

7th Grade New Testament (Gospels)**Lesson Plan:** Beatitudes**Learning Goals:** Students should be able to define the term “beatitude” and relate Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount to modern day examples.**Opening Question:** What does it mean to be blessed?

Prayer

Discuss Question on Board

Activity: According to the wisdom of the world, there are those that are blessed and those that seem to get the short end of the stick. Today, we are going to imagine that we are all going to the blessing bank. We will make a line based on who is worthy to receive blessing and who is not based on the world’s standards.

Give the students a list of people in our world (one for each student). The students will arrange themselves in order of first to last based who is “most deserving to be blessed” to “least deserving to be blessed” by the standards of the world. They will line up in a single file line with the “most deserving” at the front of the line. (Give the students about five minutes to come up with their order.)

“Twist” - just like the Beatitudes, the line then gets turned around and really is going the other direction.

M.C. Escher Art - idea of paradox

Define paradox: a seemingly absurd or self-contradictory statement or proposition that when investigated or explained may prove to be well founded or true.

This is what the Beatitudes are - they are a paradox

What does it mean to be blessed?

Definition of blessing: Spiritual and material benefits given by God to be enjoyed.
(other possible translations: happy, joyful, fortunate, or hopeful)

Who should be blessed?

According to the world’s wisdom, we think Jesus should say something like:

Blessed are those who have life together

Blessed are those who work hard

Blessed are those who are good stewards of their resources

Blessed are those who don’t cuss, smoke, or chew or hang out with those that do

Blessed are those who come to church

Blessed are the cleaned up

Prayed up

and Studied up

It’s the health and wealth gospel

If you just follow God,

you will be uniquely and especially blessed

God will make you prosperous
God will make you healthy

Temptation: We under-spiritualize it (or secularize it)
we make it a “how to” list of things we should do
we should strive to be poor in spirit
we should strive to have the attitude of a mourner
we should strive to be meek
and on and on

That’s not what Jesus is saying
if we could do any of these things on our own, we wouldn’t need Jesus
we wouldn’t need God’s grace and mercy

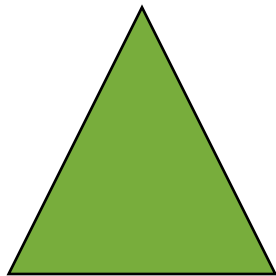
if these were things to attain,
we would be blessed because of our own merit

If it were just a “to do” list, this would not be gospel
but a new form of legalism
a new form of Pharisaism

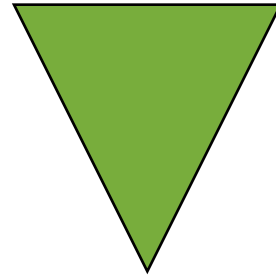
These are not good things.
These are not teachings on how to be blessed.
These are not instructions to do anything.
These are not conditions that are especially pleasing to God at all.
These are not recommended ways of living.

This passage is not, as some commentators have remarked,
something we should strive for.

Jesus is announcing a kingdom that doesn’t play by the rules.
Jesus is announcing an up-side-down kingdom.



VS.



Or as Dallas Willard translates it,
Blessed are the spiritual zeros,
the spiritually bankrupt
the deprived and deficient,
the spiritual beggars,
those who don’t have any religion at all.

These are the poor in spirit.

These are the ones that don't measure up to society's standards
those you won't find on the front page of magazines at the grocery store checkout.

Blessed are the physically repulsive
Blessed are those that smell bad
The twisted, misshapen, deformed,
The too big, too little, too loud,
The bald, the fat, and the old
They are all celebrated in the party of Jesus.

Or what about the more serious ones?

Blessed are the flunk outs and drop outs and burned-outs
The broke and the broken
The drug heads and the divorced
The HIV-positive and herpes-ridden
The brain damaged and the incurably ill
The barren and the pregnant too-many times or at the wrong time
The over-employed, the under-employed, the unemployed
The unemployable
The swindled, the shoved aside, the replaced
The parents with children living on the street
The children with parents dying in the rest home
The lonely, the incompetent, the stupid
The emotionally starved or emotionally dead

God is on your side!

That is good news!
come on folks - the Gospel gonna break out in here.

To the homeless, God is on your side
To those behind bars, God is on your side
To the addicts, God is on your side
To the broken, God is on your side
To those who would never darken the doors of a church, God is on your side

The Beatitudes ARE:

- A radical announcement of God's Grace
- A description of what it looks like for the kingdom to draw near.
- An announcement of the up-side-down kingdom.
- God's announcement of blessing on the undeserving.
- These underserving people will participate in God's reign.
- Connection to parables about the kingdom (Matthew 19:30; 20:16): "The last shall be first and the first shall be last."

Lesson Summary /Review:

Students should review and highlight the following vocabulary terms and concepts from this lesson in their notes:

- Beatitudes
- Blessing
- What does it mean that Jesus is announcing an up-side-down kingdom?

Doctor	Lawyer
Teacher	Firefighter
CEO of a major corporation	Missionary
Movie Star	Lead Singer of a Christian Band

Drug Addict	Single mom (6 kids from 6 different dads)
Prostitute	Inmate in Prison
Child with AIDS	Person with Cancer
High School Drop Out	Homeless Person