

Matthew 5:1-12 Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, ² and he began to teach them. He said: ³ “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. ⁵ Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. ⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. ⁷ Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. ⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. ⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. ¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹ “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Do you want to have a happy life?

1. Blessed
2. Blessed in our standing before God
3. Blessed in our dealings with others

Several years ago, the British government announced its intent to create a “happiness index” to gauge just how cheerful its citizens are. The plan was quickly scrapped, as one British politician explained, “You cannot capture happiness on a spreadsheet any more than you can bottle it.” Is he right? Is there no way to measure happiness? Kids, aren’t you happier when eating cake than when eating a carrot? Aren’t we happier when the Badgers win? It’s not difficult to figure out what makes us happy. Then again happiness that comes from eating cake or watching your favorite team win is a happiness that doesn’t last. Do you want real, lasting happiness? Do you want to be happy with yourself and in your relationships? Do you want to have a happy life?

We often have a shallow idea of what brings happiness. A child thinks that if he gets the right present for Christmas, that will make him happy. Who of us doesn’t believe that if we just had enough money, we would be happy? Or if we had a better job, better car, bigger house, we would be happy.

In this lesson, Jesus talks about being blessed. Blessed could be translated happy, but it’s certainly a different kind of happiness. Aristotle contrasted the blessed one with the needy one. So, in the Greek mind, you are blessed when you need nothing from anyone. It is for that reason that Sophocles said that the only happy person is a dead person.

Jesus would have us take a wholly different look at what it means to be blessed. As a baptized child of God who has experienced the gift of salvation through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, our happiness or blessedness does not come from what we have or the circumstances of life. Through faith we are blessed. There may be suffering, sadness, sorrow, fear, trouble, and even death, but the Christian is happy – better blessed. Now, what Jesus is teaching believers in this lesson is to live out that blessedness in life.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. ⁵ Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. ⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. The root meaning of the word for “poor” is “to be bent over, to stoop.” A Christian does not stand tall before God and proudly point to all the money he gives to God’s work, or to all the time he volunteers at church or in the community. Instead, like the tax collector in the temple, he stoops before God, beats his breast aware of his many sins. A Christian is poor in spirit – spiritually poor – who has nothing to bring to God but sin and guilt. A Christian is one who stands as a beggar before God and can only receive from him.

He even mourns over his sin. Like Paul we say, “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?” (Romans 7:24) Does our own sin grieve us? Do we mourn for the neighbor who ignores God; the coworker who uses God’s name in vain; the son who despises God’s Word, the physical abuse, adultery, and slander reported daily in the news?

Then may we also hunger and thirst for righteousness. The thirst for righteousness is quenched only at the fountain filled with the blood of Jesus. It is a drink made of equal parts his perfect life lived in our place and his precious death as our substitute. We hunger and thirst for the Word of God that brings us that righteousness and fills us with that righteousness so that we live out that righteousness in daily life. We learn to be like Jesus, to be meek.

Jesus said we are blessed when we are the meek. Someone once said that meekness is not the opposite of macho; meekness is macho under control. The meek do not insist on their rights without considering the rights of others. They

will tolerate mistreatment without considering how to get even. Meekness is Jesus. Jesus said, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart." (Matthew 11:29)

Those who are poor in spirit, who mourn, who thirst for righteousness and are meek are blessed, Jesus said. How? They have the kingdom of heaven and comfort. They inherit the earth. They are filled. The Greek word for filled is one you would expect to hear at a feedlot. Cattle are not so much filled as they are fattened, they are over filled. That is what Jesus is saying about us when we thirst for righteousness, we will be stuffed with it.

And you inherit the earth. You are favored citizens of this place because Jesus promised to work out everything for your good. He rules the world for the benefit of his people. That's why we can afford to let others cut in front of us at the checkout line and why we don't have to insist on getting our way. God sees what's going on and will give you what you need. So, if you have to have the last word in an argument, let it be "I'm sorry," or "I forgive you."

When we live these attitudes, we are blessed in our standing before God. We are also blessed in our dealings with others. ⁷ *Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.* ⁸ *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.* ⁹ *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.* ¹⁰ *Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* ¹¹ *"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.* ¹² *Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

Blessed are the merciful, who are moved by the needs of others. The opposite of mercy is the rich man who ignored the needs of Lazarus. He let him lie at his gate and never lifted a finger to help. Or we remember Pilate. Pilate showed no mercy to Jesus even though he knew he was innocent and saw him beaten and bloodied.

Blessed are the pure in heart. We pray for that almost every Sunday as we sing the "Create in Me." "Create in me, a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." We pray this prayer after hearing law which convicts us and gospel which comforts us. We want that Word of God to make us pure in heart.

Blessed are the peacemakers. They don't stir up the pot with gossip. They don't retaliate or get even. They seek to bring peace in the home, school and church. They recognize what King David observed, "How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1)

And blessed are the persecuted. That word is used of hunting prey or hunting down an enemy. When we are the hunted because we believe in Jesus, we are blessed and we should rejoice. Remember how the disciples in the book of Acts rejoiced when they were thrown in prison for preaching about Jesus?

Rejoice in persecution? Yes, because we are blessed. Look at what that says about us. We will see God. What a promise! We are called sons of God. We will have the kingdom of God for all eternity.

Blessed we are when we live as a blessing to others. What a difference these attitudes make in a Christian life and a Christian home. Husbands and wives feel supremely confident in each other. Children sense their well-being. Brothers and sisters get along famously. Friendships blossom and endure. Congregations flourish with harmonious fellowship.

So, do you want to be happy? Through faith in Jesus Christ we are already blessed with forgiveness, life and salvation. Let us, then, strive to be attitudes that bless others. When we strive for those attitudes, we, too, will be blessed. We will have a happy life.