew 5:9). The most serious warfare is the interior combat that divides our minds when we know what is right and yet fail to do it. Peace comes when what we know from the Word agrees with how we live. Thus real peacemakers are those who follow and obey the Lord. Such people are in the image and likeness of God, and therefore are called the “sons of God.”

8-10. “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matthew 5:10-12). Evil spirits constantly try, in every way, to discourage people who are seeking the kingdom of heaven. They strive to break down our desire to do the Lord’s will. If we would endure to the end, we must have courage, patience and steadfast persistence, for spiritual rebirth is not a battle of the moment, but of a lifetime. The reward of victory is the “kingdom of heaven.”