

"Blessed to Be a Blessing"

Matthew 5:3-16



"God blesses..."

-When they would have heard this phrase, they would have understood it in two ways:

God Approves - Those who are seen, valued, chosen, picked for the team...

God Satisfies - ...and able to enjoy all the benefits of the team!

-this "perfect happiness" (*Makarios*) is not about a fleeting state; it is pronouncing the deep, soul-level satisfaction of belonging, fitting, being at peace, rightly aligned.

Today, we will see Jesus' description of the "People of the Kingdom", the "Blessed" ones.

-Jesus seems to break these eight descriptions into two categories:

-**Their postures towards God** (poor and in need, mourning, humble, hungry/thirsty for justice)

-**Their postures towards other people** (merciful, pure of heart, peacemakers, doing right)

Postures towards God...

"God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for Him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs." Matthew 5:3

-The poverty being spoken of here is not truly about physical poverty or financial poverty. It is about the recognition of our spiritual incapability of earning God's righteousness on our own.

Consider: How often are you aware of your "poverty", your spiritual need? Are you willing to express this need to God?

"God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted." Matthew 5:4

- Mourning is not whining. It is honesty with God about our pain, brokenness, our sin and the sins of others that have affected us. Only then can we receive the comfort, healing, restoration, and "satisfaction" offered. (John 5:6, Matt. 9:12)

Consider: Do you have areas of "sickness", pain or brokenness caused by sin? Are you willing to be healed by Jesus, and leave your sin behind?

"God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth." Matthew 5:5

-Those who approach God with humility or "meekness", see temporal power, riches, and fame as not necessary, because true inheritance comes through the riches offered by Jesus, both dwelling with Him now, and in the eternal Kingdom.

-The opposite of this is pride, and the desire to grab power, fame, and glory for oneself. They want to build their own kingdom. (James 4:6)

Consider: Have you been trying to build your own kingdom? Has pride led you into a posture of opposing God?

"God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will be satisfied." Matthew 5:6

-The aching for Jesus' ultimate reckoning of justice is an appropriate instinct for God's people. He can also, at times, call us to be instruments of His justice, standing in the gap, defending the defenseless, feeding the hungry, etc., but we must ultimately see true justice as belonging to God, not to us. (Psalm 13:1, Rev. 22:20-21)

Consider: Are there examples of injustice in our world, and specifically in close proximity to you, that upset you? Have you felt the aching for things to be made right? Do you believe that God cares as much as you do?

Postures towards other people...

"God blesses those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy." Matthew 5:7

-Mercy appropriately follows our "hunger for justice", as it is the reminder of the forgiveness that we have received. Justice and mercy must both be the postures of the people of the Kingdom.

Consider: Reflect on the parable of the unmerciful servant (Matthew 18:21-35). Does this story remind you of any times when you were unwilling to forgive, and forgetful of the forgiveness offered to you?

"God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God." Matthew 5:8

-"Utterly sincere" is another way of describing this phrase. To be completely truthful, genuine in motivations, intentions, not just in our outward appearance.

-Each action done with motivations of worshipping Jesus moves you closer to Him, to see who He truly is more clearly, the Holy and Pure One that we get to make more famous in the world.

Consider: As you interact with others, do you find yourself serving at times with “ulterior motives”? How might you prepare your heart to serve in ways that bring honor, glory, and fame to God?

“God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God. Matthew 5:9

-“Peacemaking” often flows out of “pure-hearted” conversations, whether it is through vulnerably admitting wrongdoing and seeking forgiveness, or humbly pointing out an area of brokenness and incongruity in someone else’s life.

-Remember to work towards justice and extend mercy.

-Everyone reconciled to God through the work of Jesus, gets to be part of the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18-21).

Consider: Review your last week. Have you brought more war, chaos, division, or more peace, reconciliation? How often do you see those around you as representing “other teams” to be warred and fought against, rather than those to be invited into peaceful connection with God and His Kingdom?

“God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs... Matthew 5:10

-Peacemaking, and “doing right” will often lead to persecution, as worldviews collide. And by “doing right”, Jesus means the following of His Kingdom’s practices, which He will continue to unveil as the sermon precedes.

-Currently, 42 countries where Christianity is *restricted* (e.g. - China, Iran, North Korea); 26 are *hostile* towards Christianity (e.g. - Israel, Nepal, Nigeria); and 9 *heavily monitored* for dangerous patterns (e.g.- Russia, Honduras, Rwanda). See “*Voice of the Martyrs*” QR code below (left) for more info.

-Ultimately, we are simply to make peace, do what is right, and expect that there will be opposition.

Consider: Do you know of men or women who have truly been persecuted for following the teachings of Jesus? Are there any practices of the Kingdom that you believe may lead to persecution for you?

Those who are “blessed” have the opportunity to pass on the blessing. (Matthew 5:13-16)

“The salt of the earth” – The people of the Kingdom can bring the vibrant, life-giving message of Jesus to the dying world, and to preserve it for future generations.

Warning - Salt (Sodium Chloride) that is mixed with other elements can make it ineffective and even dangerous.

“The light of the world” – The people of the Kingdom should build such a bright and beautiful community that combats the darkness, illuminates the truth, and provides hope for the weary.

Warning - A lamp that is placed under a basket will not be useful and could be dangerous.

A Prayer Practice for the People of the Kingdom (the “Blessed”):

-Find a quiet space and face away from the door, present in the room. Take a moment to recognize the presence of God that is there with you. And then use the following prompts...

“Lord, I am poor in spirit, and in need of your help.”

“Lord, I am mournful, and in need of your comfort.”

“Lord, I desire humility; help me to combat my pride.”

“Lord, I long for your justice; help me to trust your sovereign plan.”

-And then, turn and face the door, representing the people that you will interact with outside...

“Lord, I want to give mercy, as I remember the mercy shown to me.”

“Lord, I desire a pure heart, so that my intentions and actions may point others towards You.”

“Lord, I want to work for peace, pointing others towards wholeness and healing found in You.”

“Lord, I want to do what is right; help me to see You clearly, even if I face great opposition.”

Further Steps:

-Take time this week to look over the “Consider” questions. Ask them to yourself in the Lord’s presence and answer them truthfully. Then, perhaps sharing your answers with a friend can help you to apply any steps you hope to take.

-Also, join us as we read through the New Testament this year!

(Use the code below for the downloadable guide for the NT plan.)

