

Refuge City Church — February 11, 2024

Gospel of Matthew: “Be Blessed” (Matthew 5:1-4)

Introduction

[verses 1-2]

“Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him.”

- **CONTEXT** [Matthew 4:23-25]: “his fame spread”... “and great crowds followed him.”
- Jesus’ preliminary message was “Repent and believe in the gospel, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”
 - The King presented his inaugural address, and it’s packed with meaning!
 - Now He’s about to deliver what we might call His ‘state of the union’ speech.
 - To lay out His plan for humanity, and how we are to live in the kingdom He has presented to us.
- 1. **Politically:** This sermon will set standards that are far higher than the Mosaic law ever did.
 - Old Testament law gave the people principles on what they were to *do*.
 - This message sets a higher standard of how we are to *be* [behave].
 - Your character will produce your conduct.
 - **Romans 5:3-5**, “Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” [considering vs. 1, “...since we have been justified by faith...”]
 - **UNDERSTAND:** this is *impossible* to accomplish without the grace of God and the Holy Spirit’s empowerment in us.
- 2. **Religiously:** This sermon trumps all the religious leaders of the day [Pharisees & Sadducees] that took it upon themselves to hold people accountable to the law.
 - Their belief that keeping/obeying the law externally makes one righteous.
 - Jesus would condemn them later on for this mentality.
 - **Matthew 23:27**, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people’s bones and all uncleanness.”
 - This message sets a higher standard for righteousness [right living] before God.
 - **1 Samuel 16:7**, “For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.”
 - **Proverbs 4:23**, “Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.”
 - Internal transformation *must* happen before any action we take to be pleasing to the Lord.
 - **Luke 11:39-41**, “Now you Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. You fools! Did not he who made the outside make the inside also?”
 - “You want to stop cussing? Cleanse your heart. You want to control your anger? Cleanse your heart. You want to stop gossiping?”... you get it.
 - How do you do this practically??

- **Romans 12:1-2**, "...present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."
- Sacrifice self-gratification for righteousness. This is done by the proximity of your followership, and the depth of your fellowship with Jesus.
- You can't just think hard about it for a minute and expect things to get better.
 - Have you ever found yourself acting different in front of someone you highly admire? Why do you act different??
- Sacrifice involves complete obliteration.
- By this sermon, Jesus will show the impossibility of achieving such standards apart from God.
 - Thus the 'bad news' is presented in a way to point us to the 'good news' of the gospel.
- So how are we to live?
 - We don't *do* the things in order to simply appear holy. That would mean we are sovereign.
 - We are to live in such a way as to present the hope of Jesus to others, so they are drawn to Him.
 - **1 Peter 4:6**, "For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does."
 - **Proverbs 9:6**, "Leave your simple ways, and live, and walk in the way of insight."
- What are Beatitudes?? [latin = state of blessedness; supreme happiness]
- This is who you are to *be* as a faithful subject in the kingdom of God.
 - Maybe this is why they are called *be*-attitudes, not *do*-attitudes!
 - The *only* way to receive these blessings is by the grace of God.

[verse 3] "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

- "Poor in spirit" = humility; "a spiritual beggar"
 - The sad news is that we inherit a natural unworthiness to be in the presence of God.
 - But God... [**Romans 5:8**, "...shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."...] if we have received that free gift of salvation, He calls us worthy.
 - **Ephesians 4:1**, "...to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called."
 - Being poor in spirit has nothing to do with material wealth.
 - My worth/value/righteousness is solely dependent upon my connectivity to Jesus.
 - **John 15:5**, "I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."
 - A wealthy young man found this out when Jesus exposed his heart for his dependency on money, rather than the opportunity to follow Him.
 - **Matthew 19:21-22**, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.' When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions."

- **QUESTION:** Why did he walk away sorrowful?? He was rich! Shouldn't he have had supreme happiness?!
- [spiritual pride vs. poor in spirit] **Luke 18:10-14**, "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."
- **QUOTE:** "The kingdom does not go primarily to the materially wealthy, but to those who admit their spiritual bankruptcy." [Dr. Thomas Constable]
 - If you have too high of a self-perception, you will not pass GO.
- Aren't you glad this is the first step in the kingdom? There is not a single person without the hope of stepping into the kingdom of God.
 - **Luke 18:17**, "Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." [humble, naive, dependent, and have nothing to offer]

[verse 4] "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

- We may have lost someone we loved with all our heart.
 - Their passing left such a gap in our life that we couldn't help but grieve.
 - When someone is that close to you, they become 'part of you', and at times you don't feel as if life is worth living if they are not going to be a part of it.
 - Yet, over time, the grieving will fade.
- Jesus and Lazarus [John 11]
 - Lazarus, brother to Mary and Martha, became sick. They came to Jesus asking Him to come and heal him.
 - Jesus would use this as an opportunity to prove His deity and His claim that He is the way, the truth, and the life.
 - Lazarus dies, and on the way to his tomb, we're told that Jesus wept.
 - Through this story, we know Jesus didn't weep solely due to the loss of Lazarus.
 - **John 11:32-35**, "Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.' When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. And he said, 'Where have you laid him?' They said to him, 'Lord, come and see.' Jesus wept."
 - Jesus also wept prior to entering Jerusalem [Luke 19], and in the Garden [Hebrews 5:7]... Why?
 - The hurt and sorrow He felt because of what sin's control over humanity. [deepest sense of compassion]
- Having an understanding of our spiritual bankruptcy should lead to a grieving over the sin in our life.
 - **Romans 7:24**, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"
- The deepest sense of mourning is over sin which we can not eradicate on our own.

- Our sinful depravity needs a savior, and our grief expresses the deepest cry over it.
 - **2 Corinthians 7:10**, “For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.”
 - This grief should lead us to a humble state of need [poor in spirit]... see how these go hand in hand?
 - **James 4:8-10**, “Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.”
 - Maybe we need more sorrow over sin, rather than temporary happiness that only seeks to mask our pain.
- If we believe the promise of Jesus, this mourning is temporary... for we shall be comforted.
 - **Psalm 30:5b**, “Weeping may last through the night, but joy comes with the morning.”

Conclusion

- **Matthew 25:31-34**, “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’”
- Prior to this, which could happen very soon, we ought to humble ourselves.
- As we live in God’s kingdom, it is imperative we do some heart surgery.
 - Allow the Lord to expose what needs to be rooted out, so that we can truly walk as He walked, and be pure, as he is pure.
- Ultimately understand what Jesus came to do.
 - The very last message of the Old Testament scripture was one of sadness.
 - **Malachi 4:6**, “And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction [strike the land with a curse].”
 - Yet what is the message of the kingdom of God that Jesus presents?
 - The good news of the gospel. He came with blessings. Be encouraged. There is hope in the name of Jesus!