



This Sunday we continued with our new topical series at Magdalen Road, looking at the counter-cultural 'shape' of the Christian life – especially that 'the way down is the way up'. Why is it that God says we must be weak to be strong, foolish to be wise, go through suffering to enjoy glory, be slaves to enjoy true freedom? We will, each week, be seeking to challenge our 'natural' thinking processes, asking God to help us to think more and more as he does – and trust him that what he says is best.

This week we looked at the start of Jesus' sermon on the mount, noting that Jesus' words are surprising after Matthew's introduction explaining who he is. As the one from the line of Abraham and king David, as Emmanuel, as the one the prophets pointed to. As the king who will bring in God's kingdom that will change the world... for Jesus to begin by saying blessed are the Poor in Spirit, Mourners, Meek etc is "paradoxical". We noted though that this was the plan – it was through little people with changed hearts and changed lives who will change the world.

v3-6: How to know the king.

The Beatitudes have an order and progression, rather than being a random order of platitudes. **Poverty of Spirit** must be the starting point as people grasp that before God they are bankrupt and unable to help themselves. Which leads to a recognition of brokenness (of the world and of individuals) and so a **mourning** over sin and then a **meekness** which we means, as we see what we're really like, we treat others with care, respect and humility. This then leads us to a desire and a **hunger for righteousness** – in part that's a desire for things to be right with the world, but also especially for God's righteousness to make us right again. This is how we know God's king.

v7-12: How to follow the king.

However the Beatitudes do not end there – our being filled with righteousness changes how we treat others and relate to the world. The following 3 are consequences of being changed – not an act that we put on for others. Initially the change is seen in being **merciful** (not treating them as they deserve), because God shows us mercy. **Pure in Heart** means wanting to live his way in all things at all times. **Peace-makers** are those who have enjoyed peace with God and so enjoy peace with one another and bring peace to the world.

Whilst these three might sound attractive – the reality is – like Jesus our new actions will polarize people. Which means we will face the kind of hardships he did. In those situations to remember a) that we're following in good footsteps and b) there is a reward is vital.

Here are just a few questions that might get things going, please feel very free to ignore / adapt for your group:

Summarise Matthew so far.

How has he painted Jesus?

Who are the Beatitudes for?

What does it mean to be blessed?

Put each of the first 4 Beatitudes into your own language.

When are we tempted to NOT be like the descriptions given?

How can we remind ourselves to not think like the world?

Do you agree that there's a progression right through them? Why? Why not?

Put the next 3 into your own language.

When are we tempted to NOT be like the descriptions given?

What is the outworking and consequence of implementing them?

How do you feel about that?

What does Jesus think you need to remember when you want to avoid hardships?

How do you think God will change the world through people who live like this?

Have you any experience or examples of where this is put into action?
