



+ **YOU**

Summer 2024
Promises We Can Count On

Sermon Title: #Blessed? Or Blessed

To be used with Session 3: God's Promise of Blessing

Scripture: Matthew 5:3-11

Connection with Bible Study: To complement the Bible study "God's Promise of Blessing" this sermon will help listeners understand that there is a difference between "feeling" blessed and being blessed. People can post their Instagram photos of their perfect family vacation in the Caribbean and tag them with "#blessed." But being blessed has nothing to do with your Facebook highlights. It has everything to do with what God pronounces over you.

Introduction: "

Imagine that an alien were to land on our planet and observe how we use the word "blessed" and determine its meaning *solely* by how it is used on social media. First off, this alien would be confused about how to spell the word, because everywhere you see it on social media, it's #blessed, not just blessed.

From there, the alien would start to look at all our Facebook posts, Pinterest boards, and Instagram feeds. And his conclusion would be that #blessed means living the good life. Sipping an artisan coffee or a craft brew in a remodeled kitchen that opens out onto a patio overlooking a Key West sunset as you hold hands with your supermodel wife, while your children frolic in the surf with your purebred designer dog.

But that has nothing to do with what the Bible means by blessed. Many of the things we associate with a blessed life—health, provision, beauty, and more—are, of course, gifts from God. But they are just hints and shadows of the real and true blessedness. Like the song Blessed Assurance, they are just a foretaste of glory divine.

When the Bible talks about being blessed, what does it mean? Let's get an Old Testament answer and a New Testament answer.

1. Blessed Because God Made You (Gen. 1).

In the Old Testament, the word *blessed* first shows up in Genesis 1:22. When God blessed the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, it was the first of over two hundred times the word blessed is used in the Old Testament. The word is "*barak*," and it means to endow with power for success, prosperity, longevity, and so forth.

Lifeway

© 2024 Lifeway Christian Resources
www.biblestudiesforlife.com

Later in the creation story, God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy (Gen. 2:2). Even before the Ten Commandments were given, the people understood that the seventh day was to be a special, sacred day of rest.

God blessed what He created and called it good. The word *good* has many meanings, but it has some etymological connections with the Hebrew word for “beautiful.” So everything that is good and beautiful in the world is the result of God’s blessing. That includes you and me.

Think about this for a moment: Moses wrote the book of Genesis. He probably wrote it during the forty years the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness. He probably didn’t always “feel blessed” during those forty years! Blessing isn’t about feeling blessed. It’s about *being* blessed!

2. Blessed Because Jesus Says So (Matt. 5:1-11).

The first time the word “blessed” shows up in the New Testament is in Jesus’s Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7). The sermon begins with eight “beatitudes” (beautiful attitudes). The Greek word is *makarios*. The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament defines it as “referring overwhelmingly to the distinctive religious joy which results from our share in the salvation of the kingdom of God.”

This makes sense when you look at the Beatitudes themselves. There is almost nothing in verses 3-8 that would make someone “feel” blessed. Who feels blessed when they mourn? How does being persecuted for the sake of righteousness fit in with how people normally talk about being blessed on social media?

3. Blessed Because You Are Becoming More Like Jesus (2 Cor. 12:9)

In 2 Corinthians 11-12, Paul reflected on all of the hardships he had endured in his life—the shipwrecks, the beatings, the stonings, the death threats, the betrayals from people he thought were his friends. He alluded to some kind of physical problem; he called it a thorn in the flesh. He prayed over and over for God to take this thorn in the flesh away, but God wouldn’t do it.

Would you say Paul was blessed, by the world’s standards? Was he living his best life now? Was he #blessed?

No. Not by the world’s standards. But look at how Paul ended this section of the letter to the Corinthians:

“Therefore, I will most gladly boast all the more about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may reside in me. So I take pleasure in weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and in difficulties, for the sake of Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor. 12:9-10).

Paul considered himself blessed because he had a share in the kingdom of God. Even when nothing in his life was Instagram worthy, he knew that his life allowed the power of Christ to rest upon him.

Conclusion: If you don't know Jesus, then enjoy every opportunity to be #blessed. Make the most of that Caribbean cruise. Take delight in your kids opening their Christmas presents. Enjoy time with your family at Thanksgiving. Just realize that without Jesus, this is the most blessing you are going to get.

But if you do have a relationship with Jesus; if you do have a share in the salvation of the kingdom of God, then take comfort in your mourning. Be blessed in your brokenness. Endure persecution with joy. Why? Because this is the closest to hell you will ever have to endure. One day, Jesus will say to you "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (May. 25:34).

Oh, beloved, don't just settle for #blessed. You can leave this place today truly blessed. Bow the knee. Confess with the tongue that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

James Jackson is pastor of Glynwood Baptist Church in Prattville, Alabama. He and his wife Trish have two grown sons and a grandchild. James blogs regularly at 66in52.com, a ministry dedicated to helping people fall more in love with God's Word through daily Bible study.