

TITLE: A “BLESSED” LIFE

TEXT: MATTHEW 5:3-12

INTRO: The “Sermon on the Mount” (Mt 5-7) begins with “the Beatitudes” (from the Latin *beatus*, a translation of the Greek word used 10 times in these verses – “blessed, fortunate, well-off, happy”). If Bill Gates spoke for only 10 minutes on how to be **financially** blessed, who wouldn’t show up?! But Jesus is talking about being *spiritually* blessed – having **joy**, not some fleeting feeling of happiness that gets you through the day. These things are general (not much detail yet), & some are paradoxical (seem contradictory) to gain your attention.

I. (v. 3) Blessed are the POOR IN SPIRIT: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven:

- A. “Poor” – “begging, destitute of wealth, lacking in anything, helpless, needy.” It can mean different things, even when used with “spirit.” E.g., aren’t Christians spiritually *rich*? Yes, because we know & apply Jesus’ teaching. But when He said this, Christianity didn’t exist. He was in the early processes of bringing about this spiritual blessing that *everyone* needed – the new covenant. Anyone *not* poor & lacking in spirit was someone who believed he was okay & needed nothing!
1. This can be seen as someone who lacks the knowledge Jesus provides, but is *not* lacking after he finds & obeys Jesus.
 2. This can be seen as everyone at all times being poor, helpless, & unable to save themselves alone. In contrast to arrogance, it’s a humble attitude, recognizing one’s **spiritual dependence**.
- B. Blessed is the one who *knows* he’s spiritually poor (helpless) on his own. This person doesn’t have the attitude that “God will accept me however I am,” but rather will **seek Him out**, & thereby gain the kingdom of heaven (“*kingdom of God*” – **Luke 6:20**) – i.e., the church of Christ (**3:2; 4:17** – the kingdom of heaven is at hand), the *only* avenue to Heaven.

II. (v. 4) Blessed are they that MOURN: for they shall be comforted:

- “Mourn” – “grieve, lament.” Mourning for what? Everyone mourns (for a lost loved one, etc.). But He obviously meant this spiritually – mourning, grieving, lamenting for sin.
- A. Your own sin: **James 4:8-10** – “*Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, & purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted & mourn & weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy into heaviness* (sin in your life should prevent you from having any kind of laughter, joy, or happiness). *Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord & he shall lift you up.*” **2 Cor 7:10** – “*godly sorrow* (grief, sadness) *worketh repentance....*” Mourning leads to repentance, which leads to forgiveness, which is true “comfort.” How do you feel after you sin? Do want to be comforted? Then you must mourn (& repent)!
- B. Sin in the church: Sadly, too often Christians don’t have any concern for “sin in the camp” (or if they do, they don’t show it). **1 Cor 5:2** – “*Ye are puffed up & have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.*” **Rev 2:14-15** – “*I have a few things against thee, for thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam...and the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which things I hate.*” How can we expect comfort (encouragement, consolation) if we ignore sin?
- C. We mourn for sin in general (sin of the world): We can’t control the actions of those around us, but this doesn’t mean that those actions don’t affect us. Sadness for the world’s sin leads us to evangelize, so they can share in our comfort.

III. (v. 5) Blessed are the MEEK: for they shall inherit the earth:

- A. “Meek” – mild, gentle, humble; but not weak – strength under control. **Matt 21:5** – “*Behold thy king cometh unto thee, meek....*”). **Num 12:3** – “*Moses was very meek*” (he was gentle, humble, & self-controlled, *not* weak). **Psa 25:9** – “*The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way*” (because the meek will humbly listen & obey)! **1 Pet 3:4** – “*a meek & quiet spirit.*” Christians aren’t called to be weaklings, but gentle, self-controlled, not easily provoked or irritated.
- B. Through this attitude we “*shall inherit the earth.*” Does this mean Christians will conquer the world? Clearly not militarily.
1. Some believe “earth” should be “land” & simply refers to the promised land of Canaan (i.e., the church). **Amos 9:15** – “*And I will plant them upon their land, & they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them....*” But it seems that this is another paradox – the “meek” (in contrast with an arrogant, prideful attitude) will conquer.
 2. Jesus *has* already called His church a “kingdom” (v. 3; **3:2; 4:17**). And OT passages like **Isa 2:2**, **Dan 2:44**; & **Micah 4:2** present this kingdom as one that *will* conquer the world (it will outlast *every* other kingdom, **all** nations flow into it, & it shall endure forever). This is fulfilled in the church, being made up of people from **all** nations, & *never* to pass away.
 3. This meek disposition was part of Christ’s character & is still to be a characteristic of His kingdom – something that still attracts people of every nation, land, & language. Truly His followers have inherited the earth.

IV. (v. 6) Blessed are they that hunger & thirst after RIGHTEOUSNESS: for they shall be filled:

- A. “Hunger & thirst”: the most basic human emotions – the need for physical sustenance. An otherwise good person will steal in order to eat; what *won’t* people do for food & water? Only a dead person doesn’t hunger & thirst, and the person who doesn’t hunger & thirst *spiritually* is ill & will eventually die.
- B. The desire we have for food & drink is the kind of desire Jesus wants from us – but for righteousness (cf. **Jn 6**). Righteousness means to be right in God’s sight – to believe, act, & live in such a way as to be pleasing to the Father.
- C. If you hunger & thirst (i.e., earnestly & desperately desire) to be righteous, you WILL BE! Why? Because God **will** show you how (in His Word). If you want it badly enough, you’ll find it!
- D. Everyone hungers & thirsts for something (maybe multiple things). But Jesus’ promise of fulfillment is only for those who are after *righteousness*. This is such an appropriate thought/teaching at the beginning of His ministry, before He has given any other details about the Kingdom & its requirements. They didn’t need to know the details yet in order to be hungry for them!
- E. And it’s just as appropriate today for a non-Christian to begin with this attitude. This is the attitude we should all have.

- V. **(v. 7) *Blessed are the MERCIFUL: for they shall obtain mercy:***
- “Merciful” – compassionate, kind, full of mercy; forbearing, not vindictive, not giving what one may deserve; having the ability (if not the right) to exact a punishment on someone (whether deserved or not), and choosing not to; being merciful.
 - Again, this is general. It does *not* mean we should ignore judgment, justice, & discipline (especially in the church) – things that are **required** by God’s law. But rather have mercy on people when we can (e.g., a penitent person – **2 Cor 2:6-8; Lk 17:3-4**).
 - “**For they shall obtain mercy.**” Even in a general setting, we know full well that we’re all guilty, deserve punishment, & desire mercy. What better blessing is there? But we must *give* mercy (**Mt 6:12,14-15; 18:23-35**–the unmerciful servant; **Jam 2:13**).
- VI. **(v. 8) *Blessed are the PURE IN HEART: for they shall see God:***
- “Pure”–clean, undefiled. *Pure in heart* – many people believe it’s not your actions, but your heart, that matters to God (“God knows my heart”)! Jesus requires a pure heart (mind) because this results in pure actions (cf. **v. 27-28** – adultery starts w/lust).
 - OT priests had to be ceremonially pure/clean (separated – holy) before they could “see God” (i.e., serve in His temple). Likewise, God commands purity from His church (**1 Tim 5:22**–“*keep thyself pure*”). **Heb 12:14**–“*Follow peace w/all men, & holiness (purity), without which no man shall see the Lord.*”
 - They shall see God* – this isn’t literal, just as it wasn’t in the OT (“*there shall no man see me & live*”–**Ex 33:20**). The idea is to **know** God. **3Jn 11**–“*He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God*”; **1Jn 3:6**–“*Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not; whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known Him*”). No intersection between purity & impurity.
 - To see God (to know Him in this life, or to see Him literally in the next life) requires purity (consistency – *God is light, & in Him is no darkness at all*–**1Jn 1:5**). He is “*of purer eyes than to behold evil, & cannot look upon iniquity*” (**Hab 1:13**).
- VII. **(v. 9) *Blessed are the PEACEMAKERS: for they shall be called the children of God:***
- “Peacemaker”–one that makes peace. “Peace”– quietness, rest; safety/security (opposite of war), harmony/concord.
 - “*Children of God*” – sons, offspring; those who look like (act like) the Father. God’s ways are truly peaceful – not just in the life to come (peace between us & God), but in this life (peace among all humans) – **1 Tim 4:8**–“*godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.*” If everyone followed God’s ways, true peace would exist everywhere on Earth, and all would have the hope of true peace with God in Heaven for eternity.
 - So how can we make peace? We can “*seek peace & pursue it*” (**1 Pet 3:11**), avoiding conflicts/confrontations wherever possible. This is part of being “meek.” But this obviously is *not* at the expense of living pure, holy lives He’s called us to, which includes teaching others the truth. These things *will* bring about persecution, not peace (**1 Tim 3:12**, cf. **v. 10**).
 - Spiritually* – true spiritual peace is peace with God; this is the peace we strive to make. And how does one make peace w/God? **Luke 14:32**–A weaker army seeks the stronger army’s terms of peace. And we must seek spiritual peace per **God’s** terms. Sin is what prevents peace, so as peacemakers, we must teach others how to resolve sin. Doing so often brings persecution (v. 10f).
- VIII. **(v. 10-12) *Blessed are they that are PERSECUTED for RIGHTEOUSNESS’ SAKE: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.:***
- Blessed are the persecuted* (“to put to flight, run, flee; be pursued; be mistreated”)!
 - Another paradox: Those who are persecuted, for *whatever* reason, don’t usually feel blessed! But He doesn’t say this of just anyone who has been persecuted – **only** those persecuted “*on account of righteousness*” – for being right in God’s sight (the world doesn’t like this)! (v. 11) They...*shall revile you, persecute you, & say all manner of evil against you falsely on account of Me* (“for righteousness”). There are people in this world who’ll persecute you for *any* reason (doesn’t have to be religious; maybe because of your sports team)! But Jesus is talking about being persecuted for being righteous.
 - He just said (v. 6) blessed are those who hunger & thirst after righteousness.
 - They’re blessed because they’re filled – filled w/righteousness because they pursued it, found it in Christ, & obeyed it.
 - They’re also blessed because they’re persecuted for it (and you *will be* persecuted for it – **1 Tim 3:12**). Jesus says this at the beginning of His ministry. Nobody can claim that He mislead His followers to believe that the Christian life would be easy! **Jn 15:20**–“*The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you....*” These verses show clearly that following Christ can & will bring persecution (but also blessing)!
 - Persecution comes in different forms. One milder form (but a form nonetheless) is when you’re ignored by friends (or potential friends) because you refuse to compromise the truth. Blessed are you when you’re righteous & this happens to you, because yours is *the kingdom of heaven* (the church).
 - It may sound like He’s saying that you’re blessed because you’re going to Heaven (which is true). But as we’ve already discussed (v. 1,5), this kingdom is the church, and it’s worldwide, of every nation. You have family all over the world!
 - Mark 10:28-30**–“*Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all & have followed thee. And Jesus answered..., Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake & the gospel’s, But he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time (in the church), houses & brethren & sisters & mothers & children & lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come, eternal life.*”
 - “*Rejoice, and be exceeding glad...!*” **1 Pet 4:13**–“*Rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings.*” The apostles rejoiced “*that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name*” (**Acts 5:41**). Paul wanted “*to know him, and the power of his resurrection, & the fellowship of his suffering, being made conformable unto his death*” (**Phil 3:10**).
 - “*Great is your reward in heaven.*” How interested is God in spending eternity surrounded by those who *wouldn’t* sacrifice the sinful pleasure of this temporal life? Persecution is an **opportunity** to show God & Jesus that they mean more to us than any ‘peaceful’ situation we might gain here by giving in. Plus, you’re putting yourself in some great company (“*the prophets which were before*” – could you add to their conversation about persecution?). And God looks forward to rewarding us in Heaven!

CONCLUSION: The characteristics of a blessed person: poor in spirit, mournful, meek, righteous, merciful, pure, peaceful. In a perfect world, these aren’t the kind of characteristics that would bring about persecution. But it’s a world that hates God & His ways, & says that happiness comes through sin. Jesus says otherwise, and encourages us to have these characteristics & be blessed – now & in Heaven.