

Matthew 5:1-12
February 2 & 3, 2020

"God bless you!" How many times have you heard or said those words? Sometimes, these words are spoken by a total stranger after you have sneezed. Why? Apparently, it goes back to a superstition all the way back to the first century. When someone sneezed, they were ridding the body of evil spirits. Therefore, *"God bless you."* Sometimes, those words are spoken to someone out of thankfulness for all they have done for you. *"I am so glad you did that, God bless you."* Sometimes, they are words spoken to cheer someone up after they have gone through a difficult time. *"May God bless you."* Sometimes, it is how we sign the end of a letter or an email. But what does it look when someone is blessed by God? How can you know who is blessed by God? Do people look different when they are blessed by God? Can you walk through a store full of people and identify those who are blessed by God on the basis of what they are wearing? Can you tell the people who are blessed by God by the car someone is driving?

Are you blessed by God? How can you know? Does God's blessing come and go? In other words, are you blessed by God when you get that promotion, but you have lost God's blessing when you lose your job? Or do we live our lives thinking that God's blessing comes and goes all the time? What does it even mean to be *blessed by God*? In our Gospel Lesson today, Jesus gives an answer to that question. The answer might even surprise you.

The words of our text are well-known. These words begin Jesus' *Sermon on the Mount*. Jesus began His sermon by explaining what kind of people are truly blessed by God. He does NOT say, *"Blessed are the wealthy,"* or *"Blessed are the politically powerful,"* or *"Blessed are the great athletes,"* or *"Blessed are the kids who get straight A's."* It is not that any of those things aren't blessings. But Jesus' description blessed people is not the same that we would list.

Let's take a quick look at these words:

- 1. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."** Imagine how hopeless it would feel, if you were so poor that you could never get out of poverty. No matter what you would try, it wouldn't work. That's the kind of **"poor in spirit"** that Jesus is talking about here. In other words, Jesus is saying that you are blessed when you stop relying on yourselves to get to heaven, and rely totally and completely on Jesus. It is only then that the **kingdom of heaven** is ours.
- 2. "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted."** People who mourn are not normally considered blessed by God. If they are mourning, they have obviously experienced something that makes them sad. They have lost someone or something. When you look at this world, when we look at ourselves, we can't help but see what we have lost. This perfect world that God created is gone. We can't help but see all the sin that is in our lives. We can't help but mourn. When we may feel helpless because we can't change it, when we look at the one who can – Jesus – then we can be comforted. True comfort is only found in Jesus.
- 3. "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth."** When you hear the word **"meek,"** we think of weakness. Look at what Jesus says. Jesus did not say, *"Blessed are the WEAK."* The Bible never says that Christians are weak! In fact, it says the exact opposite. Far from it. But, followers of Jesus trust in the strength that is not found within us. We are blessed by not placing ourselves above God. Strength that only can be found in Jesus. In Christ, we have everything.
- 4. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled."** You and I look at being hungry and thirsty as a bad thing. When we haven't eaten all day, our stomachs let us know it. On a hot summer day, we need water to keep doing what we wish to do. Cravings of hunger and thirst can be powerful motivators in our lives. Jesus reminds us that we are blessed when we **"hunger and thirst for righteousness."** Christians hunger and thirst after righteousness. We want to be right with God. We want to think right and speak right and do right. We know that Jesus has made everything right with us between himself and us. We want to live thankful lives for him.

5. **“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.”** Think about those words. How could we NOT show mercy? When our God has had such mercy on us, when He has looked at our sin and our rebellion and, instead of destroying us He has saved us? How could we not have that same attitude toward others? We want others to know about the incredible mercy that God has for them.

6. **“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.”** There is not one of us here this morning that is **pure in heart**. Inside our hearts there is a bunch of rotten and stinky stuff in there. It needs to be scrubbed clean. That’s what Jesus does. In the waters of baptism and his word, he makes us **pure in heart**. He washes our sin away. With sins forgiven, we will see God.

7. **“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.”** We all desire peace. And, as much as we can we try to make peace. We make try to make peace with our neighbors, our co-workers, etc. Yet, it isn’t always possible. But God has made peace with us. Since we have peace with God, we want to be **“peacemakers.”** We want to share God’s peace with others. Why? So that others **“will be called sons of God.”**

8. The final blessing that is ours: **“Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”** Persecution will happen to Christians. When the world laughs at you for your beliefs, when people make fun of you or think you are backward or old-fashioned or out of touch...rejoice! You are in good company. God’s people have ALWAYS been persecuted for following Jesus. With God on our side, how can we not be blessed?

These are the blessings that God has given to each of you. If there was ever a reason to praise God, it is found in these words. Rejoice in those blessings. So, be what God has made you – Blessed! God bless you! Amen.