

Sermon on the Mount

Blessed Are... Matthew 5:7 - 12

*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 persecute you falsely because of me. Rejoice and be glad,
for your reward is great in heaven...*

(Matthew 5:7 – 12)

Jesus begins each of the Beatitudes with “blessed.” He sees blessedness at the center of all of life; a sacredness bestowed by God at the moment of our creation. This blessedness is present both in us and among us (“theirs *is* the kingdom of heaven, they *will* see God”) and, at the same time, growing into fuller realization.

For many, the word *blessed* is synonymous with “lucky” or “fortunate” – “I am blessed to have so many friends on Facebook!” Here, however, Jesus is teaching about a *blessedness* that is sacred, a pure gift from God, given out of His deep love for all of His creation.

When this blessedness manifests as mercy - that consistent, ever-faithful, relentless, constantly-pursuing, lavish, extravagant, unrestrained, furious love of our God - it naturally grows and expands to include everyone. Giving mercy makes mercy more available, not only to those to whom it is shown, but also to the givers themselves.

When this blessedness brings forth a pure heart in us, we are able to see God’s indwelling Spirit in all things. As we gradually let go of our attachment to anything that isn’t God, our heart becomes pure and we slowly grow in awareness of our complete dependence on God. This awareness helps us see God in others and act with dignity, respect, and compassion.

When our blessedness arises as peacemaking, it is because we have come to know the peace that only Christ can give. Christ’s peace restores relationships. Those who strive for reconciliation cultivate God’s presence in the world and, thus, are called His children.

When our blessedness leads to a righteous life, we live in communion with God and neighbor. This communion with God and neighbor contradicts much of the culture today and sometimes, out of fear, confusion, and misunderstanding, conflict/persecution results. It may not make sense, but it is in this very tension, between communion and persecution, that God’s transforming love can bring about the kingdom of heaven.

The Beatitudes are the beginning of Jesus' teaching known as the Sermon on the Mount. In them, He speaks over and over again of our *blessedness*. The rest of the Sermon paints a picture of what it looks like to really live out of this *blessedness* and shine into the world Christ's abiding light, the light that darkness cannot overcome.

Reflection Questions:

What challenges you about these Beatitudes?

In what ways do you live out your blessedness?