



# SCRIPTURE UNION INTERNATIONAL

GLOBAL WEEK OF PRAYER  
NOV 6 - 13, 2022



**LIVING THE LEGACY**

Our place in God's Kingdom



# INTRODUCTION

This year's Global Week of Prayer aims to build upon last year's theme – 'Prisoners of Hope'. Throughout the week, we invite you to embrace the Kingdom of God, to explore the essentials for Kingdom life, and to demonstrate hope – by 'Living the Legacy'.

Join us on this journey as we examine the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12).

The Beatitudes is the name given to the set of 'Blessed' statements, pronounced by Jesus in Matthew 5 and Luke 6. These famous verses are often reduced to a set of moral statements for personal happiness and wellbeing, but they are so much more than that! They captured the imagination of the likes of Martin Luther King, Mahatma Gandhi, and many others.

Jesus had been travelling throughout Galilee, in the north of Israel, and his reputation had spread. Everywhere he went, crowds gathered. In Matthew 5, Jesus found a high place to sit down where the people could see him. His disciples were also there as he began to teach them. Jesus began and ended with the phrase 'theirs is the Kingdom of heaven' (v 3, 10). The phrase acts like a pair of bookends to help us to interpret all the words in between. Jesus' teaching helps us to see what the Kingdom of heaven looks like in action – both now, here on earth, and in the future realms. And it gives us a glimpse of those who belong in the Kingdom – the Kingdom of heaven belongs to those who 'live the legacy'.

It is important to understand the Beatitudes are teaching for communities. The pronouns Jesus uses are plural. They, theirs refer not to an individual, but to a group. In addition, he does not shy away from addressing the reality of how broken and weighed down people are.

*You may watch the passage on [Lumo](#)*

*Additional references:*

*Jeremiah 6:16, Luke 6: 17-22; Hebrews 11, 12; Rev 1:3; 14:13; 16:15 etc*

The words of the Beatitudes help us to find our place in God's story as a community of people.

The Beatitudes should both surprise and shock us. They certainly would have done so for Jesus' hearers. The Kingdom is one where those who are at the bottom of society, are in fact on top – they are blessed! Those that the world attributes little or no value to, are those that reflect the Kingdom of heaven. The Beatitudes have far-reaching implications for how we view power and position, for the way our societies are structured, for the value we place on people. The Beatitudes speak of radical, social transformation. It is an upside-down vision of the world.

Notice how Jesus picks up on themes that run throughout Scripture. There are echoes of Jeremiah, recurring themes in Isaiah, Luke, Hebrews, and a foreshadowing of Revelation .

Where do you find yourself in this Story? How are we as Scripture Union around the world challenged to live today? What is Jesus saying about our present reality, as well as our hope for the future?

This year we invite you to join the SU Global Family in praying together. We invite people of all ages to get involved in a series of events. This will include a daily prayer guide (with a specific focus for each day) a 24-hour Zoom prayer event and a range of creative prayer activities.





# DAY ONE

# JUSTICE



- <sup>3</sup> "Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.
- <sup>4</sup> "Blessed are those who mourn,  
for they will be comforted.

We begin our week with these difficult verses. It is challenging to consider that blessings can be found amidst a poverty of spirit and during a time of mourning. Luke's version includes physical poverty as well. Poverty of spirit can indicate someone that cowers or is less than confident. This is a stark contrast to some of our communities, where wealth and success are heralded as the highest goals. The blessed person is one of humility, who fully relies on God. In the upside-down Kingdom, the person who is poor in spirit is rich in the Kingdom of heaven.

We may be shocked to read that those who mourn are blessed. However, God is close to the broken-hearted and a comfort to those in mourning. Intimacy with God during a time of sorrow can bring great comfort. We as SU have much we can mourn over during this week of prayer. This could be injustice, loss, sickness, the ongoing impact of the pandemic, violence, and brokenness. As we come together to pray, consider what you are mourning in your local context as well as well as other global situations. Consider those within the SU global family who are also in mourning.

Lectio Divina is an ancient way of reading Scripture, that encourages you to read slowly and pay attention to what God might be saying. Here is a method of Lectio Divina you can use with people of all ages. You can use this method by yourself or as a group. If using this as a group, choose one person to read the instructions out loud, as well as the Bible reading. You might also like to have pens and paper to hand.

### READ

Read Matthew 5: 3-4 slowly. Stop at the end and pause. Read the passage again, even slower.

### REFLECT

Are there any words in this passage that 'jump' out at you, that seem important to you? Are there any pictures or ideas that come into your mind? Do you think God is saying something to you?

### RESPOND

Talk to God about your reflection. You might like to write down your word or draw a picture. You might like to ask God a question or thank God for something.

### REST

God likes to talk to us. Sit in silence for a while and listen. Rest in God's presence.

## Reflect

- Spend time in mourning for the brokenness you see around you. Ask God to show you where you can offer comfort and support.
- Consider the areas of poverty in your community, country or globally. Pray for SU ministries that are operating in these places.
- Ask God for courage and sensitivity, to be channels of His shalom in these situations.

## Pray





# DAY TWO

# RIGHTEOUSNESS



- <sup>5</sup> "Blessed are the meek,  
for they will inherit the earth.
- <sup>6</sup> "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
for they will be filled.

Today's verses begin with the word 'meek'. It is a word that Jesus used to describe himself too (Matthew 11:29). This can be misunderstood as weakness or someone who is afraid to stand up for themselves or for being defenceless. However, meekness can describe a person who is disenfranchised and of such low estate that their complete reliance is solely on God. Blessed is the community of people who serve the world around them from an identity that God gives them, rather than having a man-made status or having achieved a name for themselves. Jesus makes a beautiful promise in this Beatitude, that those who make peace are 'Children of God'. What a wonderful thing – to belong to God's family, to identify with and reflect God's presence in our world. The reward for a peacemaker is not peace – it is an identity, and not just any identity – they will be called the children of God.

Those who are part of the Kingdom of heaven hunger and thirst for righteousness. There is both desperation and need in that statement. We are to crave and seek righteousness as an essential of life. Righteousness and justice go hand in hand, as we desire to see the world made right. Luke includes physical hunger and thirst too.

Blessed is the community that seeks to put the world right, to see people fed spiritually and physically, and to drink deeply of the spring of water welling up to eternal life.

## Reflect

1. In your own location/country or throughout the world, do people feel that there is no one who can advocate for them? Write these places down, if you feel comfortable, and pray that their meekness will not be taken advantage of.
2. Righteousness is to put things right. Think of a place in the world where things are not right. It may be because of war or hunger. Pray a short prayer together.
3. Why do you think Jesus says that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be filled? Spend time in silence asking God for that hunger and thirst to grow in you.

## Pray

- Choose a ministry that your local SU movement provides and pray for the leaders involved, that they may serve with meekness. You may like to contact each of these leaders to let them know you have been praying for them.
- Pray that the global SU movement be known as an organisation that seeks God's righteousness with the same desperation that we seek food and water. Pray for our leaders locally and globally, to make just and wise decisions.
- Pray the Lord's prayer together!







# DAY THREE

# MERCY



- 7 "Blessed are the merciful,  
for they will be shown mercy.
- 8 "Blessed are the pure in heart,  
for they will see God.

Jesus uses a variant of the Hebrew word 'chesed' here for mercy. William Barclay describes chesed this way: 'mercy, means the ability to get right inside other people until we can see things with their eyes, think things with their minds, and feel things with their feelings.' Whilst it includes lavish forgiveness, beyond what is owed, it is more than that. When we view the world through the eyes of another, we will be led to respond, not with revenge or anger, but with empathy – literally putting ourselves in the shoes of another. It is the exact opposite of holding a grudge or plotting a revenge – where my feelings and satisfaction take priority.

In Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, he showed us the way of mercy. He calls us as a community to live as he did. Mercy chooses to act in ways that are selfless, healing for relationships, offer grace and find new ways forward. This Beatitude is two-way – as we give mercy, so we will receive it. As we act with mercy, we are freed from bitterness and broken relationships and from the sin that binds us.

Following on from mercy, is purity of heart. Jesus continues focussing our attention inward, to the source of our actions. Being pure of heart describes someone devoted to God, who lives with integrity.

Taking note that the Beatitudes are corporate, Jesus encourages his hearers to consider a community with a pure heart as a community that is focused on God and reflects God's ways in all they do and say. They have a 'clean heart', and pure motives – something that is challenging, when even in our best moments we often have mixed motivations. The call to action for us here is for an unadulterated devotion to God.

The blessing for those who are pure of heart is that they will see God. What an incredible blessing! When we act with clear intentions, we have clear sight. Our integrity and devotion to God will lead us into a deeper relationship with our creator.

## Reflect

Mercy is an action word. To help us remember to act with mercy, learn to say MERCY with your hands in sign language. Here are some links to show you sign language from different countries to help you find out how to say it in the various sign languages: [ASL](#), [AusSL](#), [BSL](#) and [Makaton](#)

## Pray

- Pray for situations where mercy is difficult to live out. Consider where you can extend mercy this week.
- Pray for SU work among families who are separated or broken – that they will extend mercy to each other.
- Consider what purity of heart might look like for your local SU movement. You may like to lament and identify where motives have been mixed or impure. You may like to celebrate times where there has been great unity of purpose and devotion to God.
- Pray for your local SU Board as they seek to guide their movement. Pray that they will govern with wisdom and compassion.





# DAY FOUR

# PEACE



<sup>9</sup> “Blessed are the peacemakers,  
for they will be called children of God.

As we gather today to pray, we focus our attention on one of the most well-known lines from the Beatitudes. As Jesus spoke, he most likely referred to the Hebrew word ‘shalom’. Peace is more than the absence of violence; it is a fullness and wholeness of life. Making peace is a work of the Holy Spirit that we are privileged to participate in. The ministry of reconciliation is entrusted to us (2 Cor 5:18). It is the healing and restoration of relationships, between individuals or communities, with God. It does not talk about which side we are on – the party that has been offended or the party that has caused offence. Whichever side it is, the responsibility that lies with an individual or community that reflects the Kingdom, is to be a channel of shalom. Consider your own context and communities, as well as situations around the world where people are working for peace amongst difficult circumstances.

Jesus makes a beautiful promise in this Beatitude, that those who make peace are ‘Children of God’. What a wonderful thing – to belong to God’s family, to identify with and reflect God’s presence in our world. The reward for a peacemaker is not peace – it is an identity, and not just any identity – they will be called the children of God.

Peace lies not in the absence of war but in the presence of the Saviour, he who initiated the reconciliation of the entire world. Maybe it is a time for us to consider our relationship with God, our web of human relationships and with that of creation. Shalom includes the entire household – what is your world made up of today?

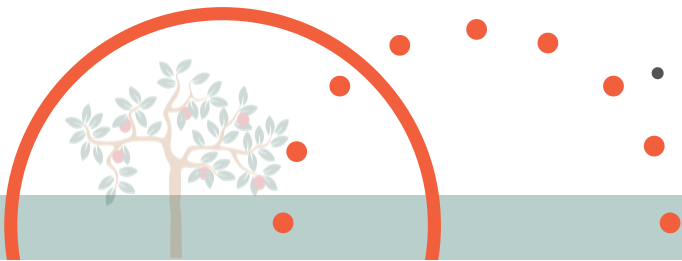
## ○ Reflect

Here is a template of a dove to use to print out and cut out several times, to create a peace wreath. On each dove write a prayer – praying for peace for a person, community, or country. Glue or tape the doves together in a circle to create a wreath.



## ○ Pray

- Pray for the leaders in your community who are involved in peace-making initiatives, such as police, teachers, social workers, NGOs.
- Pray for God’s wisdom as SU movements seek for ways to be involved in making peace.
- Pray for the places in the world where violence and war are rife. Pray particularly for children who are displaced, lonely and afraid. Pray for the SU groups working in these places.
- Pray for the churches in your country – that they would facilitate the restoration of lives, families, and communities.





# DAY FIVE

# LEGACY



- <sup>10</sup> "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.
- <sup>11</sup> "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.
- <sup>12</sup> "Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way, they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

The Beatitudes are bookended with the phrase, '...theirs is the Kingdom of heaven' – to remind us that the focus of the whole passage is to see what life looks like from God's perspective. As you have gathered and spent time praying through the Beatitudes this week, you may have experienced discomfort or surprise at how challenging these verses are. They finish with more challenges, but some encouragement too.

The final Beatitude in v 10 focuses on persecution. There will be a cost when you choose to live life God's way. Jesus prepared his disciples for what was to come, and the difficulties they would face. Choosing to live an 'upside-down' way of life will come at a cost, one that Jesus experienced through the cross. But, like the other Beatitudes, there is a blessing too. Earthly persecution is no match in comparison to what God has for us. There are rewards to come! However, the rewards are conditional – 'persecuted for righteousness' sake', not for doing the seemingly right thing, but for not doing the wrong thing. The natural human response to being attacked is retaliation - history shows

us that and the world advocates demonstrations of retaliatory strength. But this is a Kingdom worth living for because you are not in this alone – there are many who have gone before you.

The Message version of the Bible concludes this passage with a wonderful reminder that we are not alone in our struggles. In v 12 we are encouraged to take up the challenge because 'all of heaven applauds'. We are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses, cheering us on (Hebrews 12). And we leave a legacy for those who will come after us. One day we will cheer on others too. But for now, live the legacy!

## Reflect

Use a world map to pray for those who are in places where it is difficult to follow Jesus. You might like to look at the [Open Doors website](#) to find out about Christians who are facing persecution because of their faith.

## Pray

- Can you name some godly people who have gone before you? What legacy did they leave through the way they lived their lives? Give thanks to God for them.
- Pray that the SU Global Family will 'live the legacy' – that those we serve will want to follow Jesus because of our lives.
- Pray for courage to live out the challenge of the Beatitudes. Which Beatitude has challenged you most? Spend time with God reflecting on this.

