

Matt. 5:1-12

When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. Then He began to speak, and taught them saying:

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

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive 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 for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when people 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 in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

The Gospel of the Lord

Reflection Questions

- 1) ***The Context:*** The gospel tells us that Jesus sees the crowd and then turns to go up the mountain. It almost seems as though Jesus is trying to avoid the crowds (which, in one sense, is true). But, there are a couple of things going on here. Jesus needs to go to a remote place to speak with His Dad to have a sense of what to say to people next. In scripture, mountains are places of encounters with God (Ex. 19:20-24 Moses ascends the mountain to speak with God). Both Moses and Jesus speak directly to God and then have a message from God for the people. What is your “mountain top” time with God? How does that effect how you relate to those whom God is sending you?

- 2) “...after He (Jesus) sat down, His disciples came to Him.” Jesus assumes the posture and the position of Rabbi. When a Rabbi sat, that meant that He was about to launch into an important teaching session. The text mentions that this sermon is addressed to His disciples but there were likely people from the crowds within earshot since they had come such a long way to see Jesus (Matt. 4:25). The Christian definition of “disciple” is “one who sits at the feet of Jesus and learns. The disciples (and the ‘want-to-be disciples in the crowds) sit, listen and learn. We are each Christ’s disciples as well. How do we “sit at His feet and learn” from Him? (e.g. listening to His voice in prayer, in scripture, through teachers, through experience). How do we pass on what we learn?

- 3) The term “Blessed” or “Beatitude” refers to a supreme blessedness, an exalted happiness or a *supernatural happiness*. This kind of happiness, contentment, blissfulness (in religious terms) comes from heaven and cannot be taken away by any earthly circumstance or person. Have you experienced this gift from God? When? How?

- 4) Clearly stated in our U. S. Constitution is the “right to the *pursuit* of happiness”. Happiness is a value that crosses all cultures and all times. But our cultural definitions of how to achieve and to maintain happiness often clash with the ways that Jesus promises us happiness. How is this “supernatural happiness” that Jesus speaks of similar to or dissimilar to some of our worldly definitions of happiness? What are some of the differences and why? (e.g. happiness vs. deep supernatural fulfillment).

- 5) “Blessed are the *poor in spirit*”. The word for poor here is “ptochoi” which means abject poverty. The truly poor in spirit know that they are spiritually bankrupt without God in their lives. The poor in spirit come before God completely needy, empty hands and open hearts. They come knowing that God can supply all their needs. How are we like that? How has a very vulnerable time in your life also been a very rich time?
- 6) “Blessed are *those who mourn*, they will be comforted”. This phrase refers to Isaiah 61:1-4 where God anoints a person to bind up the brokenhearted and to comfort all who mourn.” People who are willing to deeply feel God’s heartache over how sin and evil have damaged the world will find supernatural comfort. How do we allow ourselves to mourn with those who mourn? How does that enrich us as people?
- 7) “Blessed are the *meek*, for they will inherit the earth.” The term “meek” here does not mean timid or weak. The “meek” are the anawim of Psalm 37 (one who is humble before God and does not try to force God’s hand). The Greek term for “meek” is “praus” meaning not self-seeking. How does being meek in this way make us powerful witnesses as God’s children? (particularly in our society that can encourage people to be self-seeking).
- 8) Blessed are *those who hunger and thirst for righteousness*, they will be filled. To hunger and thirst is to be completely focused upon that which we hunger for. Righteousness is a holy thing to hunger and to thirst for. The righteousness of justice for those who are being oppressed and the righteousness of personal holiness. These are holy longings and God longs to fulfill holy longings even more than we do. Do we believe that? How does God go about fulfilling these holy longings? How has He done that in your life?
- 9) The *mercy* described in this passage is the Hebrew meaning of “chesedh” a merciful compassionate love for the other, so much so that one can see everything from that other person’s perspective. Do we pray to have this kind of merciful understanding for others? Particularly for those who persecute us? How does Jesus help us obtain that kind of understanding?
- 10) The “*pure in heart*” here means the “unadulterated” heart; not mixed with other substances, other motives, other agenda. The pure heart is completely devoted to God (Matt. 6:24, James 4:8). How is a pure-hearted/ a single-

hearted person more naturally disposed to serving God and glorifying God and therefore seeing God in all persons, places and situations?

- 11) “Blessed are the *peacemakers*.” The word that Jesus probably used for peace was “shalom” which is more than an absence of strife, it is the presence of harmony and brotherhood. Jesus is not offering this blessing to those who simply avoid strife, but on those who actively make peace. The “making of peace” does not necessarily mean that no force is necessary. As Martin Luther King carved a pathway for peace for many people, his prophetic voice was “causing trouble” for others. The same is true of John the Baptist. How do we see ourselves as peacemakers? What are some of the immediate rewards of being peacemakers? (what are some long-term rewards?) What are some immediate persecutions you have experienced being a peacemaker?

- 12) “Blessed are those who are *persecuted for righteousness’ sake*”. There is a parallel between vs. 10 (for righteousness’ sake) and vs. 11 (for My (Jesus’) sake). “Blessed are you when people 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 in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” These verses speak of some harsh realities of persecution that come with promoting Jesus’ mission here on the earth, but also speak of supernatural blessings that come with the persecutions. (e.g. The blessed state of happiness, the rewards in heaven and being counted among the prophets). Have you ever been persecuted for the name of Christ? What happened? What blessings did you receive as a result?