

Lesson 1: Blessed Are You

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Lessons to Live By / The Beatitudes; Sermon on the Mount/Plain / Matthew 5:2–12

- › Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Introduction

Blessed are you Disciples of Christ! Today we begin a four week series based on the first chapter of Christ's Sermon on the Mount! As we look at Matthew 5 over the next month we will see the fact that Jesus is giving us lessons to live by. After all He is teaching us! Our theme for today is "Blessed are you!" What really is this lesson that Jesus is teaching us here today? After all as we look forward into the chapter you see that Jesus is teaching on the law, but first He starts with blessings!

Jesus begins his teaching with gospel...gospel for those who are disciples of Christ.

The disciples of Jesus are blessed because of what God has done for them and what God has in store for them. Jesus isn't jumping into ethical demands here, but is describing blessings that they will fully enjoy in the new creation.

Characteristics of a disciple

Blessed are the poor in the spirit. Blessed are those who mourn. Blessed are the meek. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Blessed are the merciful. Blessed are the pure in heart. Blessed are the peacemakers. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake. These are all characteristics of a disciple. These are all characteristics that Jesus gives to us. Each one of these beatitudes could be a sermon in and amongst itself. So for the purpose of looking at series theme: "Lessons to live by," we are going to be taking a look at three of these beatitudes. Blessed are the merciful. Blessed are the pure in heart. Blessed are the peacemakers.

Blessed are the merciful

Blessed are you the merciful. This along with the previous four beatitudes describes Jesus's disciples. Jeff Gibbs in his commentary comments: "It bespeaks the transforming power of discipleship and of Jesus' call to faith. Jesus himself is mercy incarnate, perfect mercy. One simply cannot become his disciple without beginning to exhibit mercy in a new way." (page 246) Mercy is a characteristic of a disciple. When you look at your life though, how do you see mercy flowing through you? Better question to ask how do others see mercy flow through you? What does mercy look like? Let's look at how Jesus describes it and Matthew records it in the parable of the unmerciful servant in Matthew 18. Remember the master called his servant how owed a large a debt and the master was going to throw him in prison until he could repay. The servant begged the master, and the master forgave his debt. The master had mercy on his servant. The forgiven servant had a servant serving him who owed him a much smaller debt and threatened to throw him in prison until he could repay. The servant begged for mercy, but did not receive it.

Jesus gives mercy, but there are times when it does not have its desired effect, and the debt remains. So where's the blessing for us? Oftentimes we are not merciful. Luther describes the merciful as those who deal with others in a friendly and gentle manner, patiently tolerating and enduring faults or weaknesses, gladly forgiving the sinful and the frail. We read that, we look at the parable of the unforgiving servant and we see that oftentimes we are not merciful. So the question is are we still blessed?

The answer is..."Blessed are you."

Blessed are the pure in heart

Blessed are you who have a pure heart. The pure in heart also describes Jesus' disciples. What does Jesus mean by the pure in heart? In David's Psalm of Confession after his sin with Bathsheba he prays, "Create in me a pure heart O God." Here David is pleading for a forgiven heart. Here David is praying for a cleansed heart. Is Jesus describing the disciple with a forgiven heart? Absolutely, but what else is Jesus doing?

David also speaks of a pure heart in Psalm 24, "He who has a clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully." The action of swearing deceitfully refers to the worship offered to an idol. A pure heart does not worship idols, but worships the only true God. so as we look into our hearts, we know we don't have pure hearts. They are stained with sin. They are stained with idol worship. No these idols aren't sun gods or moon gods, these gods are the very things that we put ahead of the true God in time, money, and talents. These are things that get in the way of us going to God to worship him. Our hearts are dirty and are not pure. Luther describes a pure heart as a heart that is cleansed of its own peculiar ideas and filled with what God says in his Word in order to consider everything in a Christian and godly way.

We read these things, we self-examine ourselves and we think: Are we still blessed?

The answer is..."Blessed are you."

Blessed are the peacemakers

Blessed are you who are peacemakers. Jesus continues to address those who are called his disciples. Peacemaking is a characteristic of a disciple of Christ. As Jesus sends out his disciples later on in Matthew 10 he says, "Let your peace come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you." Jesus' call to the disciples is to send them out to bring peace to all those who will receive it. How does peace come? It comes through the proclamation of Jesus Christ. When Jesus talks about peacemakers, He's talking first about those who are sent to bring the message of Jesus to the world. By your baptisms, you are sent to bring the message of Jesus Christ to those in your lives.

No matter into what vocation God has called you, you are to work for the restoration of wholeness in many ways. You are to bring God's message of peace to those around you. Then we look at ourselves, we self-examine ourselves and we see that we have failed in this task. We are afraid to speak the message of peace, because we might be ridiculed. We might be questioning what we are to say. We might be afraid the words may not come out properly.

It's not just that we are afraid, it's also the fact that we are sinners broken. We oftentimes only think about ourselves and are not bringing peace, but division. Luther describes peacemakers as those who are giving help and counsel on the side of peace as much as possible and putting the best construction on everything by being a reconciler and mediator. Hearing how Luther describes a peacemaker, we oftentimes fail to put the best construction on everything. We oftentimes aren't seeking reconciliation but are building up walls and holding grudges.

As we hear all of this we ask, "are we still blessed?"

The answer is..."Blessed are you."

Blessed are you

Dear family of God, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, broken sinners. You have heard gospel blessings this morning in the Beatitudes this morning. You have also heard how when we look at these characteristics of being a disciple we don't see us. We don't see someone who is merciful or has a pure heart or is even a peacemaker. We come before God and ask him, are we still blessed? The answer is yes...yes you are!

You have been given mercy! Not because you earned it, because you didn't and you can't. Jesus Christ looks at you and has mercy on you. He sees your suffering, he sees your pain. He

sees your sin and he forgives your debt. Jesus Christ is mercy for you. He took your sin upon himself and died for you. He erases your debt. Blessed are you!

You have been given pure hearts! Not because you have done anything to make them pure, because you haven't. You continually try to poison your hearts, but Christ cleanses them. At your baptism, He cleansed your heart! He made it clean. He continues to cleanse it with the words of forgiveness. He makes your heart pure in the receiving of His Body and Blood. He made your hearts pure by offering up himself on the cross for you and by rising from the dead. Blessed are you!

You have been given peace by the perfect peacemaker! Not because you earned it, because you didn't. You know that you creative division. Christ came to give you peace. Peace was given when Christ was born for you, for the angels announced peace to the shepherd. His name is the Prince of Peace. Peace was given to you at the cross and the empty tomb, when he defeated the enemies of sin, death, and the devil. Peace will ultimately be given to you on the day of the resurrection of all flesh. Jesus is the ultimate peacemaker...he's the prefect peacemaker as he reconciles you with one another and ultimate reconciles you to the Father and restores the relationship between God and you.

Blessed are you sons and daughters of God. There are countless other blessing for you even in the beatitudes we did not look at including inheriting the earth and being satisfied with righteousness. And when you are persecuted on account of Christ, your reward is great in heaven. You are blessed! Blessed are you!

My prayer for you today is that you will walk and live in the blessings of God as you are blessed!

In Jesus name! Amen.

Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding, guard your hearts and your minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior. Amen.