

Matthew 5:1-12

## The Blessed Ones

Is there more to this life? Have you ever asked that question or known someone who has asked that question? Questions like that only come through brokenness. If everything was right in the world we would not have hopeful longings for something more. But is there something more, and if there is something more, is it better?

The current world that we live in is a broken world. Sin has wrought disaster on the world bringing disease and death. G.K. Chesterton described our world as a broken stained glass window. As we walk by we see the broken colored pieces of glass strewn about. We know that the pieces all belong together, but we are unable to figure out how to put the pieces back in order. Each piece represents a particular truth - beauty, wisdom, humility, love - but there is nothing to hold it all together. There is nothing to prevent the world from collapsing under the weight of individual taste.

If the pieces are to be put back in order there must be one truth that binds it all together, one truth that reveals to us what has been shattered, one who not only shows us what has been shattered but who can put it all together again. To put it simply, we need a Savior to rescue us from our own selves. We need a Savior to reveal what is true, to show us how to live, how to love, to show us that we were meant for more.

Look how hopeless this situation of our grasping for truth is. Our world is full of suffering because our world is filled with people who don't even know who they are. They think we do but deep down they are troubled. Can you tell me who you are? Now what you do but who you are? If not for Jesus, if not for our Savior, if not for his ministry to us we would be lost in utter darkness, blind to see the beautiful truth of who we are and who he has made us to be. Because of the Sermon on the Mount we know who we are. How? Because he has told us. Who is the Evangelical me who has told us? He is the one who was sent from God, the Eternal Son of God who came seeking and saving. Who came living and loving, who came giving his life for the ransom of many so that we would know who we are. Who are we? We are the blessed ones. Look at the Beatitudes. Don't simply see them at a distance, feel them warming your soul as you realize that these sayings are not just describing just anyone, these blessed sayings are describing you who are faithfully trusting Jesus.

We are poor in spirit. We are mournful. We are meek. We are hungering and thirsting for righteousness. We are merciful. We are pure in heart. We are peacemakers. We are persecuted for righteousness sake. But that is not all. Ours is the kingdom of heaven. We will be comforted. We will inherit the earth. We will be satisfied. We will receive mercy. We shall see God. We will be called sons of God. In case you missed it, ours is the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Beatitudes provide for us deep roots of everlasting joy. And in these days we need these sayings more than ever. Let's read the Bible together.

READ TEXT

Before we begin it is important for us to know what we are looking at. We call these Beatitudes. How many times did you use that word in conversation last week? What is a beatitude? A beatitude is a saying that reveals supreme blessedness. A saying that reveals what it means to be perfect and lacking nothing. Jesus is saying, "These are the blessed ones, this is the way to blessedness."

As we look at the whole of the Beatitudes today I want to give you four truths about this blessed life that Christ has called us to as we look to the Beatitudes to see all that God has called us to be.

## **1. Christ Has Come to Remake Humanity**

The Bible begins with this great declaration that God benevolently and lovingly created the world. Why did he create the world? Did he do so because there was something that he lacked? No. The reason that God created the world is because of his desire to show his own love. He created for our sake. But the light that the world enjoyed through relationship with God was interrupted by a deep and dark shadow as the world was cast into darkness through the willful and sinful rebellion of mankind as we chose another way over God's way.

From the midst of darkness a great light has shined. At the center of this light is a Son, a Savior; the Son, the Savior. He has come in marvelous light with the dawn of a new day to shine brightly into our darkness to replace our darkness with his light.

Look at the text. Matthew 4:12-17. His message to those in darkness is repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand. What is the Kingdom of Heaven? God's reign over all the earth inaugurated at Christ's coming, realized by his Spirit-filled community, the church, and fulfilled finally at Christ's second coming. There is both an already and not yet aspect to the Kingdom. Christ has come and Christ is coming - both are true. We who trust in Christ are saved and are being saved. We live between two worlds, between the tension of today and tomorrow.

As Christ proclaims this message we see him in 18-22 calling men to exchange what they know for something that he will make known to them. We see him calling men with the promise that he will give them something better to pursue, something better to love, a better way to spend their lives. He calls them to follow him.

But where are they going? Look at the next verses 23-25. Why are these verses here? They tell us the mission of God - to make all things new, to bring brightness to darkness, to make an end of sinning, to set a broken world straight, to bring the Kingdom of God. Christ has come to remake humanity, to reorder the world to Himself.

Then look at what happens. The crowds are gathering so he opens his mouth and taught them. Look at this phrase for just a moment. He opens his mouth. Why is Matthew drawing us to this point? I think there are two reasons. First, we see the people are ready to hear, ready to receive. A hush has gone over the crowd as the light of the world stands before them to speak. People are often aware of their predicament but are often less ready to receive the remedy for what ails them. I think about conditions of health that are most serious but not immediate. Say a heart condition or a blood disorder. I am speaking now about things that can be prevented. The doctor recommends cutting

back on sugar or cholesterol for better health, even threatens us that if we don't stop this behavior we will die, but statistics show that most are not ready to accept what the doctor says.

But worse than a person who poorly manages health is someone with a closed and hardened heart to God. Here is the author of life speaking, the light of the world bringing darkness to nothing, and yet most who hear his voice will not listen. Remember who he is, he is the one whose mouth was there in the beginning causing the stars to shine, making dry land from the turbulent waters. He is the one whose coming the Old Testament declares and expects and now he has come from heaven and is seated on a mountain speaking to a weary crowd desperate to hear a message of hope. He opens his mouth and teaches the way of blessedness.

What does he mean by "blessed are..."? The Greek word for Blessed is *makarios*. There was an island off of Greece that was called Makarios. They called it the blessed island because it had everything that the residents needed. They did not need to depend on another source, they had all that they needed without any lack. This is what God is calling us to when he says "blessed are..." He is calling us to a life of where of complete satisfaction in him. Blessed means happy but more than happy. Blessed refers to one who is approved by God, one who is the highly favored of God. Psalm 1, blessed is the man. Jesus is telling us that this is the way to be the blessed man.

Wouldn't you say that this is good news? A message of hope has come to the horizon of this world as the dawn of a new day is beginning. Christ has come to remake humanity, to reorder it to himself. Blessedness comes to us through Christ. Without him we don't know what true blessedness is.

## **2. Blessedness Comes Through Grace**

We stand in desperate need. We are outside the bounds of blessedness. We may have thought we knew a way to blessedness and we might have been right if he hadn't come. But Jesus did come, and in his coming he told us the way. Look at the demands of this list. Christ declares that this is what it means to be blessed. It's impossible for us. But what impossible with man is possible with God. Don't miss this. God doesn't just tell us about the blessed life, God comes and lives this life for us. He did not just write it on a scroll for us to read he sent the Son to seek and save.

When you read each Beatitude we read what Christ intends each Christian to be. This is not some elitist list, this is a list of characteristics that are meant for each of us who follow Christ to share. Look at the list. Each goes together and builds off each other. Each is intended to bring us to the same end. See verse 8 and verse 10? Verse 8 and verse 10 have the same end. They form a bracket (inclusio) around each of the 8 statements of blessedness. Each of these blessed statements, or Beatitudes is intended to show is the pathway to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Look at the descriptions again. How do they hit you? Do they seem like something we would run towards or run away from? The point of such high demands is to show us that the only way that we can achieve blessedness is through grace. Remember the conversation that Jesus had with Nicodemus in John 3. Nicodemus comes to Jesus by night and says to him, "You have to be from God because no one can do what you do." What did Jesus say next? "Nicodemus, I tell you the truth,

unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” The only way that we can see the kingdom of God, the only way that we can live a life fully pleasing to God, is by his grace in our lives reaching us where we are and giving us life.

It is one thing to know that we are meant to be this way and quite another to understand that we can be like this. The way that we become blessed is by participating in the life of the Son. We come to Jesus who has come to us and cast ourselves on him, trusting in him for our life. He not only tells us what is possible he makes this blessed life possible through grace by faith in him.

If such life is available it only makes sense that:

### **3. Blessedness Should Be Our Top Priority**

If you had never heard the Beatitudes before, never understood that these were statements that describe the character of a Christian, would you believe them? They sound pretty unbelievable don't they? You mean to tell me that poor, mournful, meek, hungry, merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers who are persecuted are the ones who are going to win in the end? Yes. No wonder those on the outside aren't knocking down the doors to get in to join us. Some within the walls of the church look around because they don't really believe these statements themselves and say we will never win the world this way, let's change things. So they lead the church to pursue other things, they may even draw great crowds thinking they are doing God's work. But they miss the glory of the gospel.

The glory of the gospel is that God has chosen the foolish things in the world to shame the wise. Listen to Lloyd-Jones. “The glory of the gospel is that when the Church is absolutely different from the world, she invariably attracts it. It is then that the world is made to listen to her message, though it may hate it at first. That is how revival comes. That must be true of us individuals. It should not be our ambition to be as much like everybody else as we can, that we happen to be Christian, but rather to be as different from everybody who is not a Christian as we can possibly be. Our ambition should be to be like Christ, the more like him the better, and the more like him we become, the more we shall be unlike everybody who is not a Christian.” (Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, 37).

Christ has come to call us away from the world and to himself. There is no loss in following Jesus. Not that there is not loss but that followers of Jesus loose nothing, they gain everything. Jesus is going to tell us later in the next chapter to seek his kingdom first and by doing that we gain everything.

This blessed life is a life unlike anything that the world knows. If we choose to live this life there will inevitably be conflict with the world. Conflict is okay for the Christian because as verse 13 and 14 says, we are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. But we aren't putting our own flavor into the world or shining our own light, our lives are witnesses of his light.

Look at the Beatitudes again. You may look at the list and not recognize yourself but is there someone that you recognize? Is there someone who totally fulfills every Characteristic? Can you see Christ?

#### **4. Christ is the Blessed One**

Christ was poor in spirit - he totally depended upon the Father. Christ mourned - he bore our sins and sorrows on the Cross. Christ was meek. Christ was hungering and thirsting for righteousness. Not his own righteousness but our righteousness, and he went to great lengths to secure our righteousness. Christ was merciful. Christ was the pure in heart - he never sinned. Christ was the peacemaker - he made our peace with God. How? Christ was persecuted - he was led like a sheep to the slaughter as he suffered and died on the Cross for our sins.

You may look at this list and not see yourself. You may look at this list and see how far you are. Listen close, look to the list and see one thing before all others. See Christ. Do you want a blessed life? Don't trust in your efforts trust in his effort. Trust his effort and live.

This same Jesus who we see here climbing a mountain to teach will be the same Jesus

Thank the Lord for calling us to this life. Thank the Lord for giving us this life.