

Year 3, NT Lesson 3: Kingdom People

Lesson Highlights:

- ✓ **Scripture References:** Matthew 4:17-5:16
- ✓ **Teaching Point:** Jesus begins His first teaching by describing the kind of people God approves of.
- ✓ **Unit Memory Verse:** *Matthew 6:9-13* – Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”
- ✓ **Alternate Verse:** *Matthew 5:3* – Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Lesson

Overview

The King of kings is gathering a people for His kingdom. They are not filled however with the kind of people an earthly king might look for. Instead of finding those who can add to His wealth and glory, Jesus is seeking those who are desperate for His. What that means for us is that we have to die to self-sufficiency...die to self-esteem... die to pursuing the pleasures and riches of this world. But in return we will receive all that we hoped for. Fortunes will be reversed; the dead will rise; hopes will be realized; tears wiped away. Short-term loss will mean eternal gain if we believe our King. Pray with us that our kids can begin to have faith to believe that only by following Christ's humiliation will we ever join in His exaltation.

Story

Our story last week centered on a battle that didn't just happen once but has been happening throughout time. It started with the Holy Spirit leading Jesus into a wilderness area where He fasted for...how many days? (40) That's a long time to go without food. After those days passed, who came to Jesus? (*Satan*) Right. And he tried three times to get Jesus to do some things. Turn stones to...what? (*bread*) Right...and then at the top of the temple, Jesus was supposed to do what? (*jump off*) What was supposed to happen then? (*angels would catch Him*) And then lastly, Satan told Jesus that he would give Him something...what was that? (*all of the kingdoms of the world and their glory*) All Jesus had to do was...what? (*worship Satan*) Yeah...that's all...as if it's no big deal. But all of them were a really big deal because all of them were the same temptations we face. We all are in a fight to believe that God is a good Father who will provide for us what we need...that was the bread...will protect us...that was the jumping off of the temple part...and will give us our inheritance...that was the world part. And we saw Jesus fight back with one thing... what was that? (*God's Word*) Exactly. Our weapon is the same as His. When we know God's words we also know the fullness of who He is.

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That's our hope for following Jesus and resisting Satan...resting in what God has told us. And the best news we have is that Christ won! He resisted all of those temptations. He won that battle and every other. And His perfect works is ours when we trust in Him. He is the real King of kings. He is the One true Son of God. And you know what? It's time to start building that kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. For that He's going to need some people, isn't He? Who are they? What kind of people is He looking for? I mean... who makes it in the kingdom? That would be good to know, wouldn't it? Because I don't know about what you want, but I want in. So, let's find out what He said. Turn with me back to the book of Matthew. Let's read in **chapter 4, verses 17-22**.

The first thing we read was the message of Jesus to all those who would join His kingdom. What was that command in **verse 17?** (*repent*) We talked about that a couple of weeks ago. Repent means to leave the sin we've been doing and turn and obey God. That was the same message God's been giving His people for centuries. Do things God's way...not your own way. Follow Him, not your own ideas. So, that's the message...but who are the people? If you're going to build a kingdom, of course you'd first pick...a bunch of fishermen? I wouldn't! I'd pick my friends and then people I thought would work hard and bring me good things. But that's not how Jesus sees things. We always pick the strongest and the smartest and the most fun people to be around. We pick people we like and people who are like us. But Jesus has another idea. He has in mind people who have a few things in common. One day when a lot of people were crowding around Him, He took His disciples up on a mountain and taught them. Let's have a few of you read a few verses at a time from **chapter 5, verses 1-12**.

Let's start with the word that Jesus said over and over...what was that? (*blessed*) Basically, that's the way we might say, "God approves of those who..." Do you know what "approves of" means? (*see what they think...to think something is right or good*) So, we might read the first one like: *You know the kind of person God approves of? Those who are poor in spirit. You know who else? Those who mourn.* In fact, let's take them in groups of four and talk about those...blessed are who? (*consider writing them on the board from top to bottom: poor in spirit, mourn, meek and hunger and thirst for righteousness*) Let's see if we can think about this kind of person. You can probably see a lot just from the words you know...poor, mourning, hungry, thirsty. If we were looking at a picture of someone like this, would it be a happy picture? (*no*) Nope. It would be sad...like seeing a picture of kids who are begging for food...or someone at a funeral. Why does God want people in His kingdom like this? Well, they're not just hungry for food or thirsty for water; they are hungry and thirsty for HIM. They aren't just poor...not having any money; they are missing the only thing they want...HIM. They aren't mourning because someone here on earth died; they're mourning because the One they really love, God, is not with His people.

But notice what Jesus promises them. What do the poor in spirit get? (*the kingdom of heaven*) What are the rest of those four? (*will be comforted, inherit the earth, will be satisfied*) Notice that what Jesus is promising those who long for them is that everything they want will be theirs. Everything will change one day. Those who had nothing will have everything. Those who were thirsty for God will never be thirsty again.

Now, let's look at the next four...what are the first parts? Blessed are...who? (*make another list... merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers, those who are persecuted for righteousness sake*) Those things are a little different, aren't they? Those aren't describing sadness or anything like that. They are describing the kind of actions that are done by those who are in Christ's kingdom...the kind of people God rewards. Those that are merciful...what's that mean? (*see what they say...compassionate, kind, forgiving*) In other words...someone like our Savior who shows kindness to His enemies, to sinners like you and me. We can be sure that we are NOT a part of God's kingdom if our lives are filled with bitterness and anger...if we don't reach out to help others, if we are those who reject people because of their sin. God's kingdom isn't filled with people like that. And what do the merciful receive in **verse 7**? (*mercy*) To get it, you have to be it. Being like our King gets you the favor of our King.

The next one...pure in heart...what does that mean? (*see what they say*) When we say something is pure, we mean that it's all that thing. If I say that I am giving you pure chocolate, you really wouldn't want to eat it. You know why? (*see what they say*) Pure chocolate would only have one ingredient...chocolate. And chocolate actually tastes terrible without sugar. Pure means single...one thing...pure water has nothing else added. Pure hearts have nothing but love for God in them. We know that God has told us that we are to love Him with all of our...what? (*heart*) Exactly. The pure of heart...those who love God with all of themselves...will get what in **verse 8**? (*they will see God*) They get what they want. When the only thing that will satisfy your soul is God, He promises that you will get that which satisfies you...Him. The end goal of the gospel...the highest reward above all other rewards is this...you will see God face to face.

What about the next one? What does it mean to be a peacemaker? (*someone who works hard to settle problems with others and between others*) Again...like Jesus. Jesus came to offer peace between us and God. He came because God wanted us to have it. We who are God's enemies, who reject His commands, who go our own way. God wanted us to have peace...and to give it. God's people...the ones who are in God's kingdom...work hard at being those who spread that peace to others...who help those who are fighting...who forgive others easily when they harm us. We're like that because Jesus is like that. And what do they get? (*called sons of God*) Because they look like their Father. That's the highest compliment anyone could pay us...to say, "You look just like your Father."

But what about that last one of this group? Blessed are...who? (*those who are persecuted for righteousness sake*) What does it mean to be persecuted? (*to be treated bad by others*) Right...treated back because of Jesus. That's what He's talking about here. Read with me **verse 11** because Jesus explained this one a little more. (*let someone read*) God approves of those who are harmed for His sake...when people call you names and make fun of you and even hurt you because you are His and it shows. Does that sound like a lot of fun? (not really) We probably don't mind the thought of being a peacemaker or kind and merciful to others...but Jesus is also saying that if you are His, if you're in the kingdom, it's not going to always go well for you. You can expect others that aren't in the kingdom to hate that you are in. They are called His enemies for a reason. They killed Him. We can expect the same. Now, many of us won't actually be beaten up for Jesus...but some will.

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And all of us can expect the world to hate us. Jesus tells us later on that if the world hated Him enough to kill Him, we can expect them to hate us, too. And those that suffer like this? What do they get? Look at the end of **verse 10**...and glance at **verse 12**. (*the kingdom of heaven...great rewards*) You get the kingdom! You share in Christ's rule. You share in Christ's glory. You share in Christ's honor. You share in Christ's riches. You get the kingdom of heaven! Great is your reward.

God has high expectations for His people...but God gives great promises to us, too. It's easy to look at the first sides of these lists and think, "That doesn't sound like a lot of fun!" But look at the last half of all of them. All that He promises to give us makes it worth whatever it costs. When you believe that, you'll know that you are one of His. He believed that gaining all of these for you was worth giving up heaven for. He thought that it was worth it to be poor Himself...to be sad and to be persecuted. He gave up the glories of heaven because He thought you were worth it. Will you give up the glories of this world to gain the glory of His kingdom? The offer is yours...you can take it if you believe that He really is the King and you're really ready to bow your life before Him and give up what you want for a far better treasure. That's what God's people look like who get God's kingdom. I want that...and I want that for you. Let's pray together that God would change our hearts so that we can love Him as He deserves to be loved.

Prayer Time

Before you pray, allow the kids time to share with you things that are happening in their lives. Be sure you write these down with their names for you to pray for as the week goes along. Ask individuals about how things went with the things they mentioned the previous week. Older kids can be asked if they will pray for another who mentions something. As the leader, begin by opening in prayer and thanking God for this lesson:

- Praise Jesus for helping us to see the kind of people God is looking for.
- Ask Him to give us hearts that are able to desire Him above all things so that we would truly be the kind of people that can be a part of the kingdom of heaven.

Pray for any specific requests named either by praying yourself or by opening it up to those who said they would pray.

Suggested Follow-up Activities

Teachers are free to choose the activities that they feel are best for their group. The idea is that as the children work and play, remind them of the truths they just learned.

Scripture Memory: Figure out your reward system for memorizing the Scriptures provided in this section. Give the children several opportunities to tell it to you in class. Play a memory game with the kids if you have time.

Craft/Activity: Bee-Attitudes Matching Game – Remind the kids that today we learned about the kind of people Jesus said God approves of. He is looking for those who want Him more than anything else...and promises them that when they find Him, they find everything they were looking for.

You can do this one of two ways. You can give each child a set of the cards and have them color and then cut them out around the shape of the bees and the hives. They can then mix them up and practice to see if they can remember which reward goes with which trait Jesus said we are blessed to have.

You could also make two sets for a matching game that your class can play with teams of no more than 8. You can place the hives at one side of the room and give the kids a stack of the bees. The players will grab a bee, race to the other side of the room and find the matching hive. Once you tell them that they have the pair correctly matched they can use sticky tack that you hand them to place them on the white board and race back to their team where the next person is ready to go. Whichever teams matches and places them all first wins.

Materials: craft pages; crayons or markers; scissors; sticky tack or other items to make the cards work as a game

Craft: Buzzing Bees – Remind the kids that today we learned about the kind of people Jesus said God approves of. He is looking for those who want Him more than anything else...and promises them that when they find Him, they find everything they were looking for.

Give each of the kids a copy of the blank page copied onto light blue paper. Also, give them a copy of the cloud and bees. Provide string and sharp pencils. Have them cut out the cloud and use the pencil to punch small holes in the cloud at the asterisks. Next, have them color their bees and cut them out. They can then cut eight different lengths of string and tape one end of them to the backs of their bees. Have them take the other ends and thread them through the front of the clouds and tape them to the back. They'll then glue the cloud to their blue paper just under the words. As they work, go over the Beatitudes with them or consider taking a few of them away at a time to play the matching game while the others work. Those left working will benefit from hearing the phrases being called out around them.

Younger Child Option: Copy the template of the cloud onto the page with the words prior to class. You can use White Out to remove as many of the asterisks as you'd like to make the craft manageable for your kids. Enlarge the bee templates until they are a manageable size. Cut out as many bees as you've decided to give each child and provide the same number of pieces of different sized string or yarn. Show them how to use tape to adhere the string to the back of their bees. They can then use glue or tape to hold them onto their clouds.

Materials: craft pages; scissors; stick glue; crayons or markers; string; clear tape

Craft: Worker Bees – Remind the kids that today we learned about the kind of people Jesus said God approves of. He is looking for those who want Him more than anything else...and promises them that when they find Him, they find everything they were looking for.

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Give each child a large piece of yellow construction paper and a sheet of bubble wrap just slightly smaller than the paper. Provide bowls of black paint and sponge brushes. Show them how to brush their bubble wrap all over with paint. You want the paint to go into the creases more than on top of the bubbles which it should do easily. They do not want the paper soaked with paint, just covered nicely. It should not drip when they pick it up. Have them then turn their bubble wrap over and press it lightly onto their piece of construction paper. When they remove it, they should see a honeycomb pattern. Allow time for this to dry before moving to the next step.

Give the kids the rest of their craft pages. Have them cut out the words to glue to the top of their page. Next, have them color and cut out their eight bees and the word bubbles. Help them as a class to match up their bees with the correct words from that verse and then glue them together around their honeycomb.

Younger Child Option: Press the pattern onto the construction paper prior to class and pre-cut all of the bees together with their words. Allow the kids simply to glue the pieces onto the page.

Materials: craft pages; large sheets of yellow construction paper; bubble wrap for each child; scissors; stick glue; crayons or markers; black paint (you can water it down to spread more easily, practice before class); bowls; sponge brushes