

**SUNDAY-SCHOOL LESSONS ON  
THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS:  
CHIEFLY ON THE SERMON ON  
THE MOUNT AND THE PARABLES**

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Sunday-School Lessons on the Teachings of Jesus: Chiefly on the Sermon on the Mount and the Parables by G. F. Piper

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**G. F. PIPER**

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ON  
THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS,  
CHIEFLY ON  
THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT AND  
THE PARABLES.

Revised by  
George Fisk Piper

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## P R E F A C E.

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THE forty-three Lessons contained in this volume are based on some of the most impressive teachings of Jesus, as reported in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. As a matter of convenience, these teachings are here considered in the order in which they are reported in the New Testament, — not in their chronological order, which would be of little value in a work of this kind, even if it could be satisfactorily determined. The purpose of the book is to make those who use it better acquainted with the mind and heart of Jesus, and to imbue them with his spirit, not to inform them concerning his outward life.

These Lessons have been extensively used in Unitarian Sunday Schools, as they appeared in monthly parts, and it is confidently expected that they will be put to still wider use now that they are offered in this more attractive and convenient form.

G. F. P.

Boston, May 13, 1880.





# SUNDAY-SCHOOL LESSONS.

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LESSONS 1-4.

## THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS.

### LESSON I.

#### THE BEATITUDES.

Matthew V. 1-12.

FOR YOUNG SCHOLARS.

1. What remarkable sermon did Jesus preach?

*The Sermon on the Mount.*

2. To whom did he preach it?

*To a great many people who were gathered around him.*

[The teacher may explain why so many people were gathered around Jesus, and speak of their condition and opinions.]

3. How did Jesus begin his sermon?

*"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*

[Explain "poor in spirit" and "kingdom of heaven."]

4. What did he say of those who mourn?

*"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted."*

[The teacher may explain how the religion of Jesus is adapted to comfort mourners.]

5. What did he say of the meek?

*"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."*

[Explain who are meant by the "meek," and what by "inherit the earth."]

6. What did he say of those who hunger and thirst after righteousness?

*"Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."*

7. What is it to hunger and thirst after any thing?

8. What did Jesus say of the merciful?

*"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."*

9. What is it to be merciful?

10. What did Jesus say of the pure in heart?

*"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."*

[Explain who are meant by the "pure in heart," and how it is that they "see God."]

11. What did Jesus say of the peacemakers?

*"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God."*

[Explain the phrase "children of God."]

12. What did Jesus say of them that are persecuted for righteousness' sake?

*"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*

[Explain what it is to be "persecuted for righteousness' sake."]

13. What are these sayings of Jesus called?

*The Beatitudes.*

[Explain why they are called "Beatitudes." Speak of the difference between these sayings of Jesus and the opinions of the Jews. The lesson on the Sermon on the Mount in "Scenes from the Life of Jesus" (pp. 58-61) may be read to the class.]

FOR OLDER SCHOLARS.

1. Of what sermon do the Beatitudes form a part?

2. In what part of Palestine was this sermon preached, — Judæa, Samaria, or Galilee?

3. What mountain has tradition fixed on as the place where it was delivered?

4. Is it probable that the sayings of Jesus in the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of Matthew were all spoken on one occasion?

[It is thought by some of the best authorities that they were not.]

5. Is it probable that his sayings have in all cases come down to us precisely as he uttered them?

[It is certain that some of the reports of what Jesus said are inaccurate.]

6. How does Luke's report of the Sermon on the Mount differ from that of Matthew? Luke vi. 17-49.

7. What multitudes were gathered around Jesus at the time this sermon was preached? Matt. iv. 25.

8. What had brought them together? iv. 23, 24.

9. Will you repeat the first Beatitude? v. 3.

10. Who are meant by "the poor in spirit"?

11. What is meant by "the kingdom of heaven"?

12. Why does this kingdom belong to the poor in spirit?

13. How did the opinions of the Jews concerning the kingdom of heaven differ from those of Jesus?

14. What does the second Beatitude (verse 4) mean?

15. What consolation does the religion of Jesus afford those that mourn?

16. Who are meant by "the meek" in the third Beatitude (verse 5)?

17. What is meant by "they shall inherit the earth"?

18. What is it to "hunger and thirst after righteousness"?

19. What blessing do such receive? 6.

20. Can we gain all the material good we seek?

21. Can we gain all the moral and spiritual good we seek?

22. What blessing do the merciful obtain? 7.

23. How are the pure in heart blessed? 8.

24. What is it to be "pure in heart"?

25. What is it to "see God"?

26. Why can the pure in heart see him better than others?

27. What blessing is promised to the peacemakers? 9.

28. What is meant here by "children of God"?

29. In what sense are we all children of God?

30. What is it to be persecuted for righteousness' sake?

31. What is the reward of such?

32. What law of reward do you find running through the Beatitudes?

NOTES. Matt. v. 1. *Multitudes*. According to ch. iv. 25, these multitudes comprised not only people living in Galilee, where Jesus was then teaching, but also those from Decap-

olis, or the ten cities to the east of the Sea of Galilee, from Jerusalem and other parts of Judea, and from the region on the eastern side of the Jordan. According to ch. iv. 23, 24, the occasion of their coming together was the fame of Jesus, which had spread to all parts of Syria. They had heard of the wonderful cures wrought and the wonderful words spoken by him in Galilee. — *A mountain*. The mountain, rather. Many suppose that the Sermon on the Mount was delivered on the hill known as the "Horns of Hattin," situated a few miles west of Tiberias, and having two horn-like heights rising about sixty feet above the plain between them. Dean Stanley is confident that the tradition which has fixed on this hill as the place where Jesus delivered his most remarkable discourse is well founded ("Sinai and Palestine," p. 360). On the other hand, De Wette, Meyer, Robinson, Keim, and others think the particular hill impossible to identify. — *Was set*. It was the custom of Jewish teachers to sit while they taught. — *His disciples*. The word "disciple" means a learner. In the New Testament, the term is applied in most cases to the twelve apostles, but sometimes to all who believed in or followed Jesus. In this instance, the twelve are probably meant, but possibly all who were gathered to hear him. They were for the time being his disciples, i. e. learners.

3. *Blessed are the poor in spirit*. According to Norton and many others, the meaning of this is: Blessed are they who feel their spiritual wants. "We must conclude," says Tholuck, "that what is meant here is the feeling of moral poverty." — *For theirs is the kingdom of Heaven*. The Jews meant by the "kingdom of Heaven" or "kingdom of God," the reign of the Messiah on earth. They thought that a mighty ruler, foretold by the prophets, would arise, free his people from the authority of the Romans, and establish a great and prosperous Jewish kingdom, with Jerusalem for its capital and himself for its king. But Jesus conceived of the kingdom of heaven as the reign of spiritual truth in human hearts. It was not those who boasted that they were descendants of Abraham, and felt that they needed nothing to render them fit subjects of the Messiah's kingdom, that would be entitled to a place in it, but those

who felt their spiritual poverty. "Looking around him upon the multitude," says Norton, "he saw, perhaps, many who had no earthly goods; and there stood near by him the few disciples who had at that time left all to follow him. Borrowing, as was usual with him, a figure from present objects, he speaks of that poverty which is not in external circumstances, but the poverty of the mind, the destitution felt within. The meaning of his words, I believe, was: Blessed are such as feel that they are destitute of all things; and he referred to such as, free from the high pretensions and spiritual pride of the generality of the Jews, might feel that as Jews they had no claim upon God, might recognize their own deficiencies in goodness, and be sensible how much was wanting to their true happiness."

4. *Blessed are they that mourn.* Most commentators think that this must mean those who mourn for their sins; but why may we not suppose that Jesus, having in mind the sources of consolation afforded by belief in an overruling Providence and the immortality of the soul, meant to say, even the mourners are blessed. "The purpose of our Saviour," says Norton, "was, I believe, simply to announce that his religion brought blessed consolation to all who mourned."

5. *Blessed are the meek.* The mild, gentle, and forbearing, in distinction from the proud, arrogant, and resentful. Not proud conquerors, but gentle disciples, would possess the new kingdom. — *For they shall inherit the earth.* The land, rather, i. e. the promised land. "The Jews believed that if they obeyed God, they should remain in possession of the promised land; if they disobeyed him, they would be removed from it, and scattered among other nations. Hence the 'inheriting of the land' was, in their minds, but another name for the enjoying of God's favor. In this associated and figurative sense, the terms were used by Christ. His meaning was, literally, Blessed are the mild, for they will enjoy the favor of God." — Norton.

8. *Blessed are the pure in heart.* The sincere, upright, those who are without moral stain. — *For they shall see God.* "A figure of sense to describe a spiritual state. To see God, is to understand his character, realize his providence, and to have a close walk with him.

By purity and faith we may live as seeing him who is invisible. The expression perhaps has some allusion to the Jewish rites, as the ceremonially pure alone were admitted to the worship and presence of God in his temple. In the East likewise, where monarchs seldom appear to their subjects, to see them was accounted the highest of honors and privileges, and equivalent to enjoying their friendship. To see God is to enjoy his favor." — Livermore.

10. *Persecuted for righteousness' sake.* Righteousness is rectitude of life, living in harmony with the highest Christian ideal. The righteous, although persecuted, are blessed still; for they have that peace of mind which comes from right-feeling and right-doing. The kingdom of heaven — the sway of peace, truth, and light in the soul — is theirs.

"Such," says "The Bible for Young People," "are the well-known Beatitudes, which stand at the head of the so-called Sermon on the Mount. They contain the great central thoughts of Jesus's teaching, — his gospel, in fact. Should any one ask what Jesus was, and what were his purposes, we could give him no more concise and no fuller answer than these eight or nine short sentences. This was what Jesus had to offer, what he brought into the world: not a new code, with its penal enactments; not a new system of doctrine, with its curse upon all who should dare to depart from it, — but a sure promise of deliverance from misery, of consolation under all suffering, and perfect satisfaction of all the wants of the soul. In these Beatitudes he gives us his best thoughts, shows us the purpose of his life, and, as it were, lays bare his soul before us."

"No biographical combination of characteristic traits," says Nichols, in his "Hours with the Evangelists," "could form a more graphic and true moral photograph of Jesus than do these remarkable sayings."

REFERENCES. On the Sermon on the Mount, see "The Bible for Young People" (Vol. V. pp. 198-227); Nichols's "Hours with the Evangelists" (Vol. II. pp. 55-123); Norton's "Internal Evidences of the Genuineness of the Gospels" (pp. 295-309); Morrison's "Disquisitions and Notes on the Gospels" (pp. 85-125).