

The Beatitudes
Pastor Kim Engelmann
West Valley Presbyterian Church

The passage that Rick just read [Matthew 5:1-12](#) is known as the Beatitudes. Some say there are nine Beatitudes, others ten – it depends how you divide them.

Many have said that these 9/10 Beatitudes are sort of the New Testament version or addendum to the 10 commandments. Jesus speaks from a mountain just like Moses received the 10 commandments...on a mountain...

When I was in the Holy Land, I got to stand on the mountain (that you see in the slide there) where Jesus spoke these Beatitudes, and I read these 9/10 blessings to our group as we gathered in an open air chapel. The breeze was blowing gently and I sensed the Holy Spirit's presence there on that mountain as I imagined Jesus speaking these same words in that very place...

Now, Unlike the ten commandments, these ten blessings – Beatitudes - are more than just mandates of what we should do.... Rather there is a promise or a blessing attached to each one them...

Now, take a look at these blessings for a minute... Our culture would write these ten Beatitudes very differently wouldn't it?

Probably something like...

Blessed are the rich! Blessed are the educated!

Blessed are the famous!

Blessed are those who get what they want!

Blessed are the comfortable!

Blessed are the Golden State Warriors and the San Francisco Giants!

Do you ever pray...

Lord, bless me and take me out of my persecution!!!!

And yet it says here, Blessed are the persecuted

Lord, bless me and take me out of my poverty of spirit
And yet it says here, Blessed are the poor in spirit

What do we learn from this?

God's blessing does not always obey our interpretation of what we think will make us happy.

God's answer to our prayers are not always what we request are they?

Sometimes God answers us according to our will. But sometimes it is often very different.

What I want you to remember is this....

There's a paradox to blessing

The very thing we would avoid

The very thing that we would consider to be bad luck or unfortunate

Is the very thing that blesses us in the end...

Let me tell you about the word "blessed"

The word 'blessed' comes from the Greek word that describes a joy that is self-contained.

Meaning that it is independent from all circumstances that are surrounding it.

Our English word 'happiness' means something completely different.

Happiness comes from the root word 'hap' that means chance.

Like the word happenstance...

Human happiness comes from chance and the changes in life – circumstantial things

But **This word 'blessed' is self contained. Independent of circumstance. Untouchable and unstoppable.**

John 16:22

No one will take your joy from you.

Too many of us spend our lives thinking I will be happy when... I will be happy if...

But blessing does not come when we get what we desire. It doesn't come when we get that stuff or more money. It doesn't come when we get that dream job. No.

Blessing comes in the person and the power and the presence of Jesus Christ in the midst of circumstances, that our culture would consider to be unlucky, unfortunate, difficult...

God's blessing is not given for us to get whatever we want.

God's blessing is given *in the midst of* whatever circumstance, whatever trial or tribulation we are in.

Jesus understands something. He understands that **If it doesn't challenge you, it won't change you.**
(lets say that together)

Jesus understands that **God's blessing comes not in the comfort but through the struggle.**

(Like Jacob and the angel – Jacob wrestled for that blessing)

When I struggle, I gain strength, and when I gain strength, I step into the blessing of God because after awhile I begin to realize that no matter what I go through God's grace is sufficient. God is faithful.

God will see me through.
And after awhile of living this way I realize that means nothing that happens around me can take away my joy.

That is the ultimate blessing

(Let's hear an AMEN)

Lets walk through these Beatitudes together...and notice that for every difficulty there is a promise of blessing

³ ***“Blessed are the poor in spirit,
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.***

The word ‘poor’ here is not just about not having the latest Iphone but it is about being **desperately impoverished.**

This basically says...

Blessed are the desperately impoverished.

We don't have a clue what that is

When Jesus spoke these words from the mountain that day...95% of the people he was talking to were below the poverty line, under oppressive Roman Rule.

Jesus wanted to encourage those people who were weary and worn down by life..

Blessed are you he tells this crowd – God will bring you justice

The kingdom of heaven is yours

A more spiritual interpretation is...that...

Poor in spirit means to lose your pride.

It means to have a proper understanding of my insufficiencies and God's all sufficiency.

Spiritually speaking I am desperately impoverished. Only

God is sufficient. Trust in God. Focus on Inheriting the kingdom of heaven –

Verse 4

***⁴Blessed are those who mourn,
For they shall be comforted.***

There is an Arab proverb that says **All sunshine creates a desert.**

One of my kids used to say that he didn't like CA because the weather here was in denial of realities of the world.

It is true, if you only have sunshine, the air becomes arid and the ground doesn't produce, and certain things only come, with rain.

And there are certain things that only sorrow can create in our life. Jesus is talking here about blessing in the midst of sorrow.

What a paradox that is.

Someone once said **We are an Easter People living in a Good Friday world.** Suffering and hope living together. That's the reality in which we live...

This kind of grief is a part of the journey, and the tears and sorrow can actually bring depth of character and understanding and eventually empathy for others.

Maybe you are in that place of grief right now. In midst of that grief, that we all must walk through in our lives, may you experience the blessing of Holy Spirit comfort.

Verse 5

⁵ ***Blessed are the meek,
For they shall inherit the earth.***

Meekness does not mean weakness.

Meekness means controlled strength.

The Greek seems to indicate its like a domesticated animal - sort of like an ox – that has tremendous strength but has been trained to serve effectively.

It models the humility of Jesus who though he was God, he became like us and walked with us, and taught us on our level.

Scripture also tells us that

Moses “was very meek, more than all people who were on the face of the earth” (ESV).

Controlled strength. Humility before God.

What does it mean to inherit the earth It means that although we are given great worth and power as children of God, we are meant to serve here for awhile in controlled strength and humility...doing God’s will according to his plan for us,

Verse 6

⁶ ***Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
For they shall be filled.***

This is a blessing that comes when we are passionate for the things of God beyond all else...

A working man in Palestine would have earned a wage equivalent to about 3 pennies a week.

He would be at the threshold starvation almost every day.

Thirst was even worse.

If a man were to go on a journey, he could get caught up in a sandstorm and the only thing he could do was to sit down and put his cloak over his face and hope that he didn't get suffocated and hope that he didn't die of thirst.

So when this Scripture talks about this, it is not talking about hunger and thirst that can be satisfied in the afternoon with a Subway sandwich.

It is talking to those who are living on the edge of starvation and on the edge of thirst.

Those who are desperate...

And it is begging a question of us, are you willing to pursue the goodness of God to the point of desperation?

Are you willing to pursue God to the doorstep of starvation? How intense are we to seek the righteousness of God?

The blessing of being filled comes if you seek him with all your heart.

**⁷ *Blessed are the merciful,
For they shall obtain mercy.***

The word used here for merciful comes from the Hebrew word that doesn't just mean to have sorrow for somebody or to just feel bad for somebody.

Merciful means to step into someone's skin and feel what they feel. It means to think what they think, to walk in their shoes. That is the kind of mercy we are talking about.

This is what Jesus did for us. He walked around in our shoes for 33 years...

A great scripture that speaks to this Beatitude is this...

II Corinthians 1:3-4

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

What mercy do you need to give to somebody else this week?

Verse 8

***⁷Blessed are the pure in heart,
For they shall see God.***

Psalm 24 say **He who has cleans hands and a pure heart shall ascend the hill of the Lord.**

Like mercy and meekness, sometimes purity can be seen as weakness. Naïvete

But that isn't it. Purity of heart can be summed up in one word – that word is **INTEGRITY**.

Integrity in our relationships. Integrity in our work and our words. Integrity in terms of making God our first priority.

Kierekegaard a Danish Theologian has a book titled...**Purity of heart is to will one thing.** Not to be divided in our loyalties but to seek Christ and Christ alone.

In Christ alone, my hope is found.

***⁹Blessed are the peacemakers,
For they shall be called children of God.***

We are called to be peace-makers.

The world is a violent place. Not everyone is willing to take it on. Its easier to stay safe and keep out of it.

Yet...Jesus wasn't afraid to take on our violence .

Jesus is our peacemaker. He stepped into the violence of our sin and took it on himself. That's why when we do what Jesus did, choose to step into the middle of conflict and suffer for peace, we are God's children.

I still remember when a HS teacher I know stepped into the middle of a fist fight between two angry teenage boys. In the tussle, he himself was smacked in the nose by one of the boys who was aiming at the other kid and got the teacher by mistake.

The fight immediately stopped, as blood spurted everywhere. "Oh my gosh," said the student. "I am so sorry."

I think of Jesus, getting into the middle of things for us, innocent on the cross for us, shedding his blood for our sin. Such a sacrifice stops us in our tracks. It changes us. It makes us look up and say, "I am so sorry". As Jim Forest says in *The Ladder of the Beatitudes*

No one has ever been converted by violence.

Jim Forest, The Ladder of the Beatitude

Verse 10 and 11 – I've combined them for time...

¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, 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. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

It was this chapter -Matthew 5, the Sermon on the Mount, that actually inspired the Civil Rights movement long ago. It was Dr Kings notion, of what he called **creative suffering** that the leaders followed - that actually came from these Beatitudes.

So with confidence in these words, those leaders stepped into suffering with a cause. They stepped into suffering with a purpose to follow Jesus Christ to gain racial justice for all people.

I don't remember who said this statement but I love this. **If you are succeeding without suffering, somebody else did the suffering already.**

It's the way our broken world is. And the way these Beatitudes written it sure seems like suffering is an onramp to Blessing...

Not only that...but it says *Rejoice and be glad...for in the same way they persecuted the prophets before you...*

That last line says, this kind of suffering...creative suffering... makes us like the prophets. Why? Well....

We are prophets in the sense that as we are peacemakers, and hunger and thirst for God...as we are merciful....we are pointing ahead to who God is in the midst of evil. We are prophets because we are pointing ahead to a better way, a better world, a better day...

Today, you might be in a situation you want God to pull you out of, but instead God wants to reside with you in it, and bring a blessing out of it.

Are we willing to allow that? Maybe we are missing the blessing because we are so focused on getting out of the suffering. Maybe if we look a little closer...the blessing will emerge...we'll see it...

The blessing of Jacob, after he wrestled with that Divine Being (angel), was a limp. Normally people don't see a limp as a blessing...

How is a limp a blessing...you know how the Jews interpret it?

Jacob had one foot in heaven, and the other on earth. He could never be completely balanced here on earth, because he had been with God...and he was heavenly minded

What a glorious interpretation of something we would consider a disability!

Blessed are you today, if you suffer, if you limp, if you have difficulty...

Are we willing to allow God to be God, and use the evil to bring about the blessing...the discomfort to bring about the peace...the mourning to bring about the comfort?

That's how God works...that's who he is...

In closing let's read these Paradoxical Beatitudes together... aware of their meaning...and aware of how God may be working through these words in each of our own lives ...

(split in half each side)

ALL: Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, ²and he began to teach them.

He said:

**³Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

**⁴Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.**

**⁵Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.**

**⁶Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.**

**⁷Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.**

**⁸Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.**

**⁹Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.**

**¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted because of
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