



MATTHEW 5:1-12 | Rejoice?

Sunday, November 2, 2014 – Festival of All Saints

¹ Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, ² and he began to teach them. He said:

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 children 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.*

For centuries these people had lived under oppression. Ever since they were released from captivity in Babylon the Jewish people had been under the control of a pagan, heathen king. Despite being released, the Jews were still under the Babylonians control. Then came the Greeks with their mythology and human reason. Then came the oppressive Romans, ruling with an iron fist. It seemed like the Jews could never catch a break. High taxes, military invasion, poor living conditions, and a pagan world invaded their lives. They were desperate...

And they tried so hard! For centuries their own rabbis and leaders had told them that following the commands of God and of the Torah would bring about a life worth living. Listen to Abraham and Moses. Follow the Lord your God. Then life will be good. Then life will have purpose. But as they tried and tried to follow these laws they realized how utterly hopeless they really were! It was one failure after another. And this new lifestyle really didn't answer any questions. In fact, it created even more! How can I possibly be saved, now? Why should I even try? They were desperate...

So, here were desperate people looking for answers in their life. They saw Jesus as their teacher, their rabbi. They wanted to know what he had to say about making their lives happy and prosperous. They yearned for answers to questions they couldn't answer. They were desperate...

Does that sound familiar? Do you feel the same way? Are you desperately clinging to God's leg, begging, pleading for him to give you what you want? Are you looking to God to give you fulfillment in life? Are you looking for help in overcoming doubts, fears, and trouble? Have you come here today yearning to find an answer from God?

He has one: rejoice! Rejoice because you are blessed. But that's the problem, isn't it? You and I aren't looking for blessings; we're looking for happiness. Notice Jesus doesn't give us any promises of a life of ease and happiness. Being blessed is a state of being, not a state of mind. Happiness is a feeling, a state of mind. Happiness is extremely subjective. It can depend on the things we have, the circumstances in our life, the person to whom we are speaking, the job we hold, and even the weather outside.

But being blessed depends on nothing but God. Blessings are ours regardless of the weather, or of our social status, or the company we keep. Blessings exist with or without our acknowledgment. You see, that's the amazing thing about our God. He blesses the unbless-able. Too often we're so caught up in our own troubles and our own concerns that we fail to stop and realize so many of the things we have in our lives. Let's see what we have in our lives:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit." Have you thanked God lately for the realization of faith? Have you ever realized that God broke down those barriers of sin and unbelief and made you his child? If we had been forced to realize this on our own, we would be lost. We hate admitting weakness and frailty. But that is what we are! And because of our gracious God, "ours is the kingdom of heaven."

"Blessed are those who mourn." Death is not a subject many *enjoy* talking about. It's downright depressing. But through faith we are blessed in death! Mourning ends with the joy of the resurrection of Christ. Death is not final. It is but a sleep. And we are blessed because we "will be comforted" in Christ.

"Blessed are the meek." Is that how you would like to describe yourself on your resume? Well, my strongest quality is my meekness. Absolutely not! But that's not what Jesus is speaking of, here. He is speaking of a spiritual realm. Spiritual meekness—that is, humility—is a trait that is to be desired by Christians. A self-awareness of the total depravity of mankind is something that is to be desired. Why? Because faith comes from humility and repentance. And we are told that those with faith "will inherit the earth."

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness." It's true! Desperation in a Christian is a good thing, if understood correctly. Like the Jews in Jesus' time, we must recognize that there is no hope in keeping God's law. It is utterly hopeless. And so we hunger and thirst for the righteousness that we need. We desperately look for an answer to fill the void which our sins leave. And we find it in Christ. Christ's righteousness fills the void we cannot fill. And as a result, we too "will be filled."

"Blessed are the merciful." This is something completely backwards to the world, isn't it? Showing mercy is a sign of weakness. And that is true in the business world. But all of us know of an instance when someone has been "burned" because they didn't show mercy at some point earlier in life. But Jesus is not speaking of worldly affairs. He is speaking of spiritual matters. Showing mercy to those

who don't seem to deserve it is a blessing for a Christian. Why? Because mercy has been shown to us—even though we didn't deserve it!

"Blessed are the pure in heart." Paul urges us to stay away from course joking and laughter. Paul again encourages us to "watch our life and doctrine closely." Jesus himself encourages us to be "pure in heart." While that isn't easy, God never promised it would be. But the payoff is worth it! "For they will see God."

"Blessed are the peacemakers." Let's be honest. It's so much easier to argue than to make peace. It's so much easier to keep people as enemies than to cultivate a friendship. But those who make peace, those who seek reconciliation, those who want to make relationships right, they are blessed! They're blessed because they're showing the very same love that was shown to them. They're proving that they are "called children of God."

Here's the truth, the crux of the matter this morning: "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness." The truth is that by being any or all of these things will not be easy. We will be made fun of, taken advantage of, persecuted and insulted, won't we. It might even be from people sitting in this church today! But that's because Satan is good at what he does. Satan spreads the lie that these things aren't worth it, and that those who do these things aren't worthy to be called friends. But, dear Christians, that's not true! God doesn't lie! He doesn't deceive or hide anything from you. When he says you're blessed, believe it!

Truthfully, if you are insulted and persecuted because of the life you live. If you confidently live your life of faith in the Son of God, you truly are blessed. Yours "is the kingdom of heaven." You are a saint of God!

So, dear Christian, rejoice! Be glad! Leave your life of despair and have hope! While He doesn't come out and say you'll be happy, Jesus does tell you today that you are blessed. So rejoice! Be glad! Because your great reward is waiting for you in heaven!



Soli Deo Gloria!

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