

Matthew 5:1-12. Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, ² and he began to teach them, saying: ³ "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. ⁵ Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. ⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. ⁷ Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. ⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. ⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. ¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹ "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.

You are blessed.

- 1. Jesus assures the believer that we are blessed no matter our circumstance in life.***
- 2. Jesus encourages the believer to live in the light of his blessings.***

Blessed are you for your hearts have been cleansed and made pure by the blood of Christ Jesus and therefore you will see God face to face in the eternity of heaven. Grace, mercy, and peace are yours in abundance through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

In Matthew 5:2 a small phrase from the original Greek is skipped in the NIV (New International Version). Perhaps it because this phrase was viewed as redundant or something that could easily be left out this introductory sentence. But in the ESV (English Standard Version) Matthew 5:2 includes this phrase from the original Greek: "*He opened his mouth and taught them saying.*" Jesus opened his mouth. Jesus opened his mouth in order to impart precious words of assurance and encouragement to his his disciples.

Our Savior Jesus did not only come to be our substitute and Savior, but the Lamb of God who would lay down his life for us, the Lamb of God who stood silent before those who mocked him and beat him as he suffered and died, also came as a teacher who would preach and teach before he died. Jesus came as the prophet foretold to bind up the broken-hearted with his healing gospel. Our Savior came to live and to die, and he also came to preach and teach. And so we pay attention to his words. We listen as he opens his mouth and he bestows upon us the very words of God.

This morning we begin our study of some the most famous words that Jesus' would speak, certainly one of his most famous sermons: The Sermon on the Mount. For the next few weeks we will be taking a look at our Savior's Sermon. We will pause to reflect on what our Savior said and what this words mean as they apply to us. But as we begin our study today we want to be clear about to whom these words were addressed and what these opening phrases, sometimes referred to as the Beatitudes, mean.

Jesus began this discourse that takes up the entirety of Matthew chapters 5 through 7. And as Jesus begins he was speaking to his disciples. He sees the crowds approaching, he goes up the side of a mountain and he speaks to those who had already been brought to faith and

were now following him. Jesus opens his mouth and speaks much needed words of assurance and encouragement to his disciples. It is important especially in this section to recognize to whom Jesus was talking. As Jesus opens his mouth and delivers these words to his disciples we must understand that these words were not given as some prescription to follow to heal yourself before God or earn his favor or catch his attention, but rather these are words that serve as a description of what the Christian life is like. These are words that assure the believer that they are blessed and they are words that urge to the believer to live a life worthy of the calling that we have received.

Our Savior came not only to live and to die, but he came to preach and teach. He came to bind up broken hearts, to speak to hearts and souls daily affected and beat up by the troubles of the world. And so he speaks to this group of the ordinary and the outcast and he says to them. You are blessed.

This was the valuable perspective that Jesus wanted to give to his disciples: to be blessed was not something that came only with prosperity and success, fame and popularity, material wealth and earthly possessions, but true blessing came with a right relationship with God. These words of Jesus serve to remind his disciples and all of us that we may consider ourselves blessed even in difficult situations.

This was an important reminder because of the context in which these words were given. News about Jesus was spreading rapidly. Jesus and the disciples would soon see the pinnacle of their popularity. At the end of Matthew chapter 4 we hear that the crowds began to gather from Galilee and Jerusalem, from the north and the south and the east and the west to gather around this one who healed the sick and did wonderful miracles. And so as these crowds began to converge upon him, Jesus went up on a mountainside with his disciples and he opened his mouth and began to speak to them. Jesus spoke to them with words that were meant to prepare his disciples for the drastic ups and downs that were to come. The disciples would soon see their popularity rise. Then they would see it fall. They would ride the emotional tide of being in the center of attention. They would feel important and fortunate for being with Jesus as the adoring crowds gathered. They would feel blessed to live in the limelight for a while. But Jesus wanted his disciples to know that this wouldn't always be the case. They would not always receive the star treatment, but instead the disciples would soon be insulted, persecuted, and have all sorts of evil said about them on account of him. Most of these men who followed Jesus would meet a martyr's death. Jesus knew what was waiting for them and so he reassured them. You are blessed. You have reason to rejoice ***because great is your reward in heaven.***

Even though their circumstances in life would change drastically, even though they would go from the top of the world to being trampled underfoot, they would always be blessed because of their relationship with God that they had through faith in Christ Jesus. They would be blessed as they lived out their faith and trusted in their God. And so as Jesus looked down upon those adoring crowds as they were approaching Jesus opened his mouth and he spoke to his disciple. He spoke words that were designed to help them and to help all his future disciples to keep things in perspective. You are blessed.

Let's think about what that means for us today as Christians. What does it mean to be blessed? Well, today is the day of the big game. It is Super Bowl Sunday as the Seahawks take on the Broncos for the ultimate prize in the National Football League. This is the summit, the pinnacle of their profession. It is the biggest game of the year and certainly not everyone gets

the opportunity to compete on such a huge stage and achieve such a memorable goal. Therefore, it is not surprising to hear such an athlete, even one who winds up on the losing team, stand behind a microphone and say, "I just consider myself blessed to be here." This is the high point of his career and it is easy for the Super Bowl winning quarterback to say, "I am blessed." And he would be right. What an amazing privilege! What a thrilling experience! What a unique opportunity that God has placed in front of these men!

The Lord God certainly gives us days that in a similar way we can just look around at our life and it is obvious for us to say, "I consider myself blessed." Maybe you can remember a time when you were able to look around and you could just see and feel that financially, "I am doing well. I am blessed." Maybe you look our land our home our family and you could pause and say, "I am blessed." At the summit of your career, in the high points of your life, in those big moments such as your wedding day, or the birth of child, or an anniversary, or some other pinnacle moment we might look around and it is just obvious that we are blessed. We thank God for those wonderful moments!

But the Lord wants us to know that even when we are far removed from those high points of life we are still very much blessed because we are his and through faith in Jesus our greatest reward awaits in heaven. The Lord reminds us to resist the temptation to base our faith or how much we feel our God loves us. We are to resist that temptation to base our understanding of God's love for us on the basis of our good fortune or for our trust in him to be dependent on our circumstances in life. In fact, our Lord Jesus Christ, - during this highpoint of success and popularity for him and his disciples - reminds his followers that the Christian life is no one nonstop joyride of happiness, rather hardship and trouble will find us. There will be bumps in the road. Sin and guilt will not go away. Jesus tells to expect persecution and rejection because it is a part of the calling to follow Jesus in this world of darkness. But in all of this our Lord reassures us that we are blessed through faith in him. In all of this we can rejoice and be glad. In all of this we can live a life of faith and humility and service to God because we trust in him and because we know that the generous gift of heaven is waiting as the bright light on the horizon for all who believe.

And so Jesus goes on to describe the Christian life and he speaks to the disciples not in glamorous terms of prosperity, but in concrete realities and biblical truth. ³ ***"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*** As believers we have been called to repentance. This is by no means a glamorous existence, but there is blessing in such a life. We acknowledge our sin. We know that we are unworthy. We know we need our God and we have a Savior. We rely on him. We depend on him. We trust him more than we trust ourselves. To the unconverted ear that doesn't sound like we are blessed, that sounds like we are powerless and needy. To the unconverted ear that sounds a bit depressing and unfortunate. But to us who live by faith we know it to be a blessing because when we are poor in spirit we are not filled with the pride that that boasts in ourselves. Rather we are emptied of self pride and we look fully to our God in faith. We know we need God our Savior. We rely on him. We trust in him to save us and through faith we know that we undeserving sinners have been made worthy of the kingdom of heaven. To be poor in spirit is to be rich in faith. This is a true spiritual blessing.

Jesus opens his mouth and gives his disciples this understanding. Jesus opens his mouth and teaches them with the very words of God. He gives them these words of assurance. He speaks to our ordinary lives and lets us know that through faith in him we are richly blessed.

Those who mourn, those who are gentle and meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, those who show mercy and are pure in heart; they will be blessed. The believer is blessed because the blood of Christ has cleansed his heart. The believer is blessed in all circumstance of life; for although our lives will not suddenly be smooth sailing and there is no guarantee that they will be filled with physical prosperity because we follow Jesus it will be, however, a life blessed with his presence.

Those who belong to Christ will be comforted. When death brings sorrow and mourning we will have answers and for the believer we will have victory. The meek and the lowly, who are often taken advantage of by this conniving world, will inherit the new heavens and earth. After this present evil world is judged and destroyed, those who were lowly will be exalted. In this life no one will ever find complete satisfaction and fulfillment in chasing after the things of this world and the desires of the flesh. But the life of Christian is one of fulfillment and satisfaction. A Christian man using his gifts to serve his employer through honest work finds satisfaction in his daily labor. The faithful wife, the devoted husband, the dedicated Christian father, they find fulfillment and satisfaction carrying out their Christian vocation and calling.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. A Christian has a desire to know Jesus and to follow his ways and such a life that is marked by a hunger and thirst for righteousness is fulfilling. Dear friends the life of a believer is a blessed one.

And so today the Lord Jesus opens up his mouth and he delivers words of assurance to us. You are blessed. We are blessed. You may not always feel like it. The world may not share this opinion and they may tell you otherwise, the devil might whisper in your ear to look around at the messes and the troubles and challenges of your life and he tries to convince you that you are not loved by God and your life is not blessed. Don't listen. Listen instead as your Savior opens his mouth and speaks to you comfort and assurance. You are blessed. You are loved. Trust me when I say this, more importantly, trust your Savior when he tells you that you are blessed. The more you realize this; the better off you will be. The more you realize this and trust in God and see his blessings and follow his ways the more you will live according to these words of our Savior.

Dear friends, there is needed assurance, contentment, and fulfillment in these words of Jesus. You are blessed. You who are poor in spirit have been made rich through Christ. You, who have been shown so much mercy by Jesus Christ, gladly show mercy to others. You, who have mourned over sin and death, mourn with others and comfort them with the precious promises that your God has given you. Hunger and thirst after righteousness, desire to know Christ your Righteousness. Learn more about him and follow his ways. Share the peace that you have in Christ. Display his mercy and his love and his humility in your life. This is the Christian life that Jesus describes and calls you to, and you are blessed in him.

This is how we are to live in thankfulness. This is our blessed calling as Christians. This is the way that the believer lives. It might be a cause for question and criticism from those around us, but we know it to be a life of fulfillment and of blessing. No matter your circumstance in life you are blessed through faith in Christ. The Savior opens his mouth and gives you this assurance and this encouragement and we gladly listen to his voice and follow his instructions. For our reward, which is greater than any earthly prize or championship trophy or costly treasure, waits for us in heaven. ***Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven.*** Amen.