

You Are Blessed

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Luke 6:17-26 NKJ ¹⁷ And He came down with them and stood on a level place with a crowd of His disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear Him and be healed of their diseases, ¹⁸ as well as those who were tormented with unclean spirits. And they were healed. ¹⁹ And the whole multitude sought to touch Him, for power went out from Him and healed *them* all. ²⁰ Then He lifted up His eyes toward His disciples, and said: "Blessed *are you* poor, For yours is the kingdom of God. ²¹ Blessed *are you* who hunger now, For you shall be filled. Blessed *are you* who weep now, For you shall laugh. ²² Blessed are you when men hate you, And when they exclude you, And revile *you*, and cast out your name as evil, For the Son of Man's sake. ²³ Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward *is* great in heaven, For in like manner their fathers did to the prophets. ²⁴ "But woe to you who are rich, For you have received your consolation. ²⁵ Woe to you who are full, For you shall hunger. Woe to you who laugh now, For you shall mourn and weep. ²⁶ Woe to you when all men speak well of you, For so did their fathers to the false prophets.

The beatitudes when understood correctly are some of the greatest expressions of God's gifts and blessings to sinful humans. When understood incorrectly they become weights chained to our souls dragging us down to depression. The key to understanding them correctly is to recognize them as God's gifts in Christ not as something we earn or deserve.

Today we will go over three common misunderstandings of these benedictions.

The first is that they are spiritual truths not physical.

Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

These beatitudes are true only because they speak of spiritual truths not earthly. They point us beyond the circumstances of this world to the heavenly spiritual truths which we so often overlook.

The other day the K-2nd grade came to morning devotion with a very perceptive question. They wanted to know why Jesus says that Jairus daughter is only sleeping, if he knew that she was dead. That is an important question, and not one that everyone thinks to ask.

The answer is that Jesus cares more about the spirit than the body. Although her body was dead her spirit was only sleeping. Raising the body from the dead is easy for Jesus. At his word, Lazarus came forth. At his word, the little girl sat up. Giving life to a spirit is more difficult. In order to raise the spirit Jesus had to die on the cross. In order to give life to the spirit his word had to break open arrogant hearts and teach them to repent of their sin.

Similarly in these beatitudes Jesus teaches us to look beyond the physical circumstance and see the spiritual reality.

Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

That is to say, do not care so much if you have the riches of this world, but rejoice that Christ has given to you the riches of heaven.

All of the beatitudes speak to those who are complaining about their earthly circumstances. "I wish I had more money. I wish I was more beautiful. I wish I could go to Hawaii every year. I wish I was better at sports." Whatever we feel like we are missing out on in this world, Jesus reminds us that what we have received from him in the world to come is so much greater. It's like losing a bicycle and gaining a '65 Ford Mustang Shelby GT350.

In 2004 the medical community introduced the acronym, FOMO which stands for Fear of Missing Out. It was coined specifically to describe the fear some people feel about missing out on what is going on online. It is associated specifically with "a problematic attachment to social media." It's specifically associated with the desire to constantly check your Facebook feed, but you could also broaden it to speak about anytime we feel jealousy or anxiety because someone else gets to do something that we don't. We don't need to be afraid of missing out since what we have in Christ is so much greater.

Rev 2:9 I know your works, tribulation, and poverty(but you are rich);

To us who can only see earthly matters it may feel as though we have little in comparison to the wealth that other have, but the truth is that what we have in Christ is far greater than anything that they have on this earth. Do not be jealous of those who have earthly wealth, instead rejoice in the spiritual riches that Christ has freely given to you.

The second is that they are meant to be encouragements not commands.

Blessed are you who hunger now, For you shall be filled.

Another mistake that we might make with the beatitudes is to think that Jesus is telling us to go out and become these things. Spend your life fasting. Give away all your money. Never tell jokes and laugh. If you do these things you will get to heaven. In this way we mistake them for commands.

These benedictions are not commands that we ought to go out and attempt to fulfill. Jesus does not say go and fast your whole life. Rather Jesus is speaking to those who find themselves in these situations. When you are hungry take heart from my promise that you will one day feast at the table of the lamb. Similarly, he is not saying, "Go and make yourself poor," or "go and make yourself sorrowful." Rather, when you find yourself in these situations find comfort in my promises.

The beatitudes are like beef jerky. If you are at home and have a full freezer, it might not be your favorite food. When you are camping in the wilderness and don't have access to a freezer, or hiking for days, jerky is far more useful.

The beatitudes are promises that you can store in your pack. When things in life are going along smoothly you might not think about them much, but when you are struggling, in poverty, hunger, depression etc they offer a good source of strength and nourishment. They remind us that though we struggle now these things too shall end and a brighter day is coming.

Romans 8:18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

In the same way when Jesus reverses the beatitudes and says, "woe to you who are full, rich or laughing," He is not suggesting that being rich or full is a sin. He is calling on us to not be so attached to earthly situations that we forget what is important. It is not having wealth that is a problem but clinging to wealth. It is not money that is a source of evil, but the love of money.

1 Timothy 6:10 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

1 John 2:15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

We do not need to make ourselves poor or hungry, but when we are poor and hungry we can find comfort in Jesus' promises. When we are full and rich we should be wary lest becoming too attached to the things of the world we forget and leave behind the things of God.

Thirdly the beatitudes are gifts not works that we earn.

Blessed are you who weep now, For you shall laugh.

Another mistake that is easy to make with the beatitudes is to see them as cause and effect. If I am poor than I earn the kingdom of God.

Look again at the first of these beatitudes. Jesus does not say that you will receive the kingdom but rather "yours is the kingdom." Right now, you have already received the kingdom of God as a gift from Christ who died for your sins.

All the other beatitudes are the effect of this first beatitude. They are not the effect of what we do. They are the effect of this first promise. Because Christ has given you the kingdom, therefore you will be filled, and you will laugh. Jesus does not say, you are blessed if you do these things. He is saying you are blessed because he has given you the gifts of heaven, therefore even in suffering rejoice.

The promises that Christ gives us in these beatitudes are not the result of our suffering but the result of Christ's free gift.

Luk 12:32 "Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

As Luther wrote in his catechism. **"Whoever has the forgiveness of sins also has life and salvation."** Because the kingdom is ours therefore, we will be filled, and we will rejoice.

The beatitudes do not as many think teach work righteousness or a Christian form of karma, do this now and you will receive better things later, rather they like all scripture teach the grace of God. Christ has given you the kingdom, therefore you do not now need to worry about hunger or riches or suffering.

The order of the beatitudes is the opposite what we by nature think. It is not enduring suffering that causes us to be worthy of the kingdom. Rather it is because Christ has given us the kingdom that we can endure suffering.

These beatitudes are a wonderful expression of God's grace and forgiveness. They are not something we earn but something that Christ has given to us. They are not commands that we have to do but encouragement when we are in a difficult situation. They are not an expression of earthly wealth but heavenly riches. Amen.