

3. This Is a Hard Teaching: Who Can Accept It?

(John 6:60)

Jesus' teachings are not always comforting. Sometimes they disrupt us, confuse us, or seem impossible. The Beatitudes are like that. They don't follow the logic of the world. They don't lead to success, comfort, or power. Instead, they point us toward something deeper: the narrow way, the way of Christ.

The Beatitudes are just the beginning. They come at the start of Jesus' public ministry, like a **mission statement** — not fully explained, but powerfully proclaimed. The people who heard them on that hillside must have been stunned: "*Blessed are the meek*"? "*Blessed are those who mourn*"? What was this man saying?

They didn't understand it all. Neither do we.

But those with open hearts followed Jesus deeper. And so will we.

As we continue through the Gospel of Matthew, we're going to **return to these Beatitudes again and again**. We'll see how they are lived out in parables, miracles, and teachings. We'll see how Jesus himself *embodies* them — not just in words, but in his choices, his relationships, and ultimately, the cross.

So don't worry if you're confused right now. Don't worry if it doesn't all make sense or if it challenges how you've thought about God, faith, or strength.

This is not the way of the world.

This is not how we're trained to think in school, in business, or in life.

But this is the way of the Kingdom.

Let's hold these teachings gently for now — like seeds.

We'll plant them, water them with Scripture, and trust that **in time, they'll take root**.

The Third Way: The Way of Jesus

When confronted with tension, injustice, or false choices, Jesus often didn't choose **either/or**. He revealed a **third way** — a creative, Spirit-led path rooted in God's truth and mercy.

1. The Coin: Render to Caesar

"*Show me the coin used for the tax.*" (Matt. 22:19) They tried to trap him. Do we pay taxes to Caesar or not? If he says yes, he looks like a Roman sympathizer. If he says no, he could be arrested.

Jesus flips the trap with a question: *Whose image is on this?*

- He affirms what is lawful.
- But he also reclaims what belongs to God: *your heart, your soul, your choices*.

2. The Woman Caught in Adultery

"*Let the one among you who is without sin cast the first stone.*" (John 8:7)

Again: a trap. Stone her or don't. Either way, he loses. But Jesus bends down. He draws in the sand. He's quiet.

Maybe he's listening. Praying. Asking the Father: *What is the way of love here?*

He responds with a challenge to the accusers' own hearts. And in doing so, he both **upholds mercy** and **calls for justice**. Not the world's justice. God's.

The Beatitudes Are the Third Way

They call us:

- To be **poor in spirit** rather than entitled
- To **mourn** what is broken rather than ignore it
- To be **meek**, not passive or aggressive
- To **hunger for righteousness**, not power
- To be **merciful** instead of vengeful
- To be **pure in heart**, not manipulative
- To be **peacemakers**, not peacekeepers
- To **accept persecution** for the sake of the Gospel

This isn't how we're trained. The world teaches us to win, dominate, climb, achieve. But Jesus teaches us to surrender, serve, and trust.

"Not my will, but yours be done." (Luke 22:42)

Jesus is the Third Way. He lives it. He *is* it. And he invites us to walk it, too.

It's a hard teaching. But it leads to real freedom, real joy, and real peace.

Reflection Questions

- Where in your life do you feel stuck between two bad choices?
 - Have you ever experienced a "third way" moment?
 - How do the Beatitudes feel most countercultural to you right now?
 - What are you attached to that keeps you from trusting God's way?
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Lord Jesus, show us the third way. When we want to run or react, teach us to pause. To listen. To draw in the sand. To seek Your will above all else. Amen.