

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

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DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 10

THE LIFE OF CHRIST

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Citizens of the Kingdom from
Matthew**

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INTRODUCTION

It was two years into Jesus' ministry. He had many disciples and had just chosen His Twelve Apostles. These Twelve needed to know the principles, ideals and objectives of His kingdom. It was urgent for Jesus to define them.

The Spiritual Character of Kingdom Citizens

(5:1-16)

Jesus defined the ideal character of the subjects of His kingdom. Coupled with this ideal character were the promised blessed benefits. All these are described in the nine beatitudes (5:3-12) -- so called because each is introduced with the word "Blessed" (Greek: "makarios") which also means "happy." This state of blessedness or happiness is an inner experience.

1. The first beatitude declares Jesus' overall theme of His sermon: "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." It does not mean that a person would be blessed because of his poverty in material things. The "poor in spirit" characterizes those who are deeply conscious of their spiritual poverty. This is the first step toward salvation. It applies universally to all people without any exception: to the materially rich as well as to the poor; to princes and to paupers; to the strong and to the weak; to the healthy and to the sick. Those who do not have this first basic characteristic will not be able to benefit from the rest of the beatitudes. On the contrary, those who have this "poor in spirit" attitude will enjoy the blessings of the kingdom of God.

2. The **mourners** are those who seek true repentance and they shall be comforted. They weep for their sin. They weep because if they were to die they will be

Hell. They realize their need of a Saviour.

3. The **meek** are those who are humble and patient, -- they will inherit the earth (ultimately the new heaven and the new earth, *Revelation 21:1-4*).¹ Having realize their need of a Saviour for they cannot save themselves, they now cry to God in all humility that they desire to accept the Saviour as their personal Lord and Saviour. The proud will not acknowledge that he is a sinner in need of a Saviour. They will resist and remain in their sin even though they might acknowledge that they are sinners.

4. Those that **hunger and thirst after righteousness** shall be filled and be fully satisfied. This is the obvious and logical follow-up. A desire to be rid of the bondage to sin would result in a corollary that they would hunger and thirst after righteousness i.e. a life of holiness. Is this not one

¹ Revelation 21:1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. 2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. 4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

of the evidences of one's salvation? Do we know what hunger to be filled and a thirst to be quenched is like? It can be an all consuming desire where everything else like gold and silver fame and fortune means nothing. You only wish to survive because you are dying without food and water.

5. The **merciful** are those who have pity on those who are in need -- they in turn will obtain mercy.

6. The **pure in heart** are those who are sincere and truthful in their thoughts and imaginations -- they shall see the glory and majesty of God. They are the ones with unfeigned faith. There is no hidden agenda in their motives for their belief. They are truly born again. 1 Timothy 1:5, "Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned:"

7. The **peacemakers** seek to promote peace and in so doing reflect the character of God. The promotion of peace means the preaching of the gospel where the sinner can make peace with God. It is more than just a reference to making peace like what the politicians are trying to accomplish in the Middle East, albeit without much success. The peace that the LORD refers to refers to the Great Commission or evangelism that every Christian must be consciously aware of in his daily life. Ephesians 6:15, "And your feet shod with the preparation of

the gospel of peace;" Romans 10:15, "And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"

8. Those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness because they are committed to do God's perfect will but are met with opposition -- will inherit the kingdom. One would reason that to be a bearer of good news would result in an open arm reception but the opposite is true. The bearer of the gospel would be persecuted for his obedience to His New Master, his Saviour and Lord. This would refer to the perseverance of the saints. No matter what the circumstances are in his devotion and obedience to His master he will not give up. He keeps at it even if it means forfeiting his freedom and ultimately his life.

9. In the ninth beatitude, Jesus addressed his hearers directly: "Blessed are **ye....**" who are being **reviled, and persecuted, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely,**" for Jesus' sake – they will receive great reward in heaven like the prophets of the OT. These are basically the only two kinds of persecution every Christian will face in life. Physical abuse and verbal abuse which will include lying were what the apostles and the Lord went through. Should we accept anything less? Why do we not get persecuted? NOTE that out of all the beatitudes, only the last

beatitude receives a double blessing from the LORD.

Jesus teaches that real happiness is not found in outward worldly status but in the inward spirit. He used two metaphors to describe the role and responsibility of the subjects of His kingdom. They are to be the "**salt of the earth**" and the "**light of this world**". The salt of the earth are good influences against the moral corruption and decay in the world. The light of the world points others to the way back to God through Jesus Christ. Both these illustrations assume a direct contact with the world before they can be of use.

***The Higher Requirements
Expected of Kingdom Citizens
(5:17-48)***

Having gone through the beatitudes (the characteristics of the citizens of His kingdom), Jesus proceeded to address His hearers directly concerning the Law.

In the time of Jesus, **the Law means the Old Testament only**—the Mosaic Law and the Prophets. But to the Jewish leaders the Law would include their interpretations and rules which they had added to God's Word. They thought that Jesus came to destroy the Law but Jesus clearly declared that He came to fulfil the Law rather than to destroy it. Not one "jot or one tittle" (the smallest letter and stroke of the Hebrew alphabet) would be lost until all are fulfilled (5:18). This is clearly the doctrine that Jesus was teaching his disciples. Jesus did not have the autograph at that time. They

have copies of the OT Scriptures only and yet the Lord said not one jot or tittle would pass away even when the heaven and the earth pass away. Jesus warned His hearers that those who **break** the least of God's OT commandments and teach others to do so too would be called the least in the kingdom. But anyone who obey **the least commandment and teach** others to do likewise would be called great in the kingdom. Observe that for a teacher to be a true teacher in the eyes of God he must first do God's Word himself -- his righteousness must be above that of the Pharisees and scribes who knew the letter of the Law but did not obey the Law. These Jewish leaders were hypocrites, play actors and great pretenders. At that time every Jewish boy was taught that to enter heaven he must have the righteousness like that of the Pharisees and scribes. Here Jesus says you must have more, implying that these religious leaders will not get to heaven.

To prove His point, Jesus illustrated **the importance of keeping and obeying God's Law** using the following 6 laws namely, murder (5:21-26), adultery (5:27-30), divorce (5:31-32), oaths (5:33-37), retaliation (5:38-42) and relationships (5:43-47).

1. Concerning **the law against murder**, the Jewish leaders understood it to mean the actual slaying of a man. When you hate and hold a grudge, it was all right. You have not broken God's sixth commandment. But Jesus

states that murder began with thoughts of anger and hatred in the heart. If in anger and hatred, a person labelled another as "raca" (Hebrew word for stupidity) or "fool" (Greek *moros*), he is guilty of murder. It does not matter whether the actual killing has taken place. So long as the seed of murder, i.e. anger takes root in your heart you have already committed murder! Jesus went to the root of the problem. So if there is any conflict between two persons, it is best to resolve the matter speedily. And the guilty party should readily make amends. Thus Jesus interpreted the spirit underlying the Sixth Commandment.

2. Concerning **the law against adultery**, Jesus said that looking at a woman to lust after her is already committing adultery. The religious leaders say that you have to be caught in the act before you are said to have committed adultery.

3. Putting away one's wife must have been quite common in those days among the Jews. So Jesus stipulated that divorce is unlawful unless the partner is found guilty of marital infidelity.

4. Concerning **the law of taking oaths**, Jesus forbade them to take an oath in the name of God in vain. They should also not take an oath in their own name for they have no power to ensure its fulfilment. Jesus exhorted that one's dealings should be forthright: "Yea, yea; or Nay nay," Do not say "yea" but mean "nay" and vice versa. They hid behind

God's Law and told lies and made deception part of their daily lives.

5. Concerning **the law on retaliation**, citizens of the kingdom should not mete out vengeance against the wrongdoer. Instead they should return good for evil – turn the other cheek. This was an abuse of the law of just retribution which was meant for the law courts. They applied it wrongly for personal differences.

6. And finally concerning the **law of neighbourly relationship**, Jesus taught His disciples not only to love their good neighbour as themselves but also to love, bless and pray for their enemies. If the people of the kingdom love only those who love them, then they would be no different from the world.

Jesus ended by saying that they should **be perfect** as their Heavenly Father is perfect (5:48). To be able to do these six laws would mean that the person is perfect in the sight of God. Can we do them?

The Godly Motives of Practising Righteousness by the Citizen
(6:1-18)

Jesus recognized that Satan continually sought to destroy the joy and effectiveness of the lives of His kingdom citizens. One of his ploys is to get them to do right things with the wrong attitude. Jesus touched on three matters of personal piety namely the giving of alms, praying and fasting. These actions by

themselves are commendable but Jesus warned against the hidden purpose for doing them.

1. It is right and proper to give **tithes and gifts** to God but it must not be done before men “to be seen of them.” In other words, one must not give to God in order to get men’s praises and approval. A person who does so has already received his reward. Instead he should give in secret and the Heavenly Father will reward him openly.

2. When **praying to God**, do not be like the hypocrites who prayed in the synagogues and in the streets to be “seen of men.” Such people too have their reward already. Jesus taught His kingdom citizens to pray in secret. In addition do not use “vain repetitions” – saying the same phrase continuously. That is not what counts. God knows our needs even before we ask of Him. Jesus taught the people “the Lord’s Prayer” (6:9-13) which outlined how they should pray. First, begin by giving God His due honour and glory. This is followed by a petition for God’s will to be done on earth as it is in heaven, then personal petitions for material needs, forgiveness of sins, deliverances from evil, and finally acknowledgment of His kingdom, power and glory. Some Christians recite the Lord’s Prayer when they pray -- this is not vain repetition if they do it meaningfully and with understanding. Of course, those who just mechanically recite and race to finish the Lord’s Prayer is doing so in vain.

3. The final illustration of practical righteousness is **fasting**. Fasting is approved of God. But again, if the motive and manner of fasting is to be seen of men, it is useless.

The Priorities in the Life of Kingdom Citizens
(6:19-7:12)

Jesus then went on to teach the priorities in the life of His kingdom citizens.

1. **Seek the things of heaven.** Jesus commanded that men should not set their hearts and minds on earthly things but rather on things above that are incorruptible and safe. The things of this world are temporal and can be destroyed by natural calamities and stolen by thieves.

2. **Be single-minded.** If a man puts a higher premium on earthly treasures, he tends to be thoughtless and careless about God and His kingdom and will not be able to maintain a singleness of heart and mind in his devotion to God. Jesus used the illustration of the “eye”. If a person’s eyes are focused solely on God, he will have spiritual insight. But if one of his eyes is focused on the world and the other on God, he will be clouded with spiritual darkness. Jesus also used the illustration of people who tried to serve God and the “money god” Mammon at the same time. One either love God and despise money or love money and despise God. There are no two ways about it.

3. **Be loyal and serve God.** Kingdom citizens must

uncompromisingly place God as their Number One Priority. How?

4. **Do not be anxious.** Jesus urged His kingdom citizens to have faith and trust God for their earthly needs. The two basic needs are food and clothing. God feeds the birds and clothe the grass of the field – surely He will do more for them. This is what faith is all about.

Jesus also taught the people the ideal social law of the kingdom (7:1-12) which encompass judging others, exercising proper discrimination, seeking guidance through prayer and the “Golden Rule.”

5. **Judge ourselves before others.** Jesus commanded His kingdom citizens to **stop judging** fellow citizens, censoriously. This applies to undue and unjust criticism or judgement of another. Jesus cautioned that when one judges another, his own judgement judges him (7:2). Let us heed Jesus’ counsel -- judge oneself before judging others.

6. **Be discerning.** Jesus called His kingdom citizens to exercise proper discrimination -- they must discern what should and should not be shared with non-believers. It is difficult to properly discriminate whether a person will appreciate God’s truths. That being the case, kingdom citizens are to seek divine direction and guidance through prayer—ask, seek and knock. God promised that He would give good things to those who ask Him!

7. And Jesus summarized this section with the Golden Rule: *Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets* (7:12).

The Self-Test of the Faith of Kingdom Citizens (7:13-27).

Jesus enjoined all kingdom citizens to conduct a self test to see if their faith and trust in Him stand true.

1. The path to life is a straight gate and a narrow way, but the path to destruction is a wide gate and a broad way. Will you choose the easy or the hard way?

2. A tree is judged by its fruits. False preachers and teachers who disguised themselves as sheep but in reality are devouring wolves can be discerned and detected by the fruits of their conduct. Do you bear the fruits of the kingdom of God?

Every tree that does not bear fruit will be uprooted. A good tree will bear good fruit. Jesus warned that not every one who calls Jesus "Lord, Lord," shall enter into the kingdom of God. Some may even claim to have prophesied in Jesus' name, cast out demons in Jesus' name and performed miracles in Jesus' name but Jesus would say to them "I never knew you, depart from Me, ye that work iniquity." Jesus knows the hearts of men. Some have an outward semblance of kingdom citizens but inwardly their hearts are filled

with greed and deceptiveness. How about you?

3. Jesus ended His sermon with the wise and the foolish men. He, who hears these sayings of Jesus and does them, is like a wise man who builds his house upon a rock -- solid and strong. It will not collapse despite the rain, the floods and the winds. But he who hears these sayings of Jesus but does not do them, he is like a foolish man who builds his house on the sand. It has weak foundations and will not be able to withstand the rain, the floods and the wind. Its fall will be very great and the loss immeasurable.

The multitudes were astonished at Jesus' teachings for He taught as one who had authority, unlike the scribes.

SUMMARY

Jesus began by declaring that those who are poor in spirit will inherit the earth. He defined the character and conduct of His kingdom citizens. He pointed out that sin has its seed in the heart of man.

Kingdom citizens must not perform their acts of devotion to God to be seen of men to solicit their applause and praise.

Kingdom citizens must be single-hearted.

On social relationship, the golden rule is: do to others what you want others to do to you.

PRACTICAL VALUE

We should commit Jesus' Sermon on the Mount to memory so that we might live in a manner

that brings glory and honour to God and goodwill to man.

Let us emulate Jesus who is perfect. Let us be conscious of what we do lest we fall into the trap of living a lie and possessing a false faith, like that of the Pharisees and scribes.
AMEN

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 10

THE LIFE OF CHRIST

CONTENTS

DAILY READING & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Matthew 5:1-16; Luke 6:20-23; Acts 20:35.

TUESDAY: Matthew 5:17-48; Luke 6:24-26.

WEDNESDAY: Matthew 6:1-18; Luke 6:27-36.

THURSDAY: Matthew 6:19-7:12; Matthew 7:1-12; Luke 6:37-42.

FRIDAY: Matthew 7:13-29; Luke 6:43-49.

Discussion Questions

1. What are the character traits of the people whom Jesus declared as blessed?

2. What problematic trait does each of the beatitude seek to overcome?

3. "Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." What are the six points of the Law that Jesus specifically touched on (Matthew 5:21-48)?

4. What is the principle behind the command not to swear oaths (Matthew 5:33-37)?

5. In what three areas did Jesus caution against doing the right things with the wrong motive?

6. What are the seven priorities that Jesus wanted His disciples to practise?

7. What are the self tests of the faith of kingdom citizens?
