DIVING DEEPER DISCUSSION GUIDE

TEXT SUMMARY

In today's text, Matt 5:1-6, we see the first four of the Beatitudes, the opening words of Jesus' most famous sermon, the "Sermon on the Mount."

INTRODUCTION (observation):

1. Who is Jesus' audience for this sermon? According to Matthew's account, who heard these words?

2. These sayings of Jesus follow a simple two-part pattern; what is that pattern?

DISCUSSION (INTERPRETATION):

1. Regardless of the time and place where these sayings are contemplated, they are always counter-cultural. How do they run counter to our human way of understanding winning and losing, success and failure, what it means to live the "good life"?

2. The second part of each saying begins with the conjunction "for." It explains the rationale for the first. Some explanations (v. 4, 6) are easier to understand than others. But some make us pause to reflect. How does...

    - "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" explain "blessed are the poor in spirit"?

    - "for they shall inherit the earth" explain "blessed are the meek (gentle)"?

3. People mourn for any number of reasons: disappointment, bereavement, discouragement. Is Jesus merely making the general observation that regardless of why we're sad now, we can be sure that we will be comforted later, or is He speaking of a specific kind of mourning?

SO WHAT? (APPLICATION):

1. **The word translated "blessed" is sometimes translated "happy," but happiness usually accompanies delightful circumstances.** The blessedness that Jesus speaks of is deeper and far more substantial. Happiness is like the waves on the surface of the ocean, which shift with the wind; blessedness is like the currents that run deep underwater, which are unaffected by surface conditions.

   Can you think of a time (perhaps now) when your life circumstances were difficult and painful, yet because of your confidence in and relationship with God, your inner life was not in turmoil but at peace? Paul calls this a "peace that passes understanding." What is your story of your experience of the "blessedness" of knowing and trusting God in the middle of a dark trial in your life?

2. **Jesus' announcement of the arrival of the Kingdom was reinforced by His miraculous signs, which gave His followers a glimpse of that glorious Kingdom.** Now, in this, His most famous sermon, He outlines what success looks like in that Kingdom; just as His Kingdom is not what people expected (not military or political or even cultural), so also the winners (the "blessed") in that Kingdom are not what we would expect.

   We live our day to day lives in the kingdoms of this world, where Jesus' Kingdom priorities are regarded (if they are regarded at all) as naïve and irrelevant. Our culture is constantly pressing us into a different mold (see Rom 12:2). How would your life – your inner life, your relationships, your priorities – look different if this was your definition of success: deep recognition of your own spiritual poverty, profound sorrow for your sin against a Holy God, gentleness rather than competitiveness in the workplace, zeal to know and serve God in every aspect of your inner life, your home life, your public-facing life?