

January 30, 2011
Matthew 5:1-12

Epiphany 4A
One blessedness or the other

Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our text for this morning comes to us from our Gospel lesson, St. Matthew chapter 5, the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount. Starting today and going through February we will be looking at Christ's Sermon and how he teaches the disciples how to live as disciples.

Do any of you remember Aesop's fable of the dog with the bone in its mouth that sees its reflection in the water? We all know it can't have both the bone in its mouth and the bone that it sees in the water. It has to let go of the one in order to have the other. So, too, we can't have the blessedness of God's kingdom if we set our hearts on the blessedness of the world. We must be emptied of love for the one to receive and the love the other. That is exactly what our Lord Jesus does for us when he preaches into us these paradoxical blessings so that we might receive and love true heavenly happiness.

You see we are either going to receive one blessedness or another. We can't receive both blessings. That is blessings of the world or blessings of heaven. So what is Jesus really saying to us in his beginning Words of the Sermon on the Mount? My argument is that he is teaching his disciples on how to be disciples. Let's briefly pick apart each of these beatitudes.

"Blessed are the poor in Spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Here we will begin to see how we need to empty ourselves of something in order to receive the other. When we think of the poor in Spirit, it is pointing to those of us that cry out to God since we are all beggars before God; we are in need of him. There are many times however that we are not poor in Spirit, when we do not acknowledge our need for him, when we put worldly treasures of goods, fame, power, success above the Lord. So when we being disciples of our Lord find ourselves pleading and begging with our Lord to grant us mercy, then and only then are we poor in Spirit.

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." How often do we mourn when we see our world in shambles. On Thursday morning when I was driving to work, something caused me to Mourn. On the news, I heard something I knew, but the statistics surprised me. The fastest growing religion in the World is Islam. Its growing faster than any of the other religions combined including Christianity. In 20 years ¼ of the world's population will be Islam. That caused me to mourn, it also drives me to go out and spread the good news of Jesus Christ. It's an eye opener, we need to do a better job in our discipleship roles.

"Blessed are meek, for they shall inherit the earth." The meek among us are those of us disciples that are lowly and humble and are willing to give up of themselves. The meek are those that fully dedicate their lives to the service of God in the most humble of manners, that cry out to God, "Lord, have mercy".

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.” I’ve been hungry and thirsty before. It’s really not a pleasant feeling. But when we are hungry and thirsty we seek out what we need. Here on earthy we are hungry and thirsty for lots of different things and we go after them...we try and attain them, but sometimes when we hunger and thirst after everything besides our Lord and his righteousness we end falling behind, we end up giving up, we end up not receiving what we truly need inside God’s family the Church. However when we give up that hunger and thirst and hunger and thirst for righteousness something changes inside of us. I find myself in a happier mood, ready and willing to serve my God.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.” Here Christ calls us to live a life of mercy, that is to deal with others in a friendly and gentle manner, to gladly forgive the sins of those who sin against us.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” Here those of that have a pure heart are those of us that have been cleansed and washed clean by the blood of the lamb. We have a clean heart when the Spirit of God rests upon us and we give up the peculiar ideas that the world wants us to trap in our hearts. Perhaps the world tells us, “Continue to dwell on the past.” Or maybe, “It’s okay to be a one hour Christian, because than maybe I suck you right out of that one hour.”

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.” Bringing peace to those around us is indeed a heavenly virtue. Christ calls us as his disciples in this present age to go and share His peace with those around us. We are peacemakers when we listen to others and mediate between others. We are peacemakers when we bring the peace of God to others.

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” My dear family of God, we may not be persecuted in the ways that the disciples were in the New Testament, but I can tell your persecution is running rampant. You see it in our society. You are slowly seeing our Christian freedoms ripped out from our hands. We are being persecuted right here in a country that has religious freedom. We need to become strong and fight through our persecution and spread this gospel message of Jesus Christ. We need to live for him in our daily lives. For this life of discipleship that we have is an everyday affair.

We have this gift of discipleship because of the ultimate disciple, our Savior Jesus Christ. If you take a look at each of these beatitudes, Jesus Christ fulfills each of them perfectly. He would cry out to His Father, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me.” He cried out seeking mercy on the cross. He mourned over the lifestyles of those people around him, he was indeed very meek, he was gentle and humble in heart. He continually hungered and thirsted for more knowledge of His heavenly Father, remember his parents found him in the temple at the age of 12. Our Lord is merciful towards us, look at what he did, he went to the cross, took our sins

upon his back and died for you and me. He has indeed shown us mercy. Christ is pure in heart, he lived a perfect life. Christ is definitely a peacemaker, for one of his names that we call him is Prince of Peace. He brought peace between us and the Father and the cross and when he burst forth out of the tomb for you and me. Christ, persecuted yes, throughout the gospels and even still today he is being persecuted, he was persecuted to the point that it cost him his life. And because of that we can rejoice and be glad, because our reward is indeed great, because of what he did for you and me. Jesus Christ emptied himself and became a man, yet still being God he lived the life of a servant, he lived the life of a disciple of His Father and served Him in every aspect of His life.

My brothers and sisters in Christ, that's what Christ calls us to do. He explains to us what a disciple is in these words of the Matthew 5. And he also tells us the blessings that we receive since we are his disciples. Praise be to God for that. Even though we have these blessings from God, while we are still here on earth, we are perpetually stuck with one foot in the viewpoint of the world, and the other foot lovingly and compassionately placed in the realms of Christ's kingdom. We plead for our lives to be transformed by the Holy Spirit, so that we can empty ourselves of the world and to fully have the Word of God controlling our lives and in that way will be blessed eternally.

Blessed are you, the disciples of God. Amen.

Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding, guard your hearts, and your minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus our Lord.