

"Blessed"
Matthew 5:1-12
West Valley Presbyterian, February 5
Scout Sunday, Annual Meeting

SLIDES 2-6

Scripture reading – Matthew 5:1-12

Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them. He said:

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 be shown 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 because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

SLIDE 7

1. What does it mean to be blessed?

A. When we use that word, we might mean that we're really lucky. Like if you win the lottery, you might say, "I'm blessed with all this money I didn't have to work for."

B. Or we might mean that we're healthy, or that we have children. People say things like, "I'm blessed with good health", or, "I'm blessed with two wonderful children."

C. But that's not what Jesus means when he says, "Blessed are the poor in 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 because of righteousness." Jesus means much more than being lucky or fortunate.

2. So what does Jesus mean when he says "blessed"?

A. Partly, he's talking about things we do that bless other people.

SLIDE 8 & 9

B. Like with the Scout Laws. (You can say them with me if you want.) A Scout is:

- a. Trustworthy
- b. Loyal
- c. Helpful
- d. Friendly
- e. Courteous

- f. Kind
- g. Obedient
- h. Cheerful
- i. Thrifty
- j. Brave
- k. Clean
- l. Reverent

- C. Why do Scouts have those laws? Because if you keep them, life goes better for you, and life also goes better for the people around you. Like for instance, Friendly.
- a. Your Scout law says this means, "Be a friend to everyone, even people who are very different from you."
 - b. If you do that, you'll have a better life, because you'll have more friends.
 - c. And, the people around you will also have a better life because you have been friendly to them. Everyone benefits if you keep that law.

D. But is it easy to always keep those laws? No, it's not. Sometimes you might not feel very friendly. Sometimes it's really tempting to tell a lie. Sometimes you might not want to volunteer to help someone. Sometimes you might say something that's not polite.

E. That's why the Scout Law reminds us, "A Scout tries to live up to the Law every day. It is not always easy to do, but a Scout always tries."

F. And that's why Jesus says that "Blessed" means a whole lot more than just being kind to other people so that the other people are blessed.

SLIDE 10

3. When Jesus says "Blessed", partly he does mean being kind to other people. But there's a lot more to it than that.

A. That's why Jesus says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

SLIDE 11

"Poor in spirit" means that you know how much you need God's help. It means that you know you are likely to make mistakes, and mess things up. It means that you know you can't live the way God wants you to, without God's help. It means that you know you need to be connected into God. It means that you know you need to live with God in your soul. It's like Jesus is saying, "Blessed are you if you know your need of God, for yours is God's kingdom."

B. And when Jesus says, "Blessed are those who mourn," he means anyone who mourns when a family member or a friend is hurt or dies. And he also means anyone who feels badly because bad things happen in the world. Like if you feel sad because farmworkers got shot by a fellow worker. Or like if you feel sad because your house got flooded, or someone else's house got flooded. When we mourn, we know our need for God to help us get through it. And because we know our need of God, then God is with us, and we are blessed by God's presence.

C. And when Jesus says, "Blessed are the peacemakers," he means someone who is close enough to God to live in God's peace. And if someone is living in God's peace, then they can share that peace with other people. Even in very tough circumstances.

- a. Like for example: Corrie Ten Boom. You might have heard about the concentration camps run by Nazi Germany long ago, during WWII. There was a woman named Corrie Ten Boom who was a watchmaker in the Netherlands. She and her family were Christians who helped Jewish people escape from the Nazis, who were sending all the Jewish people to concentration camps where most of them died. Because Corrie was helping Jews escape, the Nazis captured her and her family and sent them to Ravensbruck, a concentration camp. Corrie was the only survivor in her family.
- b. After the war ended, you might think that Corrie was angry and bitter about all that the Nazis had done to her and her family. But because she loved God, and lived in God's peace, instead, she worked for forgiveness and peace. She met with two of the concentration camp guards from Ravensbruck, and publicly forgave them. She started a refuge for Dutch people who had collaborated with the Nazis and now were hated by their neighbors and had nowhere to go. She gave talks everywhere about peace and forgiveness, the peace that we can have in God through Jesus. And it turns out that she is buried right here in California, in a cemetery in Santa Ana.
- c. She was a peacemaker who was most certainly a child of God.

SLIDE 12

4. So what does it mean to be blessed? Well, if Jesus says you are blessed, he doesn't mean that you are lucky or healthy. He means that God is with you, and that God is connected to you. And if God is connected to you, then you receive everything your soul needs. And if you receive everything your soul needs, then it's a lot easier to help other people. It's a lot easier to tell the truth if God is prompting you. It's a lot easier to help other people if God is helping you. It's a lot easier to be a peacemaker if you already have peace in God. It's a lot easier to live the way God wants you to live, if God is living inside of your soul. Let's pray.

SLIDE 13