

## *Preface to the 2023 Edition*

**E**VEN PEOPLE WHO know little about the Bible have heard of the “Sermon on the Mount.” In the open air of Palestine, before hundreds of people, Jesus began his public ministry with a core of prescriptions which are laid out in St. Matthew’s Gospel, chapter 5, verses 3 to 12 and in St. Luke’s Gospel, chapter 6, verses 20 to 26. Today they carry the title of The Beatitudes.

Jesus did not tell the crowd what they had to believe about him; instead, he told them how they needed to treat each other if they considered themselves serious about believing in him. Yet how much do people take them seriously as guides for their own lives? The eight “Blessed are” statements can seem to be check-off-the-box accomplishments, from which we move on as if they are over and done with: lessons that need to be absorbed by others, not themselves. To those who think they have the Beatitudes down cold, author George Chevrot says, take another look.

In raising questions about someone’s actions and how much they correspond to Christ’s demands, Chevrot forces the reader to stop and reconsider the Beatitudes in a new light, that of an enlightened conscience. Depending upon how deep someone plunges into the depths of conscience, it is possible to conclude

that in light of the Beatitudes as Chevrot describes, someone might not be Christian at all, or a very poor one.

One very public person appeared to understand the true intent of the Beatitudes. U.S. President Harry Truman commented, “I doubt if there is any problem in the world today—social, political, or economic—that could not find a happy solution if approached in the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount.” For the Beatitudes to *influence* this world, they must first be *lived* in this world. Jesus showed by his subsequent preaching how to practice the Beatitudes in everyday life. We believe by practicing, as Jesus preached, and as Chevrot illustrates in this new edition.

Seventy years after this book first arrived in print, these examples of living the Beatitudes remain as vivid as when they were first preached from a Paris pulpit in the early 1950s.

## *The Beatitudes According to St. Matthew*

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

*Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.*

*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.*

*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
for they shall be satisfied.*

*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 sons of God.*

*Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you  
and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.*

*Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven,  
for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

## *The Beatitudes According to St. Luke*

*Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.*

*Blessed are you that hunger now, for you shall be satisfied.*

*Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh.*

*Blessed are you when men hate you,  
and when they exclude you and revile you,  
and cast out your name as evil,  
on account of the Son of man!*

*Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy,  
for behold, your reward is great in heaven;  
for so their fathers did to the prophets.*

*But woe to you that are rich,  
for you have received your consolation.*

*Woe to you that are full now, for you shall hunger.*

*Woe to you that laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.*

*Woe to you, when all men speak well of you, for so their fathers  
did to the false prophets.*

# INTRODUCTION



## CHAPTER ONE

### *The Gospel Leads the Way*

THE BEATITUDES FORM the prologue to the Sermon on the Mount, which itself occupies a central place in the gospel narrative.

On a level space in the chain of hills overhanging the Lake of Gennesaret a large crowd was gathered around Jesus.

Jesus was to make good use of the size of his audience to set out at length the charter of the kingdom of God. This expression, “kingdom of God,” so often used by the Savior, will be more familiar to you when, having seen what it meant to his contemporaries, you learn what meaning it holds for us, people of the twentieth century.

Notice a peculiarity in the vocabulary used. The formula varies in the different gospel texts.

St. Matthew usually writes “kingdom of heaven.” Do not think that by this he means the abode of the saints in the afterlife. The word *heaven*, or *heavens* rather, is in this case the transcription of a Hebrew term which has no singular; it is a substitute for the word *God*, the unutterable name that the Jews refrained from pronouncing for fear of taking it in vain.

St. Luke, composing his Gospel for Christians who had been pagans and did not suffer from the same scruples, said it the present way.

St. Mark wrote “kingdom of God” or again the “reign” of God. These three formulas are completely synonymous. Of course, the heavenly homeland is above all the kingdom of God, but Jesus’ mission is to bring all people to recognize God’s sovereignty now, to establish God’s rule on earth.

*The kingdom of God is at hand* (Mk 1:15). To pious Jews there was no mistaking the meaning of this declaration. It meant that God had not forgotten his people and that the coming of the Messiah would change the whole life of mankind. For long centuries the Chosen People had had the privilege of serving the one true God, but they had known that their destiny was to make him known to the whole world.

However, as no prophet had arisen from the Jewish nation for four centuries, popular imagination was inclined to dwell on the temporal joys of the messianic reign. And is it any wonder that the hope of a national revenge should come to be superimposed on the religious faith of an unhappy people, so weighed down under the yoke of the foreigner? It had also come to represent the King-Messiah, in the guise of an invincible conqueror, who would bring all other nations into subjection under the hegemony of Israel at the same time as under the law of God.

### *An Invincible Conqueror*

Obviously, Jesus could not subscribe to such a distortion of the personality and purpose of the Messiah. When he announced the approach of the kingdom of God, he immediately added,