

THE SPIRITUAL LAWS OF THE KINGDOM

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 of Latter Day Saints
 Independence, Missouri

Sunday, June 27, 1954
 8:30 a.m. KMBC & KFRM
 Kansas City, Missouri
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SCRIPTURE: Matthew 5:1-10

And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain; and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying: Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Whosoever is born of God doth not continue in sin; for the Spirit of God remaineth in him; and he cannot continue in sin, because he is born of God, having received that holy Spirit of promise.

When a person is born again, thereby becoming a spiritually begotten son of God and an heir of God's kingdom, his changed life will be demonstrated by a full and willing obedience to certain spiritual laws. It is about those spiritual laws of the kingdom that we wish to talk this morning.

The best summary of the spiritual laws of the kingdom is perhaps to be found in the beatitudes from the Sermon on the Mount, for in those eight brief statements Jesus gives a description of those who shall be deemed worthy to be citizens of the kingdom of God. The people who keep these laws are blessed. We should note here that his word is not the past participle of the verb "to bless," but is an adjective meaning "happy." Those who keep these kingdom laws are happy. A truer, or at least a broader sense of the meaning of the beatitudes might be gained by reading "How happy!" rather than "How blessed." Those who keep these spiritual laws are happy in God's sight, therefore truly happy, in that they are enjoying the privileges and blessings of God's kingdom.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Although all authorities seem to agree that the phrase "in spirit" is an addition to the original script, yet the phrase seems to belong there. Poverty is not in and of itself "blessed," nor are all poor people happy. On the other hand, poverty can be the source of much suffering and care, as well as the cause of covetousness, resentment, and hatred for others who are more fortunate. Thus the poor man may be just as great a sinner as the selfish, unscrupulous rich, if he hates and envies the rich. But the "poor in spirit" are those who feel their spiritual lack and recognize their spiritual poverty and need; they are those who come down in the depths of humility to confess their sins and seek forgiveness through Christ; they are those who -- whether they be rich or poor in worldly goods -- recognize that we are all beggars before God. Such poverty of spirit is the beginning of all virtue and of all spiritual progress.

"Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." Those who mourn may mourn because of what others have done to them, because of their own sufferings and afflictions. But the true mourners in the sense intended by this verse, are those who mourn for their own sins, as well as for the sins of others, and those who share in the sorrow of every other mourner in the world, as God shares such sorrow. Seeing how their own sins have contributed to the sum total of grief and woe and pain in the earth, they mourn their own sins. Seeing how all sin contributes to the suffering of mankind, they mourn for all men's sins everywhere. They feel and share in the sorrow and suffering and calamity of others; they share likewise in the godly sorrow which fills the heart

of God as he beholds the suffering of his children, and waits for them to choose the ways of his kingdom instead of the ways of wickedness. Those who thus mourn and share the sorrows of the earth shall be comforted -- given strength through Christ.

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." The meek are not the said or the woebegone, not the little or the weak or timid or spineless. The meek are those who are humbly dependent on God -- those who recognize their own worth and their own strength, but also their insignificance; those who are more concerned about duties than about rights; those who are strong, but who have their strength under righteous control and direction. The proud, self-sufficient man who recognizes no lack, no need, no strength outside of his own, and who seeks to impose his own will on everybody else by force, is inevitably, in the very nature of things, doomed to frustration and defeat. But the meek shall inherit the earth as their right, their legacy, because they are children of God and citizens of his kingdom.

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." No man is righteous, in the full and complete sense of the word. No man has righteousness within himself, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. But the man who hungers and thirsts after righteousness -- who intensely desires and passionately longs for them, shall be filled with that righteousness which is a gift of grace from God through Jesus Christ. It is not those who have righteousness, who have arrived, who are blessed, but those who hunger and thirst after it, who desire it, strive for it, long for it, and find it through Christ. However, those who hunger and thirst after righteousness will be unceasingly trying to adjust their lives to the standards of action which Christ demands of his followers; for the word here translated "righteousness" means literally "justice" -- right dealings between man and man, and man and God.

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." Mercy is not merely a sentiment; it is a practice -- a way of life. He who would be blessed in the kingdom of God must judge the sins of others as generously, as forgivingly, as mercifully as he judges his own. He must forgive others freely, as he expects God to forgive him freely, for God cannot forgive the sin of failing to forgive another his trespasses. The law of the kingdom is that we must extend to others the mercy we expect to receive from God, and that the humility of such mercy shall then have claim on God's mercy.

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Purity means the absence of extraneous matter -- cleanliness. For example, a jar of honey may be composed of fifty per cent corn syrup, which is perfectly wholesome and good to eat. But honey which is fifty per cent corn syrup is not "pure" honey. The ^{person} man who is "pure in heart" (that is, in mind, spirit, personality, and body, or in the total man) has nothing in his life which is not compatible with godliness. There is nothing there which doesn't belong there -- nothing in mind or body or spirit. The whole personality is focused upon and dedicated to one thing -- God and his purposes. Such men have the promise that they shall see God.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." Peace is not merely the absence of open hostilities. It is a state of well-being in which there are no tensions, no resentments, no hatreds or enmities, no jealousies, no festering sense of injustice. The peace makers do more than hope for peace; they make peace by removing the causes of contention. They effect reconciliations; they bring about harmonious relationships that correct discords before they reach the explosive stage. The peacemakers are truly the children of God, and heirs of his kingdom.

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Always when men strive for righteousness and justice and equity in human relationships, there are other men who want to continue in unrighteousness, injustice, and inequity which is iniquity, and who stop at no violence, no persecution, to maintain their special privilege and preferential status. When a man who knows he is doing right is persecuted, he should rejoice, for such persecution for righteousness' sake is an indication of his worthiness of the kingdom of heaven.

When men who are born again into the church and family of God, they desire with all their hearts to keep these spiritual laws of the kingdom; and whenever and wherever these laws are truly kept, there men are blessed -- happy -- now and for eternity.