

THE BEATITUDES OF THE PSALMS

A WEEKLY LENTEN STUDY FOR 2023

A beatitude describes those who are blessed, something all true followers of Christ are and desire to be. When we think about the Beatitudes, we tend to remember the principles Jesus taught on the Sermon on the Mount found in Matthews Gospel Chapter 5-7, where Jesus provides practical instruction for people living in the kingdom of God. Jesus began His message by describing nine attributes or conditions of *blessed* people, nine characteristics of *joyful* people, and ever since those of us in Christ's church yearn to live in accordance with those ideals.

However, there are other beatitudes found in the Scriptures, most notably in the Psalms, and perhaps Jesus had them in mind when He delivered His famous sermon to His followers. As we begin this 2023 Lenten season together, it will be helpful and even necessary for us to spend additional time in prayer, fast on occasion, and spend time in the Scriptures to better understand what kingdom living and being blessed truly means. The Psalms are a free gift of God's grace, the original devotional guide and book of prayer and song. It is my hope that this simple Lenten study of the Beatitudes of the Psalms will have us find them encouraging, helpful and uplifting in our Lenten journey and our walk with Christ to glory. Pastor Greg

MILLCREEK COMMUNITY CHURCH

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4570 LOCKWOOD BLVD. YOUNGSTOWN OHIO 44511

WWW.MILLCREEK.CHURCH

FORMAT

Each week we will begin by simply reading and contemplating the Psalm or Psalms and then answering some basic questions. All of the Psalms selected are relatively short and are easily read in a single setting. Before reading, ask God for His Holy Spirit to quicken our minds so that we might better discern the Psalms meaning and God's will. It will be most helpful to read them more than once, perhaps even out loud. You might even recognize how they are intimately related to some songs we sing during our times of worship. It will also be good to look at a few different translations and perhaps a paraphrase like Eugene Peterson's "The Message" or something similar. A Bible app such as Bible Gateway can also be extremely helpful.

GOALS

Throughout our study, we will keep some basic questions in mind: What does the passage say, what does it mean (not what does it mean to *me*!), and what difference will it make for the kingdom? How does it train us in righteousness and holiness? Is there a teaching or correction in view? Are there repeated words or phrases, or allusions to other portions of Scripture? Asking those questions are the first step in finding the truth and answers we seek! In this particular study, another goal will be to identify the "beatitude" or blessed condition in each, and then make an application to our personal life, our church, and our world (i.e., those who don't know Christ as their Lord and Savior). Finally, there will be questions to answer and an opportunity to formulate questions (and answers) of your own. Don't be shy about sharing your thoughts and questions with others as we are all still learning at our Saviors feet. Let us be blessed as we discover new things together!

CALENDAR

Week 1 Psalm 1 and Psalm 32

Week 2 Psalm 34 and Psalm 40

Week 3 Psalm 84

Week 4 Psalm 89

Week 5 Psalm 94

Week 6 (Holy Week) Psalm 112

WEEK 1: PSALM 1 AND PSALM 32

- ⌘ What beatitudes (blessings) are found in these Psalms?
- ⌘ In what ways are they related? Different?
- ⌘ Psalm 1 has three distinct parts and two contrasting themes. Identify them and consider some ways we might apply them as followers of Christ today. What contrasting words are in view? What metaphor does the Psalmist use to identify the righteous? Is there a contemporary praise song that comes to mind?
- ⌘ How might Psalm 32 be related to Psalm 1? Who is the writer and what is he experiencing, especially in verses 3&4? What metaphor(s) are used to illustrate God's mercy and grace? What was the reason for the Psalmists distress? How did he remedy it? What lessons might we learn?
- ⌘ What Lenten concepts are in view in each Psalm?

WEEK 2: PSALM 34 AND PSALM 40

- ⌘ What beatitudes (blessings) are found in these Psalms?
- ⌘ In what ways are they related? Different?
- ⌘ How is it possible to “taste and see” something that is inedible and invisible? What does it mean to “fear the Lord”? Who is doing the teaching in 34:11?
- ⌘ What common theme is found in both Psalms? Since God is spirit, how do we understand the Psalmists use of the word “eyes” and “face” in 35:15-16 and “ear” in 40:6?
- ⌘ What similar words are used in both Psalms to refer to deliverance?
- ⌘ What Lenten concepts are in view in each Psalm?

WEEK 3: PSALM 84

- ⌘ What beatitudes (blessings) are found in this Psalm?
- ⌘ Who is the “Lord of Hosts”? Who or what are the “hosts”?
- ⌘ When the Psalmist writes “faints for the courts of the Lord”, what is being described? What are some characteristics of it? Is there a modern word that comes to mind?
- ⌘ Does Lord, King, and God refer to the same entity in 84:3? Why does the Psalmist use three different descriptive terms?
- ⌘ In 84:11, how might we understand the words “sun and shield” and “favor and honor” as it applies to the Lord God? Are those terms related in some way? Do you see a poetic structure in this Psalm?
- ⌘ What does it mean to “trust” in the Lord (84:12)?
- ⌘ What Lenten concepts are in view in this Psalm?

WEEK 4: PSALM 89

- ⌘ What beatitudes (blessings) are found in this Psalm?
- ⌘ What is a “maskil”? What are some other Psalms that reference that term? What common thread links them together? Is there a contemporary praise chorus that comes to mind?
- ⌘ What does the word “steadfast” mean? Why is it such a perfect descriptive word for God’s love?
- ⌘ What is a covenant? Who might the “chosen one” refer to in 89:3? Could it refer to more than one person?
- ⌘ How are David and Jesus connected in this Psalm?
- ⌘ How does the tone of the Psalm change in 89:38? What is the Psalmist pleading for? What are some times when we might ask God for something similar?
- ⌘ What Lenten concepts are in view in this Psalm?

WEEK 5: PSALM 94

- ⌘ What beatitudes (blessings) are found in this Psalm?
- ⌘ What are the different terms the Psalmist uses to describe the wicked? What is the purpose for the rhetorical questions the Psalmist asks in 94:8-10? What other rhetorical questions are found in this Psalm?
- ⌘ What does the word “discipline” imply in 94:12? What New Testament term is related?
- ⌘ Justice is a word we hear often in the 21st century. What sort of justice might the Psalmist be referring to in 94:15? Is modern “social justice” the same as Biblical justice?
- ⌘ What is the answer to the question in 94:20? Can you think of a modern day saying that speaks to it? Who might these rulers be?
- ⌘ What metaphor does the Psalmist use to describe God in 94:22? Where is that term found in other Psalms or passages of Scripture?
- ⌘ What Lenten concepts are in view in this Psalm?

WEEK 6: PSALM 112

- ⌘ What beatitudes (blessings) are found in this Psalm?
- ⌘ What is it mean to delight in his commandments (112:1)? How is that related to the fear of the Lord? Besides those who fear the Lord, who else are said to benefit from their faithfulness? Who are some faithful people who have gone before us?
- ⌘ What do the words “light” and “darkness” imply in 112:4? Where else in the Scriptures might we find that same concept?
- ⌘ What terms are used to describe the righteous in this Psalm? Do they describe your life? What is the “desire of the wicked” in 112:10?
- ⌘ Is there a modern- day praise chorus that comes to mind that goes with this Psalm? What does it mean to be steadfast?
- ⌘ What Biblical concepts do this Psalm teach?
- ⌘ What Lenten concepts are in view in this Psalm that might be particularly helpful to us during Holy Week?