

“Blessed” – Pr Jim Sprenkle – All Saints’ Day – November 7, 2021

- I. **Matthew 5:1-12** – read previously
- II. **We all want to be blessed.**
 - a. In other words, nearly every person seeks happiness in life.
 - b. Usually this means that if we put in the effort, then the good stuff follows
 - i. It’s the American dream that hard work and effort will lead to better things in life... effort produces material blessings, which are supposed to make us happy.
 - c. If we had something like a happiness scale, a big part of society would say it is directly connected to their material blessings.
 - i. How much money is in their bank accounts...
 - ii. What kind of car they drive...
 - iii. How big their house is...
 - iv. The career they choose...
 - v. At some point, we are supposed to look around at all this effort we’ve put out – and if all works out, we say, “I’m blessed.”
 - d. Jesus has something different to say about blessings.
 - i. The disciples are gathered around Him to hear something important, as it says in verse 2, “And He opened His mouth and taught them, saying...”
 - ii. Then He goes on to teach that believers who are poor in spirit, those who are meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, and those who suffer... who are persecuted and insulted... these are the people who are blessed.
 - iii. Sure doesn’t sound like things are “happy” for these people, but Jesus teaches that in spite of the trouble, those who believe in Him as their Lord and Savior will be blessed.
- III. **These are promises mainly found in spiritual prosperity...**
 - a. Spiritual prosperity that makes a difference in our journey through life.
 - b. Deep within our psyche is what I mentioned before – work and receive the rewards or blessings – but happiness cannot be defined by our material blessings.
 - c. Jesus is consistent in His message and teachings that we are not to worry about the worldly stuff... that will come and go, but our faith means we have a different motivation – one that comes from Christ.
 - d. The idea of spiritual prosperity is a little harder to understand...
 - i. It’s hard to believe that our spiritual condition holds such a powerful position in our lives.
 - e. First of all, the spiritual is based on faith and the unseen rather than reason (or rational thought) and empirical evidence (that which is determined by seeing, hearing, touching, smelling or tasting).

- i. We all know of someone who refuses to believe in God because it doesn't make sense or it's foolishness.
 - ii. And how many people have you heard say they cannot believe in a God that is unseen... or they say, show me a sign?
- f. The spiritual is not so much about putting reason in the first place, or using our senses, but Jesus declares in John 20:29, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."
 - i. Believing that we will be blessed beyond measure, along with blessings now as God's children definitely takes faith – but that is God's gift to us.
 - ii. Faith believes the promises of God.

IV. **Promises of blessedness.**

- a. These blessings that Jesus speaks to His followers are promises of God.
- b. Professor Jeff Gibbs from my seminary classes would say that when Jesus uses the word blessed – it's not just happiness or state of bliss – it's more on the level of "redeemed" or of being "saved".
- c. The nine blessings or beatitudes start with the poor in spirit.
 - i. Those who realize they cannot save themselves and require God's rescue are blessed.
 - ii. Martin Luther writes, "I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith" in the explanation of 3rd Article of the Apostles' Creed.
- d. Those who mourn are blessed
 - i. Loss is a part of life – from the death of a loved one to the many losses that sin and trials cause us.
- e. Those who are meek are blessed.
 - i. Humility and submitting to God and His will puts us in the right place to love God and others.
- f. Those seeking righteousness are blessed.
 - i. Though just like the poor in spirit, we cannot be righteous on our own, we can still seek to grow up in it as God gives it to us as a gift.
- g. Those who are merciful are blessed.
 - i. God's example of showing mercy is our guide – especially considering what Jesus went through to be merciful to us.
- h. Those who are pure in heart are blessed.
 - i. Again, we don't have a pure heart without God's help, but it means that we trust in Him alone, and have purity because He forgives
- i. Those who are peacemakers are blessed.

- i. Peacemakers are those who proclaim Jesus is the Savior – those who bring Christ into the nations and ultimately bring “peace” that comes from a relationship with Jesus.
- j. Those who are persecuted are blessed.
 - i. Whenever people suffer for the sake of Jesus Christ, He is there to provide His support, strength and love.
- k. Finally, YOU all are blessed when people reject you for the sake of Jesus.
 - i. Notice, the final blessing is directed not to “they, them, those” but to YOU all (those sitting before Jesus) – and you all here today.
 - ii. When we face struggles because we believe in Jesus and share His name with others – when we are rejected and despised... rejoice – because you fit in with a long line of prophets and people of God who suffered for their faith.
- l. Now, you might be saying to yourself... Pastor Jim, I’m not feeling too blessed right now – when are these good things Jesus promised going to start happening?
 - i. Remember, we not only receive the crown of victory at the end of our earthly lives, we also receive the spiritual blessings throughout.
 - ii. By faith, we receive the blessings of the power and reign of heaven – even before we go.

V. **In God’s great love, He provides everything we truly need.**

- a. The Father saw the impossible divide that sin caused in us, and He sent His only Son to provide the bridge.
- b. Jesus, the very one who taught these blessings by the Sea of Galilee, would give up His own life as the only way to make us right by God.
 - i. Jesus bled and died, which was accounted to us as a gift whenever we came to believe or have faith.
 - ii. By faith, we have all the blessings Jesus declares in these beatitudes – the kingdom of heaven, comfort, an inheritance of the earth, satisfaction, mercy, seeing God, being called a child of God, and a great reward in heaven.
 - iii. We are blessed!
- c. By faith we also have many spiritual gifts in the here and now –
 - i. Before He comes in glory, or we join the saints in heaven by our own death, we receive the blessings of –
 - 1. Forgiveness
 - 2. Baptism into Jesus
 - 3. The Holy Spirit’s help to strengthen our faith
 - 4. The Lord’s Supper
 - 5. And the fellowship of our brothers and sisters in Christ
 - ii. Again, we are blessed!

- d. Yes, we will struggle through this life in the valley of the shadow of death – and no one promises us any different.
- e. And yet, by the promises of God, received and believed by our faith, we will always overcome.
 - i. As Jesus says in Revelation 2:10 – “Do not fear what you are about to suffer... You will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.”
 - ii. By God’s grace and the gift of faith, we can be assured, there will be a great reunion one day as we join those who have gone before us in a life that never ends. Amen.