**Calvary Fellowship 4.3.2022 Matthew 5:1-12 “The Happiest Person in the World”**

* **So we do a Marriage Retreat every year at Calvary & 1 of the things that’s always interesting is the other people who have events at the hotel**
* 1 of the groups that was having an event on our floor was a Jewish Speed dating group - those guys were single & ready to mingle
* Well, b/c there was a Jewish group in the hotel, on Friday night the hotel took 1 of the elevators & made it a Sabbath elevator
* If U aren’t aware of what a Sabbath elevator is, it’s an elevator that stops on every floor w/o the person having to press any of the buttons
* This way, the person isn’t violating Sabbath by “working” & pressing the button
* So Carey & I, w/o realizing it, get on Sabbath elevator & before the door closes, about 15 Jewish singles get on w/ us
* So my wife, being the incredibly nice person that she is, says to everyone on the elevator, “Shabat Shalom everyone”, which means, “Peace on the Sabbath”
* When she said that, every guy on that elevator turns to her & I don’t need to be a mindreader to know what they were thinking
* They’re thinking, “Who is this Shiksa (hot Gentile woman) who has given us the traditional Sabbath greeting?”
* So the guys start talking to her & she says that she’s been to Israel & there was a Sabbath elevator when we stayed in Jerusalem
* Well, now the guys are falling all over themselves & asking her questions about her life, what she likes & doesn’t like - her favorite time of year for a wedding
* I’ve been trying to insert myself into this conversation & it is not working
* So when the next floor opens, I grab Carey & say to the guys, “OK. This is the Gentile floor. See U later.” And I got us out of there
* I don’t know what would have happened had we stayed any longer
* I appreciate that those guys recognized the obvious - that my wife is strikingly beautiful & hotter than any girl that was at their speed dating meat market
* I was trying to tell them, “She’s not the 1 for U. She’s taken.”
* But my voice was drowned out by their hearts pounding every time my wife said something in Hebrew
* **And I get it - they were all there looking for love b/c they wanted to be happy - the truth is, we all want to be happy**
* And we all look for happiness in different places - we look for it in relationships
* We look for it in being successful - we look for it in experiences
* But most people don’t find it - and it’s not b/c they just didn’t want it enough
* Most people don’t find happiness b/c they don’t really understand is that happiness comes & goes based on a whole bunch of factors
* But joy - joy is something that’s internal & can stay w/ us despite circumstances
* But Jesus is about to open the greatest sermon ever given & the people that He’s speaking to are struggling - they are overworked, they’re overtaxed, & they’re tired - I know none of can relate to that group
* And Jesus opens by explaining how people can be happy - to literally be blessed no matter the circumstance or situation
* **So let me set the scene for U - people are traveling from every direction to see Jesus - crowds of people want to hear Him, see Him, & be healed**
* “And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them. Great multitudes followed Him—from Galilee, and from Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan.” (Matthew 4:23-25)
* Galilee & the Decapolis were north - Jerusalem & Judea are south & beyond the Jordan was East - people were going from every direction
* Well, why not from the west? B/c west was the Mediterranean Sea & apparently the fish were not lining up to hear the sermons
* But people are coming from everywhere & so Jesus finds a place to teach them
* **Now, here’s the thing U need to understand to really understand this message that Jesus is giving - Jesus is explaining there’s 2 ways to live**
* Remember, Jesus is talking to believers - everyone in the crowd believed in God - everyone in the crowd accepted the law of Moses as their authority
* But there are 2 groups - there’s the broad road & the narrow road
* There’s the house built on sand & the house built on the rock
* There’s the tree that bears good fruit & the 1 that bears bad fruit
* All 3 of these illustrations happen at the end of the sermon to drive home the point that U can look a certain way - U can look very spiritual & holy
* But in reality, U can be completely lost & far from God
* And if we don’t have this as the undergirding of the sermon, we’ll never really understand what Jesus is saying
* But if we grab hold of what Jesus is teaching us, we can have joy no matter what’s happening in our lives & live a life that’s blessed…

**———(v. 1-4)———**

**#1 - Happy People See Themselves as They Really Are**

* **Now notice that Jesus sits & begins to teach - this was the custom in that culture & He begins this sermon by talking about how to be happy**
* These 8 statements are called “The Beatitudes” - it comes from the Latin word “beatus”, which means “Happy” - or literally means “Oh how happy is…”
* The gr. word is Macharias - People in the 1st century were like us – when they thought about living the good & happy life, they thought of living on an island
* There was a series of islands in Cyprus that they considered to be paradise
* So they created a word to describe things in this paradise = Macharias
* They defined happiness as a life that was carefree & problem-free
* In these Beatitudes, Jesus is saying, “I know how you can bottle the island life. I know how you can experience Macharias internally, everyday of your life.”
* It’s experiencing blessing in your life that’s not connected to circumstances
* B/c if we think that joy & happiness are only connected through circumstances, I’m going to live a try unhappy life
* In fact, most of us who have been around for a while & especially those of us who have a bit of gray - we know something counterintuitive
* That sometimes the deep joy that we have now is connected to deep pain that happened in our part - And we wouldn’t want to go through it again
* And we certainly wouldn’t wish it on anyone, but it was those seasons in the valley that prepared me to enjoy the seasons on the mountaintops
* **So I was out walking a while ago & I try to walk about 2-3 miles a day**
* I was on the phone w/ a friend of mine & I was walking by these 2 geese that were hanging out a couple doors down from my house
* And they started yelling, “Aflack” or what they yell & they both started chasing me & flying to attack me - I started running like the wind to escape their wrath
* My neighbors probably thought I looked insane - “Look at that g uy being chased by 3 ducks.” - They are geese & they are demon possessed
* So I get home & learn that geese can fly up to 40 MPH - that means I can run 41 MPH - I’m like The Flash
* But Friday morning I’m out walking & 2 geese come out of nowhere thinking they’re going make a scene & I say, “Not today Devil” & I ran knowing I’d win
* The point is, sometimes the trial brings something out in U that U didn’t even know was there - And that brings greater joy in your life later
* **So who does He say are blessed? Who are the poor in spirit?**
* The word “poor” in the original language it’s refers to someone who is completely helpless - It speaks of someone who can’t take care of themselves
* “Poor in spirit” refers to a person who recognizes their own spiritual poverty
* They see their need for God as they have come to the end of themselves
* When a person comes to that realization, God begins to work in their lives & does things for them that they could never could do for themselves
* **He says that those who mourn are blessed - why?**
* B/c the dark seasons in our life, when things haven’t gone your way, when U couldn’t depend on anyone but God brought more growth than any other time
* And U experienced God in a way U never had before during that low season in the valley - but it’s also what prepared U for the season on the mountaintop
* That’s why Jesus says those that mourn are happy b/c they experience the comfort of God in a way other haven’t experienced
* That word comfort is the Greek word Parakleo = it’s the same word Jesus uses later of the Holy Spirit - Parakleo means to come alongside & help
* That’s what happens in your life when U go through the valleys & keep trusting God, you’ll experience Him in a way that’ll mark U for life from that moment on

**———(v. 5-6)———**

**#2 - Happy People have the Right Desires**

* **2 words that are important for us to understand - meekness & inherited**
* What is meekness? Many think that meekness is weakness, but it’s not
* Literally, meekness is power under restraint - it’s having power, but having the self control to use it properly or not use it at all
* Culturally, it refers to a wild stallion that was out of control & has been tamed
* The horse possesses great power, but it’s channeled in a productive way
* **Understand, Jesus’ listeners must have been shocked when he talked about the meek inheriting anything- b/c that’s not the way the world works**
* They were under the rule of Rome & were looking for a leader that would overthrow the oppression of Caesar & give them their land back
* So when Jesus says, “The meek inherit the earth.” – they’re saying, “Doesn’t compute” - The meek don’t inherit the earth, the forceful take it
* This is the way of this world – Rule #1: get power & rule #2: keep it
* **“**Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; Do not fret—it only causes harm. For evildoers shall be cut off; but those who wait on the Lord, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while and the wicked shall be no more; Indeed, you will look carefully for his place, but it shall be no more. But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.” (Psalm 37:8-11)
* **Here’s the truth: our struggle isn’t when we’re powerless - it’s when we have power to gain something - Jesus says the meek inherit everything**
* That’s the point of this Beatitude - that U can try to gain anything/ use your power to obtain something/ but the meek inherit everything
* “And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God’s glory.” (Romans 8:17)
* Inheritance is the natural byproduct of being a child of God & following Jesus
* **So I have a 10 year old daughter who is the funniest kid I’ve ever met**
* She has a way of looking at life that is totally amazing & hilarious
* About 5 years ago, I was making breakfast for the kids & we’re sitting & talking & Livi says, “You’re not my real father.” - I said, “Excuse me?”
* She said, “Yeah. You’re not my real father. God is my father.” - I said, “Livi, U have a heavenly Father (God) & an earthly father (me).”
* She said, “Well, God can go to heaven & earth. So he’s my heavenly father & my earthly father. Don’t you read the Bible?” - I said, “I read it a bit.”
* I said, “So if I’m not you’re father, then what relationship do we have?”
* She says, “You’re an earthling.” - I said, “Well, I got these brownies for my children, but if you’re not my child, U can’t have 1.”
* She says, “Well, is 1 of those a brownie w/ fudge?” - I said, “Yes”
* She said, “Come here dad! I love U so much!”
* My daughter intuitively understood that inheritance comes through relationship
* When you’re in relationship w/ God & walking w/ Him, meekness becomes a matter of trust
* That is, we express our trust either in ourselves or God by our ability to not force things to happen in our own strength
* I’m not talking about doing our due diligence, putting forth effort, or not actively seeking God & doing the things we’re called to do
* I mean when we’re manipulating, trying to force things to happen a certain way
* **Listen - U have a heavenly father who loves U & desires to do great & mighty things in your life - but U have to trust Him**
* U & I have to resist the temptation to exercise power w/o restraint to demand our own way - b/c when we do that it never works out for our benefit
* **Then Jesus says “Happy are the hungry b/c they’re going to be filled”**
* That’s not the way it works - in fact, we hav a special word for the level of unhappy people experience when they haven’t eaten - “hangry”
* But hunger is about desire - that’s what Jesus is getting at
* Jesus is saying happy people have good desires & those desires get met
* What is the desire they have? They hunger & thirst for righteousness
* Righteousness = It’s right conduct in relationship to God & others
* It’s when I hunger for things to be right between me & God/ it’s when I hunger for things to be right between myself & my neighbor
* It’s when I hunger for me to do the right thing in difficult circumstances
* It’s when I hunger for me to obey God’s commands
* It’s when I hunger for me to be the kind of man that God wants me to be
* When I hunger & thirst for those things, Jesus says, “You’re blessed b/c you’re going to be filled & satisfied.”
* **My son is almost 13 & he’s at a stage where he’s eating us out of house & home - he’s in a perpetual state of hunger b/c he’s growing**
* If he continues at this rate, he’s going to be 11 feet tall w/in 2 years
* The other night I made skirt steak for dinner & salad & potatoes - I didn’t have potatoes b/c I can’t any joy in my life
* But he ate everything on his plate - went back for seconds & ate that
* Then we are all talking & we didn’t notice that Xander was eating a giant bowl of cereal - I said, “Dude, U literally just ate dinner. Take a moment to breathe.”
* But sometimes he’ll tell his son that he’s hungry & Carey says, “You’re not hungry. You’re thirsty. Drink a glass of water.” - And that does it
* **B/c there’s a principle - that whatever U feed yourself is what U will desire**
* That’s why it’s so hard to go back on your eating plan after vacation
* B/c U were eating Oreo’s for breakfast & washing it down w/ chocolate milk & now you’re trying to go back to protein bars & a kale shake - it’s hard
* But once you’re in the rhythm of eating well, U actually desire the good stuff
* Well, not kale b/c kale tastes like death - but U desire the other things
* This is true spiritually as well - when you’re walking w/ God & learning of God, U desire the things of God
* So if U don’t have a desire for the things of God, then U need to watch what you’re ingesting b/c it might be junk that’s going to hurt U
* And the reality is, the junk - the hours of cable news, hours on social media, entertainment that isn’t helping U at all - it leaves U empty
* But when U desire things of God, you’ll be filled or literally “gorged”
* It’s like Thanksgiving dinner & U are wise enough to wear sweatpants so there’s no resistance - you are full & dessert is on the way

**———(v. 7-9)———**

**#3 - Happy People Don’t Carry Grudges**

* **Before we get into how to be merciful, I want to give U 4 things it’s not:**
* **#1 - Mercy is not Justifying another Person’s Actions**
* When U forgive someone, you’re not saying what they did to U was OK
* U are simply letting go of the baggage that is holding U back
* **#2 - Mercy is not Waiting on the Passage of Time**
* Whoever said, “Time heals all wounds” is an idiot b/c many times just the opposite is true - I’ve watched time harden people who haven’t forgiven
* Time only helps if you’ve forgiven b/c the passing of time lessens the pain
* **#3 - Mercy is not Denying You are Hurt**
* When U say, “It’s no big deal”, when U are hurt - that can get under your skin & like a splinter that goes attended, it causes infection & pain
* Mercy is about deciding to forgive rather than exact revenge
* Forgiveness is about accepting you’re hurt & dealing w/ it in a godly way
* **#4 - Mercy is not Automatically Trusting Them Again**
* Just b/c U forgive someone, it doesn’t mean U have to trust them
* Forgiveness is a choice we make/ trust is something a person earns
* Forgive freely, but make people earn trust through wise choices & actions
* **Forgiveness is difficult b/c it’s not the natural reaction when we’re hurt**
* Our natural reaction is revenge, so they feel the same way they made us feel
* But Jesus says that the merciful are the ones who are blessed & happy
* Why? B/c they are always reminded of how they have been the recipient of mercy, grace & forgiveness - Do U what that causes in a person? Gratitude
* “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” (Ephesians 4:32)
* **Here’s the point - when U show mercy & compassion & forgive, it reveals something about U - it reveals that you’ve experienced forgiveness**
* But when I refuse to forgive - when I choose revenge over mercy, it reveals that I’ve never really experienced mercy - but when we forgive, it breaks the cycle
* **When I was 9, I was hungry 1 day so I grabbed a package of Doritos**
* The problem was I was feeling a bit lazy & I didn’t want to chew
* But I still wanted the cheesy flavor, so I decided to lick the cheese off every chip, then b/c they were still intact, I put them back in the bag
* Feel free to imagine a bag full of moist, wet from saliva Doritos
* Everything was fine until about an hour later when my mom started freaking out when she decided to bite into a chip & nearly threw up
* She walked into my room w/ the Doritos in 1 hand & a belt in the other - that’s when things got ugly & when I regained consciousness, I never did that again
* **Fast forward 28 years & I grab a bag of Doritos out of our pantry**
* I grab a chip & take a bite & they’re all wet - my then 3 year old daughter Mia had decided to lick all the cheese off the Doritos & put them back in the bag
* What do U do? I laughed - I told Mia that’s a really disgusting thing to do
* Here’s the key - I knew what it’s like to be guilty of the same thing & forgiving her brought me great joy b/c that’s what I would have wanted for myself
* **Being a Christian means that we are sinners, but we have been shown great mercy - if anyone understands mercy, it should be us**
* If U want to be happy, then add this phrase to the equation when you’ve been wronged - “I’ve been forgiven of worse” - it’s not easy, but it will set U free
* And when U show mercy & forgive, you’re bringing joy into your own life…

**———(v. 10-12)———**

**#4 - Happy People aren’t Influenced by Haters**

* **I want U to notice 3 things that are important here - 1st, Jesus is making a general statement to everyone listening about being persecuted**
* Then in verses 11 & 12 He personalizes it & says “you” 5 times b/c this is a message to those who are Jesus followers that this is going to happen
* And that brings me to the 3rd thing I wanted U to notice - that it’s persecution for righteousness’ sake - it’s difficulties that arise for being a follower of Jesus
* “If you are insulted because you bear the name of Christ, you will be blessed, for the glorious Spirit of God rests upon you. If you suffer, however, it must not be for murder, stealing, making trouble, or prying into other people’s affairs. But it is no shame to suffer for being a Christian. Praise God for the privilege of being called by his name!” (1 Peter 4:14-16)
* So you’re blessed if U suffer for the cause of being a follower of Jesus
* That doesn’t include difficulties that arise for being a knucklehead
* **Our family went to go see Black Panther on the day of release - we were all very excited to see it - however, I did have 1 problem**
* It was a lunchtime showing & movie theater food doesn’t jive very well w/ my eating habits, so I had smuggle some food into the theater
* So I brought some almonds & a salad into the theater, but I bought a bottle of water just to keep it real w/ the theater
* So we get our seats as the movie is about to start & U could hear a pin drop in this theater as the movie was starting - so I get my lunch out
* I grab my salad, my utensils, & the container of dressing I put in there & I poured the dressing, then I close the lid & I started shaking the salad
* George taught me that this is the best way to evenly distribute the dressing
* Well, imagine taking a Tupperware container filled w/ Legos & shaking it
* It was so loud, people were looking at me, some were yelling, & the big dude next to me was not happy that we were going to be that close for 2 hours
* But I was over, I opened the container & everything was fine… until I took my first bite of romaine & it sounds like I was landing a 747 in that theater
* Now if someone had walked up to me & grabbed my salad container & beat w/ me it, I couldn’t claim Christian persecuted - it would’ve been theater justice
* **Here’s the point: Jesus is telling us a truth that we miss too often in the church today - we get fed a message that everything is going to be great**
* But that’s not what Jesus is saying - Jesus is saying, “It might not be good. In fact, it’s possible that U might be discriminated against b/c of your faith.”
* “It’s possible that some people might even hate U b/c you’re a Jesus follower. But that’s ok. B/c you’re going to be happier than anyone else.”
* How is that even possible? B/c the outside persecution is going to remind U that you’re doing the right thing
* Listen - U only feel resistance when you’re swimming against the current - if you’re going w/ the flow of everyone else, it’s going to feel really easy
* That means at work, it might get tough at times - it might mean U get excluded from certain things b/c U won’t play their reindeer games b/c of your faith
* It might mean that members of your family exclude U or attack U b/c you’re a Christian - that’s what happened to me - I was constantly attacked by my family
* And do U know that? It’s the greatest thing that could have happened b/c it taught me to learn to defend my faith when I was a really young Christian
* The enemy thought he burying me & it turned out God was using it to strengthen me & clarify my calling to teach others what I had learned
* And the same thing is true for U - U won’t see the tests as a bad thing when U look back & realize that those where the things that strengthened U
* Those where the things that developed U & prepared U
* Those where the things that God used to transform U - you’ll look at those moments & say, “I was blessed when those things happened to me b/c they deepened my faith & cemented my trust”
* **My friends, the beatitudes are giving us a blueprint - they’re showing us how to be happy beyond what the culture thinks can bring happiness**
* And in a world that is so angry & judgmental & joyless - we have a blueprint on how to be happy no matter what comes our way…