

The Blessings of the Blessed

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[0 : 0 0] So muddled up. Anyway, let's turn back to the passage we read, particularly the first five verses of Matthew chapter 5, as you see on page 809. It's actually been some time since we last were looking at what's popularly known as the Sermon on the Mount. I think it's something like nine plus years on a midweek meeting that we studied this great, great teaching of Jesus. But you know, just a once only focus on any section of scripture really is not, shouldn't be the case for any congregation because we need to hear and we need to keep hearing the voice of Jesus speaking to us. The Apostle James spoke of being quick to hear. And surely this is one aspect anyway of being quick to hear that we resort and continue to resort to the word of God and continue to hear the voice of Jesus speaking to us. Because what we have before us, of course, is his teaching, his wisdom, his guidance, his direction for those who know him, for those who serve him, for those whom God has blessed in being in the kingdom of God.

And so we will return to Matthew chapter 5, we'll return to, and 6 and 7, return to the Sermon on the Mount. Old Bishop Ryle once wrote, let us often study the Sermon on the Mount. That's what we're doing here. I pray that it's not just, of course, in a congregational setting that we study the Sermon on the Mount, that we look at the Sermon on the Mount. I pray that you'll look at the Sermon in your own private devotions. I'm sure you do. We've already, as I said, looked at the Sermon on the Mount in a midweek context. Now let's look at it, the Sermon from a Lord's Day service position. Because, as we said, we're reading here the very word of the Lord Jesus, the infallible word, the word that he gives to us to pay attention to. You know, when the temple guards heard Jesus, remember when Jesus was arrested in a trial, the temple guards said, no one ever spoke like this man. And that's exactly what we're seeing here in this Sermon.

The Sermon on the Mount, no one ever spoke like this man. So we must, there's that compulsion to turn back to this teaching, this Sermon. It's Jesus' voice. We're hearing. And as we mentioned in prayer, it's not simply us, hearers, that we turn to this section of God's Word, but we come to be doers of God's Word, to sit at Jesus' feet, to hear his voice speak to us this morning, and to hear what Jesus is saying to us that he uttered 2,000 years ago, yes, but it's the same truth, it's the same application, it's the same wisdom that we find here from the Master's voice. So what do we find when we hear again Jesus' voice, the Master's voice? We hear the greatest sermon ever preached. We hear infallible wisdom.

We hear the voice of the Good Shepherd feeding his sheep, giving encouragement, giving instruction, giving nourishment, directing his sheep, directing us to know what it means to live for the Lord Jesus, what it means to live in that kingdom life that glorifies God. And therefore, again, as someone else has written, every word of the Lord Jesus ought to be precious to professing Christians. And this word before us, surely, it should be precious to you, you know, the Lord Jesus as your Savior. So it's a privilege. It's a privilege to be, as it were, on that mountainside with Jesus and the disciples. It's a privilege to hear again the voice of Jesus giving this sermon. And you know, especially when today you hear so many voices, as it were, trying to grab our attention to, you know, to show us what it means to live well. Well, listen. Listen first and foremost to the voice of the Lord Jesus and feast on his words. Well, let's think about the background to the sermon. Well, we've obviously come to the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew, in his Gospel, Matthew's already told us what this sermon's about. As we read there in chapter 4 from verse 23, he's told us what this sermon's about. It's about the kingdom of God. It's about the kingdom that Jesus has brought in, that he's inaugurated when Jesus came from heaven to earth to bring his people into his everlasting kingdom. So kingdom living, living in the kingdom, living in the kingdom of God is central to the message, to the sermon that Jesus is preaching here. What it means to live as God's redeemed people in the kingdom of God. And that's why we started reading at verse 23. We read there that Jesus is going through Galilee. He's teaching in the synagogues. He's preaching the good news of the kingdom.

[5 : 49] In fact, even earlier, verse 17, that Jesus said, repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. So here in this sermon, what Jesus is preaching concerns what it means to live as a Christian, what it means to live as someone whose heart is different to the world, somebody whose lifestyle expresses that difference. Because he, because she has come into the kingdom of God by God's grace. And therefore, those of you who have come into that kingdom by God's grace, seek to apply the teaching that Jesus gives us here in every aspect of your life. And particularly in contrast to the world in which you live in. So, yes, it's a sermon for believers, for believers who are already in the kingdom. For you who are being instructed by Jesus, what it means to live in his kingdom.

What your life should be like. What your attitude should be in that kingdom. What being a Christian means living in the kingdom under the reign of the Lord Jesus. And you know, because we have sinful hearts. It's of our sinful nature. We need to be constantly reminded about what it means to be in Christ. What it means in practice to be in Christ. What it means to be different to the world.

Which is why we're returning again. And we'll return again to this, the greatest of sermons. So if you're a believer in the Lord Jesus, it's for you, it's for me to pay the closest of attention to the words that Jesus speaks here. Because these words tell you what kind of a person Jesus says you ought to be. What you are to aim for in your life. A life lived to the glory of God. So Jesus is teaching you what should your conduct be. What should your character be. What you should be in heart.

A heart that's been made right with God. But if you don't yet know the Lord Jesus as your saviour. Well, don't switch off. Don't switch off. Listen. Hear the voice of the Lord Jesus. Hear the voice that's calling you even now. Listen to his word. Listen to these words. Listen to his instruction.

Because what you are hearing this morning is for your eternal good. This is wisdom beyond anything that the non-believing world can offer for the good of your eternal soul. So listen. Pay attention to these words of Jesus. Not quite at the words yet. Because we still need a wee bit more background. Because, well, what have we seen at the start of chapter 5 here? We're told that Jesus has already called his disciples to be with him. I mean, he's been preaching to these great crowds around him. He's been healing the sick. He's obviously, you know, attracted a great following of people who want to see him, to hear him, to be healed by him. But as you see at the start of chapter 5, Jesus withdraws from the crowds. Initially, Jesus withdraws from the crowds. Later, of course, as you see towards the end of the sermon, the crowds are there as well. But initially, Jesus again withdraws from the crowds. And who are with Jesus as he begins his preaching? It's the twelve disciples. The disciples are with him as Jesus goes up on that mountain. And, you know, without jumping too far ahead, again, it's a mountain. We noticed this, you know, a few Sundays ago. Location of mountains in the gospel story is important.

[9 : 41] It's insignificant. Remember what we said a few weeks ago. The mountain location in relation to the teaching, the word of God. So often it was a mountain where God revealed his will for his people to live life to his honour and to his glory. So here's Matthew recording that Jesus is going up to this mountain and surely telling us this at that exact point. Jesus is revealing his mission. He's revealing his teaching. He's revealing God's will for his people.

And, you know, it's what has appeared anyway just a matter-of-fact introduction at the start of chapter 5. Well, Matthew, who was there obviously, is an eyewitness of what happened.

Matthew tells us quite simply that, you know, after Jesus has gone to that mountainside, that he sits down. Okay? That's the posture of the teacher, as was in the culture of the time.

So Jesus sits down in that posture of the teacher. He opens his mouth and he teaches the disciples. And he begins. He begins. Well, you know, as we read the nine beatitudes, the nine blessings, what might appear simple, one-sentence definitions, if you like, are so replete with power, replete with wisdom, and replete with that message that you and I need constantly to return to, what it means to live in the kingdom of God. And we're going to look at the first three this morning, the first three blessings, who are blessed of God. Because, you know, as soon as we see the word blessed, we've got to ask, what does it mean? Well, of course, we've looked at this on a number of occasions. It's this great spiritual truth that speaks of being favoured by God. You know, I think one of the clearest examples of what being blessed by God means is in the story of the birth of Jesus.

You go to Luke chapter 1. Remember when Mary, the mother of Jesus, Mary was told by the angel that she'd found favour with God. And then Mary's response to that announcement by the angel that she was going to be the mother of the Lord Jesus, what does her cousin Elizabeth say to her? Her cousin says to Mary, blessed, blessed, whatever way you want to pronounce it, blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And remember Mary in her great song of praise? Remember what she sang?

[12 : 25] For now on all generations will call me blessed. For because he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. Blessed. God bestowing his favour on those on whom he has done great things, even in salvation. So in relation to that favour, the favour of God, you see the favour of God resting on undeserving sinners. So because of that, you know that you who are an undeserving sinner of God's grace, you're blessed. And therefore, the association of joy and true happiness surely has to be within your heart as you realise you are blessed. You have known God's favour. You've known that loving kindness of God.

And that joy and that true happiness you know in your heart is because of God having chosen a people for himself, God having given you the blessing of salvation to live for him in a way that glorifies God.

So you truly can say that you are that blessed person, that you know that true happiness that comes from being found in Christ.

And you know, I sometimes think that we avoid speaking of happiness in relation to being blessed. You know, as if happiness is only some kind of superficial, feel-good, short-lived experience.

But surely happiness, true happiness in the Lord, surely that is part of being blessed. The 18th century minister, Lachlan Mackenzie of Lachlan, he wrote a very famous description of the person who is blessed.

[14 : 24] And he called it the happy man. And I know that some of what he wrote sounds maybe a wee bit quaint to us in the 21st century. But the message that he wrote about the blessed person, the happy man, is true.

And I want to read what Lachlan Mackenzie wrote because there's so much wisdom, God-given wisdom, in what he wrote. The happy man was born in the city of regeneration, in the parish of repentance unto life.

He was educated at the school of obedience. He has a large estate in the country of Christian contentment. Many times does jobs of self-denial. Wears the garment of humility.

And has another suit to put on when he goes to court called the robe of Christ's righteousness. Just listen to all these aspects, these characteristics of the one who truly is blessed.

He often walks in the valley of self-abasement, self-humility. Sometimes climbs the mountains of heavenly mindedness. He breakfasts every morning in spiritual prayer.

[15 : 31] And sups every evening on the same. He has meat, he has food to eat that the world knows not of. And his drink is the sincere milk of the word of God. Thus, happy he lives and happy he dies.

Happy is he who has gospel submission in his will, due in order in his affections, sound peace in his conscience, real divinity in his breath, the Redeemer's yoke on his neck, a vain world under his feet, and a crown of glory over his head.

Happy is the life of that man who believes firmly, prays fervently, walks patiently, works abundantly, lives wholly, dies daily, watches his heart, guards his senses, redeems his time, loves Christ, and longs for glory.

He's necessitated to take the world on his way to heaven. But he walks through it as fast as he can. And all his business, by the way, is to make himself and others happy.

Take him all in all in two words. He's a man and a Christian. And, we might add, blessed. So what about the man, the happy person who's blessed?

[16 : 45] Well, listen to Jesus' voice. As Jesus says, verse 3, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. First words.

First words of the Sermon on the Mount. First words in any sermon. First words in any kind of communication. They're always important. First words, always important. And, well, why?

Well, they set the scene. They have that immediate impact on the person who's listening. And so here in the first words of Jesus, in the sermon, they're there for impact, immediate impact.

They draw you, get your attention. They set the scene. And they come straight to the point, the definition of the person who's truly blessed, truly happy, truly favoured by God.

Blessed. Well, who are the blessed, as Jesus says here? Well, who are given, as it were, in this first of the definitions of the believer?

[17 : 50] It's the poor in spirit. The poor, not the rich and well. Not the most knowledgeable theologians. Not the religious elite, per se.

It's the poor in spirit. They're given this emphasis here, this first emphasis, on the one who's living in the kingdom of God. The one who's been shown this favour of God.

The poor in spirit. But what's Jesus speaking of here? The poor in spirit. Surely this. All. Or should we say those, who have left all, to follow Jesus.

Those who have counted everything but rubbish, in order to follow Jesus. Those who live knowing, that you're in an eternal debt, to the Lord Jesus, for His giving you salvation, through His life, and through His death.

You who know that you can bring nothing to Jesus, absolutely nothing, to merit your salvation. And having then that, that position of, of humility before God, you know you've got nothing.

[19 : 01] Nothing to give. And in having nothing, you have everything. So, what is that everything? What are the, what do the poor in spirit have?

Well, you have something that riches can't buy. You have something that knowledge alone can't buy. You have something that, any kind of status in the church can't buy. You've got the kingdom of heaven.

You know, we live in a very topsy-turvy world. And, you know, those people who, who speak about, happiness, well, it's in terms of, what we might say, volume.

You know, the vastness of riches, equals happiness. The, the height of fame, celebrity status, popularity, or, or some kind of physical perfection.

But remember, riches fade. Fame disappears. Popularity is short-lived. We get old, and we die.

[20 : 04] But Jesus tells us, there's an eternal blessing, for those who are blessed of God. And that eternal blessing, the kingdom of heaven.

If you are a Christian, remember, and keep being reminded, the word of Jesus here, you are blessed. So, get rid of all your negative thinking about yourself.

Get rid of all your moaning, and grumbling, and hear Jesus speak. Speak about you. Blessed are the poor in spirit. If you know that you're a spiritual bankrupt, you know that you've got nothing to give to God, to earn your salvation, if you know that spirit of weakness, and inadequacy, well, rejoice.

Rejoice that you are blessed. Rejoice that yours is the kingdom of heaven. You who cry out, Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner, will rejoice in the blessing, and the knowledge, that you have the kingdom.

The kingdom that Jesus has promised, to all who come to him, with nothing, nothing in your hand to bring. You who know the Lord as your saviour, you know God's special favour.

[21 : 21] You have a kingdom in your soul, your kingdom of heaven in your soul. You are now in the kingdom. Yes, God's word shows us, and promises, the best is yet to come.

The best is yet to come, when Jesus consummates his kingdom, when he returns from heaven to earth, when he returns that second time. But remember now, you're already enjoying the blessing of the kingdom.

You're rich, the poor in spirit, are rich beyond price, because of the consequences, you're being spiritual poor. You're enjoying the blessings of the kingdom now. Of course, there's more to the words of Jesus, than mere definition.

There has to be application. In other words, how do you show? How do you show by your life, that you are poor in spirit? What's that reality? How does that reality show itself?

Well, surely it shows itself in a servant heart. In that servant heart, that comes humbly before God, and before one another. It's that person, who shows that he is poor in spirit, in not being full of himself, but full of Christ.

[22 : 33] That person, who won't seek to attract the attention of others, through any kind of self-righteousness. But it's the person, who will give glory to God, in any and every circumstance.

And again, you who don't know the Lord Jesus, as your saviour, I don't know what you're looking for. Maybe you're looking for the world's riches. Maybe you're looking for fame. Some might even have all, that the world can give, in terms of what's considered, success, wealth, satisfaction.

But unless you're poor in spirit, unless, you have that poverty, within your soul, then, God's word, tells you, you have nothing.

That actually, you must lose yourself. In the book of Revelation, the last book of the Bible, one of the letters to the church, is the church in Laodicea, that church that claimed to be rich, that claimed that they needed nothing.

But, as we read in Revelation 3, the angel of the church replies, and replies with solemn words, to that church that considered itself rich, and needed nothing.

[23 : 48] The word given to that church was this, you're wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, naked. You know, and only when we realize, our own spiritual poverty, only then will we know, that true, blessing from God, that blessing that truly satisfies.

So you who as yet don't know him, as Lord and Saviour, come to him. The hymn writer wrote this, and maybe these words will be echoing in your heart, nothing in my hand I bring, simply to the cross I cling, naked, come to thee for dress, helpless, look to thee for grace, foul eye to the fountain fly, wash me Saviour, or I die.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. But secondly, and second of the blessings that Jesus pronounces, blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

So, from being poor in spirit, it follows, it follows on, that the Christian, is someone who mourns. He knows, she knows that she's a sinner, a sinner before God.

She knows, he knows that he deserves nothing of God's mercy and grace. And the person who knows that, is the same person, who grieves, who mourns, but in what context?

[25 : 11] Mourns, over his sins. Jesus is using particular language here, he's using the language of grief, to express that, the depth of sorrow, that the Christian has, and must have over his sins, sins against God.

Now, obviously the language, as I said, is chosen particularly here. Mourning. Well, when is the normal context for mourning? It's in the context of, you know, when you've lost a loved one.

And that mourning involves, the most intense of, pain and grief. And certainly very difficult, to be comforted of. So, in the early stages of mourning.

And for the Christian, who grieves, over his sin, it's a mourning. It's pain. It's sorrow. Sorrow, over loss. What's that loss?

The loss of holiness. So, the Christian, in the mourning, is mourning over his loss of holiness, and his sinning against God. And you know, particularly, the more that we grasp, the holiness of God, the true holiness of God, it's then, that you'll be truly mourning, over your sins.

[26 : 23] Grieving, over your sins. Because, you know, the more that you know, the God of all grace, the more that you know, that God is holy, holy, holy, the more, you'll mourn, over your sins.

Because, you'll know, that you'll have offended, a holy God. And the more that you mourn, over your loss of holiness, caused by your sinning against God, the more that you will come before that throne of grace, and seek forgiveness for your sins.

because your grief, can only be truly satisfied, and dealt with, the God who forgives. Because you see, the blessing, there's blessing for you who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

That's the comfort of the forgiveness of sins. Actually, that's what the blessing that Jesus is speaking of here. The comfort of knowing that, yes, you're a sinner, but you're a redeemed sinner, and a forgiven sinner.

And, going back to what Lachael McKenzie said, about speaking of the happy man, he has another suit to put on, when he goes to court, called the robe of Christ's righteousness. So, you come before that throne, of grace, clothed in the righteousness, of the Lord Jesus.

[27 : 42] You stand before him, you stand before, yes, when you stand before, the judge, you're declared not guilty, because Jesus bore your sins on the cross.

He took the condemnation, that you deserve. So, the one who's poor in spirit, at the same time, is the one, is the person, who mourns over his sins, but the same person, who's comforted, truly blessed, through the knowledge, of his forgiveness of sins.

But then you might ask, well, what does Christian mourning look like? You know, is it some kind of introverted, depressive, frame of mind? You know, looking at, always looking gloomy, and bleak?

No, no, surely not. Yes, of course, there has to be sorrow, and tears, at the sins that we commit. But you don't despair. You're not in a hopeless situation.

You have that joy, of knowing that your sins are forgiven, when you come before, the God of all grace, and come before him, and repentance of sins, through your mourning. Of course, we have to ask ourselves, in the honesty of our hearts, are we mourning?

[28 : 53] Am I mourning? Are you mourning over your sins? Has your heart been melted, so melted, that you're actually seeing, sin as it truly is, an offence, for a holy God?

Have you, have you, have you gone down on your knees, and cried, Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner? Do you know that comfort, that comfort of, of the forgiving, touch of God's hand upon you?

When was the last time you actually mourned, truly mourned, over your sin? I mean, I'm not speaking about remorse, I'm actually speaking of grief, true mourning, true grief.

You know, when in pain, you cried, Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner. You know, coming before God, with a broken and contrite heart, surely, as David said in Psalm 51, surely, that is evidence of a, a mourning spirit.

You come before him, broken in your heart, because you know you've sinned, against a holy and righteous God. Because he is the God, who's offended by sin, but at the same time, the God, who gives comfort.

[30 : 09] We sin against God, but we have that knowledge of the comfort, of forgiveness. And, you know, when you, when we remember, God has every right to withhold comfort.

He's got every right to condemn you and I, for our sins. He gives you his comfort in love. He gives you his comfort in love. And that's the measure of life in the kingdom.

The knowledge of the one true God who loves you. And that love that reaches out even to hell-deserving sinners such as ourselves. And that's why we sang in Psalm 30, when David spoke of his mourning turned to dancing, that's the expression of joy in the heart of the believer, who knows that his sins are forgiven, through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, blessed are the mourn, those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. But lastly, for this, this morning, blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Now, please remember, as I hope we've been realizing here, this is, okay, this is a third description, but it's not, you know, one Christian mourns in spirit, one Christian mourns, another's poor in spirit, another's meek.

[31 : 26] This is a description of, you know, it's not separate categories of Christian. No, Jesus is speaking of the Christian. The one who is poor in spirit, at the same time, is the one who mourns over the sins, and at the same time, is meek.

You might speak about the divine paradox, you know, the poor in spirit, who's blessed with the riches of, of the inheritance of, of true heavenly riches.

You know, again, those who mourn, the paradox, yes, you're mourning, but you have that blessedness of God's comfort in your sorrow. But now we've got the meek, the meek who inherit the earth.

Again, we have to ask, what's Jesus speaking of here when he speaks of the meek? Who are the meek? Well, they are those who are poor in spirit. They are those who are mourning, but at the same time, mourning, yes, but being humble, not demanding your rights, following the Lord Jesus, who is humble, who is humble, the one who is humble and gentle in spirit, the one who didn't insist on his rights as God's son, and his work of salvation through, through his suffering.

Remember what Jesus said, take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you'll find rest for your souls. And the Christian who is truly blessed follows the Lord Jesus, the one who is gentle and lowly in heart, the Lord Jesus, the Lord of Lords, the King of Kings, the one who is meek in earth, the one who was, as he says, gentle and humble.

[33 : 08] And therefore, meekness isn't, you know, isn't just another separate category, you know, of a separate, another kind of Christian.

No, it's someone who is, as we said, poor in spirit, who mourns over, over your sins, and is meek, and shows that meekness, in practice. In other words, it's that lifestyle of holiness, that, yes, that recognizes that God is in control of your life, that seeks first the kingdom of God, yes, that puts others before yourself.

It's the meekness, that shows itself in taking up your cross daily. But notice again, what makes the meek blessed? It's an inheritance.

The humble one, the gentle one, the one who's full of the grace of the Lord Jesus, he, she is blessed with the promise of the reign, of an inheritance, reigning, in the new earth.

Revelation 5, 10, you've made them a kingdom and priests, sir God, and they shall reign on the earth. You know, these words are just, you might say, almost too amazing, too amazing to grasp and describe, and certainly the full reality, of what that inheritance is going to be.

[34 : 27] But Paul spoke of that inheritance. Romans 8, verse 17, he spoke of Christians being heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. And if you know the blessedness of living in the kingdom, that kingdom that Jesus came to bring in, by his reign, you will know, and you know that blessedness.

And we'll know, the future promise, the blessedness of being in that new heaven and new earth. Because on that day that Jesus comes, returns, when Jesus brings his children into that new earth, there'll be no more tears, there'll be no more sins to be mourned over.

But there'll be the riches of glory, when you and every other one whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life, when you'll know that fullness of the kingdom, you depart to be with him forever.

So I ask you, do you know that reign, the reign of the Lord Jesus in your heart? Is he reigning there above all else, above all others?

Have you given your life to him in repentance of your sins? Have you, by faith, trusted in the Lord Jesus for your salvation? Do you know that grace, the grace of God, that, and you come before him constantly in repentance, and in sorrow, and in humble dependence on him alone?

[35 : 49] Well, rejoice. Rejoice in that reality that you're blessed. But if you're still to know the Lord Jesus as Savior, if you're still to know that grace, his grace in your life, don't delay in coming to him.

Because he promises you what the world cannot give. He promises you a kingdom. He promises you that eternal comfort in that knowledge of the forgiveness of sins that makes you right with God, the God of all grace.

He promises you the earth. And remember, he is the one who never breaks his promises. Amen. Let us pray. O Lord, our God, you speak to us through your word, your word of power, your word of authority, your word of might.

Lord, unstop our ears to hear that word and to act upon it in full obedience to your word. Hear us, Lord, we pray.

Forgive us our sins even in holy things. Bless us. Go before us. May your face shine upon us and keep us safe. We ask these things in Jesus' name.

[37 : 08] Amen. Let's close in Psalm 37 on page 253.

And we'll sing from verse 7 down to verse 11. And the tune is Grathenberg. Rest in the Lord and patiently wait for him.

Do not fret for him who, prospering in his way, success and sin doth get. Do thou from anger cease and wrath see thou forsake also. Fret not thyself in any wise that evil thou shouldst do.

7 to 11 Psalm 37 to God's praise. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.