



## **Key Bible passage: Matthew 5:1-12 The Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount**

**1** Put up on display as children come in: Happiness is....

**2** Today we're thinking about happiness. What makes you happy? (Get some suggestions from the children, and for every suggestion, drop a ping pong ball into a jar, or a football into a bin. When it's full, make the point that sometimes we fill our lives up with so many things, that there's no room for the happiness that God wants to give us. And that's a very special sort of happiness that will last a lot longer than any of these lovely things in the jar. Jesus was one of the happiest people who's ever lived. And one day, he told some people some secrets about real happiness.

**3** Can you imagine for a minute that I'm a very rich, important religious person who's decided to go and listen to Jesus. This is what happened to me today:

I thought I would go along to hear this Jesus talking. I had to go up a hill! I mean, I'm far too important to go climbing hills. I'm so rich that I paid some people to carry me in a chair. I made sure they put the chair down near Jesus, but a long way from all those horrible dirty poor people who had come to hear him. They were dreadful. There were even some children in amongst them! Ugh! I tried to keep well away from all those nasty poor people. I didn't want to get my beautiful clothes dirty. Mind you, I do like looking at people who are miserable! They remind me how happy I am, with my comfortable home and my bags of gold and my nice clothes.

And I saw Jesus looking at me, so I waved my hand to let him know he could start. He seemed to laugh, and he looked at the other people, the scabby smelly poor unimportant people. And to my surprise, he talked to them instead of to me! What a cheek! He started off well. He said 'If you know you've got big spiritual needs...' And I thought yes! These miserable people have got great spiritual needs! They don't know God as well as I do! But then Jesus went on. 'If you know you've got big spiritual needs, you're happy! Because the kingdom of heaven belongs to you!'

What? The kingdom of heaven belongs to important rich good people like me! Not to them! I could see some of those miserable poor people brightening up and listening to Jesus more carefully. He went on: 'If you're sad now...' And I thought, he's going to say, 'If you're sad now, you're a miserable sinner and you've done terrible things wrong and you deserve to be sad!' But Jesus said, 'If you're sad now, you'll be happy! Because God himself will comfort you!' What? This is mad! God only speaks to important religious people like me! Not them! But Jesus went on.

'If you're not important...' 'Aha! This time he was going to tell them they weren't important because God only makes good people important - like me! Jesus said, 'If you're not important, you're happy because the earth will belong to you.' I thought, No! The earth belongs to me! I own lots of farmland and a big house! The earth belongs to me! Jesus said, 'If you want to do right more than anything else, you're happy, because God will satisfy you. If you show mercy, you're happy because God will show you mercy. If your thoughts are pure, you're happy because you'll be with God.' Happy? He's saying that all these scabby horrible unimportant poor people can be as happy as me? That's not



fair! He went on:

'If you work to bring peace, you're happy because God calls you his children. If you're treated badly for doing good, you're happy, because the kingdom of heaven belongs to you.' And I stood up. I left my chair on that hill and I went home, really really cross. How dare this Jesus say that those poor lower class stupid rude people can be happy? How dare he say that God is more interested in them than in me? Happiness belongs to people who are rich and successful. People like me. Not them. And I've got happiness already. I don't need Jesus' happiness. I have no use for it at all.

**4** Perhaps that man had so much in his jar already that he couldn't find room for Jesus' sort of happiness.

**5** Let's hold out our hands as if we're expecting a present. And let's pray together. Lord God, thank you that you care about people who are going through a rough time. And thank you that you come very close to sad people and that you love to make them happy again. Please help us to know your happiness, whether we're going through happy times or sad times.