

I grew up in an environment where I often heard people wish each other “Good Luck!” Maybe that was also true of you. “How was your fishing trip? Did you have any luck?” We even heard people say to those going into the hospital for surgery, “Well, good luck!” And then there were the strange words sometimes heard after a near accident on the freeway, “I can sure thank my lucky stars!” Have you ever heard someone say that? The heathen Romans believed that the Fates or luck had more power and control in their lives than the gods. You expect to hear the words “Good luck” from the person running the gambling games in casino, but how strange that sometimes even Christians use this expression “Good luck.”

Today we listen to our Lord Jesus speak to us in this famous Sermon on the Mount. He gathers his disciples around him, sits down and then teaches them how blessed they were even when they faced major challenges in their lives. This morning we want you to think about some of the tough challenges that face you in your life. Instead of being negative, and woe is me, I want to tell you, not how lucky you are, how blessed you are.

If you are poor in spirit you are blessed. In fact you are doubly blessed because no matter how poor in spirit you may be, the kingdom of heaven is yours. **“Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”** Think of how blessed you are. You are so poor in spirit that you believe there is nothing you have inside yourself to offer God to make him love you and accept you. With David you confess your poverty before your God, “For I know my transgressions and my sin is always before me.” You see nothing in yourself, but you see everything in Jesus. “Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling.” You are so blessed because even though you see nothing in yourself worthy of God’s love, yours in the kingdom of God. You have Jesus as your King who rescued you and made you part of his kingdom of love that never changes and lasts forever. With Paul we joyfully proclaim, “For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves.”

The second beatitude that Jesus speaks says, “Blessed are you those who mourn, for they will be comforted. In my ministry I have seen a whole lot of mourning amongst Christians. I have witnessed the sudden death of babies, teenagers and young adults. I have witnessed the utter pain and sorrow, when a couple divorces, and children long afterward for years for mom and dad somehow to get back together again. I have watched people that I love and care for in this congregation slowly be eaten away by cancer. Or I look at some of the dumb and stupid things I have done wrong in my life. I weep as I look at my own sins, and what they have brought about, as well as what sin’s sin’s presence has done in this world.

But Jesus comes to us today and puts a smile on our faces. Jesus says, "I have good news for anyone crying over sin....you can find comfort, and forgiveness, and true soul consolation in my kingdom. And if you're fighting back tears of sorrow over loss or physical pain or emotional distress or loneliness or alienation or rejection, I just want to say again as tenderly as I can, `I have good news for you today: you're gonna find comfort and soul consolation in my kingdom, so mourners...."mourners....come on in, the kingdom doors are wide open to you." I will wipe every tear from your eyes. I will provide you with comfort and strength in every tribulation, and finally eternal life in Heaven. There's a metaphor in Psalm 56:8 of God having a bottle with your name on it and with my name on it....Every tear that we've ever shed has been gently collected and

put in that bottle where God can see it....and be involved with it. And sort of be in that suffering moment with us. He treasures our tears and knows....how difficult they are. And he says, "I would never just let any of your tears fall to the ground and evaporate into dirt....because I know how soul-wrenching sorrow can be so I collect every tear; I put it in a bottle; i'm there with ya--in it, through it. Ya know there are stamp collectors in the world; there are baseball card collectors in the world....you might think of God as a tear collector. Don't Worry, be happy! You will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. A Christian who loves Jesus is to be meek. Now meek doesn't mean is a whimp. Meek means gentle-spirited types; tender types. People who don't push and shove to get to the front of lines. People who don't step on other people to get to the top at work. People who don't try to take twelve items through a ten-item express lane at the supermarket. A meek Christian endures mistreatment without retaliating. Like Jesus, they are willing to leave the matter of vengeance in God's hands. They turn the other cheek and go the extra mile. And guess what, we inherit the earth. It is for our sake the earth is preserved and not destroyed. It is for our benefit that God directs the affairs of men and nations. God makes sure that all things work together for good for us while we are here. And oneday, we will inherit a new heaven and new earth.

We are so blessed because the Lord our God puts into our lives this deep hunger and thirst for righteousness. **"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled."** So often you and I eat the wrong things in the physical realm. We eat food not because we are hungry, but just because it is something to do, to calm our nerves. But Jesus is not talking about physical hunger here, but rather spiritual hunger. He wants his children to hunger after righteousness. Not a day goes by when we are not aware of how inadequate our righteousness is, but then we think of Jesus and his righteousness that has been credited to our account and makes us loved by our God. We say with Isaiah, "I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with the garments salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness." These hungry Christians are concerned about being righteous, righteous through faith in Jesus. Further, These hungry Christians are concerned about living righteous and god-pleasing lives.

They know how to satisfy their spiritual hunger and thirst. They know the Lord Jesus Christ as the Bread of Life, and they drink deeply of the living water that He provides. In other words, they make faithful use of the means of grace, the Gospel of Christ in Word and Sacraments. They like to make the Word of God part of their daily routine. They love to assemble regularly with fellow believers to hear God's Word proclaimed. They know God forgives their sins day by day, and that they will stand among the righteous on the day of Judgment. God makes sure we are filled and satisfied.

We are so blessed because the Lord our God leads us to be merciful to other people. **"Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy."** People cried out to Jesus for mercy because they knew he cared about people. Think of how blessed you are. Because Jesus has had mercy on you, he puts into your heart and thoughts and life feelings of mercy and compassion for other people. You care about people. You worry about whether or not they will spend eternity with you in heaven. You pray for people going through problems because your life is filled with mercy for people because you are a Christian, you want to be like Jesus. You are so blessed to have these feelings of mercy.

You are so blessed to know the mercy of God that has been shown to you. Every day we can see with Peter, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Your God has shown his mercy to you.

We are so blessed because we are pure in heart. **"Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God."** I know my heart is not pure by itself. I read the words of the prophet Jeremiah and I have to honestly admit that this is my heart. "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand?" I hear the Psalmist ask the haunting question, "Who may ascend hill of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place?" The answer comes back, "He who has clean hands and a pure heart." Look at your hands. Are they clean? Look at your heart. By itself it is not clean, but with Jesus it is. Jesus said in John 15 "You are clean through the word I have spoken to you." It was David who prayed in Psalm 51, "Create in me a clean heart O God." You are so blessed and so am I because our God was working on your heart and my heart to make it clean and pure. We are so blessed because we will see God. Someday we will see God face to face in his glory and we will be pure and enjoy living with people who are pure.

We are so blessed because we get to live our lives on this earth as peace makers. **"Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called sons of God."** Christians actively strive to make peace where there is enmity or hostility. They offer their services as mediators between warring nations or quarreling relatives, or hostile neighbors. They strive to live in peace with everyone. But that doesn't mean that they will not stand up for the truth of God's Word, if circumstances warrant it. Although peace is desirable, peace at any price is not acceptable. We know the peace we have with God through Jesus Christ. We want to offer that peace to all people. Remember who we are, Sons of God. Don't worry, be happy.

Jesus finishes up his 8 marks of a Christian with the words, "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of God." Expect to suffer at times for saying and doing what is right. That is what happened to Jesus, so you and I must not expect any better treatment. Remember too, there will be an additional reward of Grace to the Christian that stands for the truth of God's Word. It will be in addition to the salvation that is theirs by Christ's merits alone. These rewards will be pleasant surprises to all who receive them. So then, no "when and then thinking". No thinking, if I just had this, I would be happy. A smile can be on your face right now, and everyday. Just read this text. You are indeed truly Blessed!