

BLESSED ARE YOU
(Sermon on the Mount Part 1)

Matthew 5:1-16
Key verse 3

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

In the last two weeks we heard the same message from John the Baptist and Jesus: **“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”** Yet we can be near but never enter the kingdom of heaven. So near yet so far! In Matthew 22:14 Jesus said, **“For many are invited, but few are chosen.”** How can we enter the kingdom of heaven? And who can enter it? In this passage, however, Jesus does not answer them. Instead, King Jesus simply pronounces blessedness or happiness on those who are in the kingdom of heaven, as his subjects. This passage is King Jesus’ benediction toward his own people. This passage is not about how to enter the kingdom of heaven. In my message, I will highlight the following three points:

1. What do kingdom people and King Jesus’ blessings look like?
2. Transformation of the Kingdom citizens
3. The King’s purpose for his kingdom people on earth

I. Kingdom people and the King’s blessings (1-6)

In the previous chapter, Jesus, the shepherd King, after defeating the great enemy Satan, began his kingdom work. He became the great light dawning over those living in darkness and under the shadow of death. As the king, he preached, **“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”** He called his future ambassadors saying **“Come follow me, and I will send you out to fish for people.”** And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the good news and healing all kinds of sick people. And great crowds of people, captivated by his light, began to flock to him.

Verses 1- 2 say, **“Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them. He said:”** As the King when the crowds and his disciples came to him, he held court. But he did not hold court in a fancy palace or the magnificent temple. Rather, he held court on the mountainside, in the open air, as the ruler of the heavens and the earth and all that is in them. And in

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the next 3 chapters, he will teach us about the nature of his kingdom and its citizens.

But first, Jesus showed them the great blessedness or happiness of those in his kingdom. If we skim verses 3-10, 8 times Jesus pronounced blessing or happiness or good fortune. However, the irony was that those who came to Jesus were the poor, downtrodden, broken and sick. They looked like the least blessed in the whole world, like refugees running for their lives. But Jesus said that among these people would be the most blessed and happy people. In verses 3- 6, Jesus was saying, **“How happy and fortunate are the poor in spirit; how happy are those who mourn; how happy are the meek, how happy are those who are hungry and thirsty...”** How does this make any sense? Those who mourn and grieve and are impoverished and downtrodden are happy? Is Jesus trying to make them feel good about their terrible situation by teaching them that poverty and grief is enjoyable? No. This is not what Jesus was saying!

In truth Jesus is fundamentally challenging our concept of what it means to be happy. What do you think you really need to be happy? Fill in the blank: I need “blank” to be happy. Or, without “blank” I will not be happy. We need a well-paying or less stressful job to be happy. We need a spouse if you aren’t married to be happy. If you are married, you need more respect from your wife or more love from your husband to be happy. We all need a vacation to be happy. Yet, here in America, the wealthiest country in the world there is an alarming epidemic of misery and despair, demonstrated in the dramatic rise in opiate overdoses. Many people, desperate for change, voted for President Trump, hoping that he would make America great again.

So what do we really need to be happy? Let’s carefully observe in verses 3-6 why Jesus calls these people happy. **“For theirs is the kingdom of heaven; for they will be comforted; for they will inherit the earth; for they will be filled.”** They will receive the kingdom of heaven, not a kingdom that will be destroyed. They will be comforted from every sorrow, pain and grief, and every tear wiped away. They will inherit the earth and all the wealth and riches that are in it. They will be shown mercy and forgiveness for all their sins. And they will see God face to face, for they will have this intimate relationship with the Creator God for eternity.

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Is this not true happiness? Do you not yearn to receive the kingdom of heaven and the earth as your inheritance? To receive mercy and forgiveness of all our sins and mistakes? And to see God face to face?

But the question is how? How can we become subjects of this King? To become a citizen of the US you must meet certain requirements so you don't get deported. Verses 3-6 teach us the requirements to be a citizen of the kingdom of heaven. But don't be burdened. It's not a list of tasks he requires. It is a right attitude towards the king. Only when we accept Christ as our King do we become the blessed. For true blessedness is to be with the Giver of all good things, and to be in the kingdom of most powerful, loving, holy King.

Let's look at verse 3 again, **"Blessed are the poor in spirit..."** This is the first attitude of the blessed. Being poor in spirit means we come to God, acknowledging our utter sinfulness and unworthiness in light of God's holiness. We come with a humble and broken spirit, knowing that we can do nothing to change or save ourselves. All we can do is cry out to him, throwing ourselves at God's mercy.

King David shows us what it is to be poor in spirit. After he was rebuked for his adultery and murder by the Prophet Nathan, King David cried out in Psalm 51: 1, **"Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions."**

How then can we be poor in spirit like King David? For a long time, I was afraid of seeing a doctor in spite of my double vision and constant headaches. But just one MRI showed me that I had a big tumor in my mid-brain. Seeing my tumor and acknowledging it was the beginning of a cure. So what is our spiritual MRI? It is the word of God. Come to his word, and let it reveal the sinfulness and brokenness of your heart and life. Pray like David, **"Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."** (Psalm 139:23-24)

And simply acknowledge our sin and humbly bring it before the Lord. And we will be blessed, for Jesus promises that we will receive the kingdom of heaven. Praise Jesus!

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Once we realize we are sinners, we don't just stay in our broken state. We begin to mourn. This is the second attitude of Kingdom people. Verse 4 says, **“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.”** We all want comfort from the deep wounds and hurts in our hearts. And we often turn to other things or people. I turn to the tennis channel on TV or play tennis when I need comfort. Others turn to Netflix, or comfort food, or a person, or sleep for comfort. But all these things are like taking Tylenol for a brain tumor. Ultimately, it is our sins, and its consequences, which have broken the life-giving relationship with God and brought us pain and suffering. So Jesus says, **“Blessed are those who mourn.”** But there is one thing we need to be careful about. Weeping for our sins without God brings death to us while grieving for our sins before God brings life. King David cries out in Psalm 51:17, **“My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise.”** And Jesus promises that all who mourn will be comforted.

As shepherds and parents, we need to mourn for the sins of our children and our nation. Jesus encouraged those who mourned and wailed for him as he was carrying his cross not to weep for him, but for themselves and their own children. Blessed are those who mourn over others' sins. Do you mourn over your children, your co-workers and leaders of this nation? Surely comfort from our Savior Jesus will be yours in his due time.

Now in verse 5 Jesus says, **“Blessed are the meek.”** This is the third attitude of kingdom people. What isn't meekness? It is NOT weakness. Rather, it is STRENGTH. Meekness is a full trust and submission and surrender. In the midst of the storms of life and loss we trust that God is sovereign and in control. It is a full surrender into God's ability alone to save and heal us. Oswald Chambers gives an example. “Like a beloved dog whose wound is being washed, causing even more pain, the dog looks up at you, saying with his eyes, ‘I do not in the least understand what you are doing, but go on.’” For me, I experienced meekness when I surrendered myself fully to the hands of God and my surgeon, as I lay on the operating table. May God help each one of us to be meek, trusting in God, for our salvation and healing. And what is the promised blessing? Christ is pleased to give us the entire earth and all that is in it as our inheritance, when we trust in him alone.

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Lastly, our attitude as kingdom people, is a hunger and thirst for righteousness. There can be all kinds of hungers and thirsts like hunger for love, respect, honor, affirmation from others, companionship, friendship, success, knowledge, security, fun, sleeping, you just name it! But look at verse 6. For what kind of hunger and thirst is Jesus talking about? It is for righteousness. What is that righteousness? In Psalm 42:1, King David said, **“As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God.”** Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for King Jesus, the living Bread and the Living water, for they will be filled with Him.

How do we maintain a spirit of hunger and thirst for righteousness? When we see our utter wretchedness and helplessness in light of his words (poor in spirit), when we mourn for our sins, and when we surrender in humility that only Christ can save you (meekness), then we are filled with a hunger and thirst for God and his righteousness. We desperately long for his righteousness and we keep coming to God, again and again, for we cannot do anything apart from Christ. But in Christ we have all wisdom, all grace, and all strength.

But practically, often we fill our lives with Spiritual junk-food. When you snack on too much TV, games, news, sports, working out or anything else, then we lose our hunger and thirst for righteousness. So evaluate how you spend your time. Do you snack on things that take away your hunger and thirst for righteousness? If so, intentionally fast from some of things this week. And cry out to the Lord, “Give me a hunger and thirst for righteousness, that I may be filled with you alone!”

Do you feel blessed today? If we have come to Christ then we are blessed because of Jesus. Jesus is the source of blessing. All we need to do is to come to him with a broken and contrite spirit, with lifted hands and open heart, and he will do the rest. Praise Jesus who makes us his blessed and happy people!

II. Transformation of the kingdom people (7-12)

Now in verses 7-10, King Jesus teaches us how his kingdom people will be changed and what we do. We will be merciful and pure in heart. We will become peacemakers. We will rejoice while being persecuted for the King. Let's read verses 7-10.

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**“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.
Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for
theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”**

The first change King Jesus brings to his kingdom people is that they become merciful. It is important to see the order of Jesus’ teaching. Being merciful is taught right after hungering and thirsting for righteousness. In the Old Testament, righteousness is equivalent to justice: righteousness and justice. And it seems those who are filled with righteousness will seek justice. But here King Jesus says, “Blessed are the merciful.” It’s easy to simply demand justice. However, being merciful is not something natural. To be merciful we need first to experience mercy. We have received this mercy from Our merciful King Jesus when we cried out to him in brokenness and with a contrite heart. Now, this merciful King puts us in places where we can be merciful. In the parable of the sheep and goats in Matthew 25:34-40, **“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ ‘Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ ‘The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’”**

The second change King Jesus brings to his kingdom people is a pure heart. The Prophet Jeremiah lamented saying, **“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?”** (Jeremiah 17:9a) King David cried out, **“Create in me a pure heart, O God!”** But God promised through the prophet Ezekiel, **“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.”** (Ezekiel 36:26) King Jesus

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came to fulfill this promise. He came to wash away our sins and wounds with his blood and give us a new heart, a brand new heart! When we accept Jesus' blood, he creates in us a pure heart. We are born again and now we can see Jesus as God. Therefore, we see God in Jesus. We see the hands of God working in people's lives, in the world.

The third change King Jesus brings to his kingdom people is that he will transform us into **"peacemakers."** One of the names of the Messiah in the OT is "Prince of Peace." It is because he is one who brings peace between God and sinners by becoming a ransom for us. The kingdom people are being sent with the gospel of peace to the world. We do exactly what God does. Therefore, his kingdom people will be called children of God.

The fourth change King Jesus brings to his kingdom people is that they rejoice while being persecuted for righteousness. When Jesus was arrested and crucified, his disciples all deserted him. But there was an unimaginable change in them through the death and resurrection of King Jesus when empowered by the Holy Spirit. While proclaiming the gospel, the apostles were persecuted by the religious authorities. They were whipped and threatened with death. But in Acts 5:41, **"The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name"** of King Jesus."

III. The King's purpose for his kingdom people on earth (13-16)

The kingdom of heaven is where Jesus rules as King. It can be in the heart of each individual and it can be among people who gather in Jesus' name, which is his church. They are still in the world. In verses 13-16, King Jesus proclaims his purpose for them in this world. Let's read them together. **"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."**

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When we live as Christ's blessed people, we are transformed as light in the dark world, and become salt that brings taste and preservation and life to a decaying world. May God use us as his light of the world, that shines boldly, wherever we are, at home, at work, at school, in our communities and our nation and even the world. May our good deeds and life of blessedness shine so brightly that unbelieving people will see Christ in us, and glorify him, and choose to become his kingdom people as well.

Today, we heard King Jesus proclaiming his supreme blessedness; **"Blessed are you."** and his purpose as his kingdom people. If anyone who has not accepted Jesus as your King, come to him in your poverty of spirit and experience blessedness. And those who have come to King Jesus already, do you feel blessed in whatever circumstance you are in today? Let's remember and rejoice in your blessedness, and continually maintain a poor spirit before God, living as blessed lights and salt, revealing his glory and expanding his kingdom in our dark generation.