

Lesson 5 . . . Attitudes and Actions of God's Children

Gospel of Matthew

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Suggested responses to questions about Matthew 5:1-48

Note: Be sure to respond to all the questions yourself before reading the suggested responses in order to make the most of this study.

1. Paragraph 1717 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that the Beatitudes “express the vocation of the faithful associated with the glory of his Passion and Resurrection; they shed light on the actions and attitudes characteristic of the Christian life; they are the paradoxical promises that sustain hope in the midst of tribulations; they proclaim the blessings and rewards already secured, however dimly, for Christ’s disciples; they have begun in the lives of the Virgin Mary and all the saints.”
2. Matthew describes Jesus going up a mountain, which associates him with Moses who went up Mount Sinai and with King David who established Jerusalem (which was on Mount Zion) as his capital city. Matthew depicts Jesus as the new Moses and as the son of David. Jesus preaches the Sermon on the Mount and delivers the new law of the kingdom of heaven—the “royal law” of the New Covenant that completes and fulfills the Mosaic and Davidic covenants of the Old Testament.
3. Paragraph 1831 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that all seven gifts of the Holy Spirit “belong in their fullness to Christ, Son of David.”
4. Paragraph 544 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that the “poor in spirit” are “those who have accepted it [the kingdom] with humble hearts.” Paragraph 2546 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* identifies “‘voluntary humility’ as ‘poverty in spirit’; the Apostle gives an example of God’s poverty when he says: ‘For your sakes he became poor.’” St. Peter writes in 1 Peter 3:13-17: “Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is right? But even if you do suffer for righteousness’ sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts reverence Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to make a defense to someone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence; and keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are abused, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing right, if that should be God’s will, than for doing wrong.”
5. The promises made by Jesus in Matthew’s Gospel and in Luke’s Gospel are similar. In Luke 6:20, the blessing for the poor is “the kingdom of God.” In Matthew 5:3, the “poor in spirit” are blessed with “the kingdom of heaven.” In Luke 6:21, those who hunger now “shall be satisfied” and those who “weep now . . . shall laugh.” In Matthew 5:6, those who “hunger and thirst for righteousness . . . shall be satisfied,” and in Matthew 5:4, “those who mourn . . . shall be comforted.” In Luke 6:22, those who are hated by men and excluded, reviled, and have their names cast out as evil “on account of the Son of man” are urged to “rejoice” for their “reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.” In Matthew 5:11-12,

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those who are reviled, persecuted, and are spoken against falsely on Jesus' account should "rejoice and be glad," for their reward "is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets" who were before them. Luke describes people suffering physical realities—the poor, those who are hungry—while Matthew adopts a more spiritual tone, describing blessing to come to those who are poor "in spirit" and to those who hunger and thirst "for righteousness."

6. In Isaiah 42:6-7, God speaks through the prophet, saying: "I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness."
7. Paragraph 580 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains: "The perfect fulfillment of the Law could be the work of none but the divine legislator, born subject to the Law in the person of the Son." Paragraph 1968 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that the Gospel is able to bring Jesus' new law to fullness in the lives of Christians by reform of the heart and "through imitation of the perfection of the heavenly Father, through forgiveness of enemies and prayer for persecutors, in emulation of the divine generosity."
8. St. Paul writes in Romans 12:19-21: "Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God; for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.' No, 'if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink; for by doing so you will heap burning coals upon his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."
9. In Matthew 5:44-45, Jesus asks his followers to love their enemies and to pray for their persecutors, so that they may be sons of the Father who is in heaven. In Matthew 5:48, Jesus tells his followers that they must "be perfect," as their heavenly Father is perfect. These words of Jesus set the highest standard, but Jesus again and again calls God "Father," as opposed to "Creator" or "Master." Christianity is a spirit of "divine sonship" in which the baptized faithful are transformed into children of the Father and thereby are given the grace to fulfill the call to love their enemies and to be perfect.
10. Paragraph 1953 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches: "Jesus Christ is in person the way of perfection. He is the end of the law, for only he teaches and bestows the justice of God: 'For Christ is the end of the law, that every one who has faith may be justified.'" Paragraph 2015 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains: "The way of perfection passes by way of the Cross. There is no holiness without renunciation and spiritual battle. Spiritual progress entails the asceticism and mortification that gradually lead to living in the peace and joy of the Beatitudes."

Responses to the Questions for Reflection will vary.