

The Blessed, Overflowing Life

Master Class in Discipleship Series, June 18 & 19, 2022, Father's Day | Matthew 5:1-16
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What can we do to get the blessed life?

Matthew 5:1-2 introduces "The Sermon on the Mount":

Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying ...

Jesus went up on a mountain.

The text is not specific about which mountain. The picture you see is a panoramic photo from the hill by the sea of Galilee traditionally associated with this sermon.

Then Jesus sat down to teach, demonstrating his authority.

Jesus' disciples came to him to hear him teach.

Jesus had been teaching and working miracles, so a crowd was gathering around him.

Some in the crowd were there with questions, with expectations, or for the entertainment.

Some in the crowd were consciously following Jesus; they were disciples.

An inner group of disciples had formed around Jesus; these were the ones the Lord had explicitly called by name and invited to a journey of living with him, learning from him, imitating him, and making more disciples of him. They would become his Apostles.

Jesus was teaching all his disciples what life as a disciple was like.

The Sermon on the Mount is the Master Class in discipleship.

Master Classes are classes taught by experts in a field to those deeply interested in the subject.

The subject of the Sermon on the Mount is living as a disciple.

Jesus is the unparalleled expert on how to live as his disciple.

That makes the Sermon on the Mount the Master Class in discipleship.

Jesus begins by answering the question, "What can we do to get the blessed life?"

This is a critically important question because we all want to live blessed lives.

Jesus addresses this question first in the Sermon on the Mount in the Beatitudes.

Resolutely hope in the blessed life.

To understand why we must resolutely hope, we must go back to the Kingdom of God.

Jesus' Sermon on the Mount is located in Matthew, chapter 5.

What happened in chapters 3 and 4 sets the context for the Sermon on the Mount.

Back in Matthew chapters 3 and 4, we read about the Kingdom of Heaven or of God.

John the Baptist proclaimed that the Kingdom of God was coming in surprising ways.

John told the crowds that came to listen to him that the Kingdom of God was coming.

He surprised them when he told them that being descended from Abraham would not ensure that they were part of the Kingdom of God. They were surprised!

If one's ancestry didn't ensure being part of the Kingdom of God, what would?

Jesus proclaimed that the Kingdom of God brought surprising outcomes.

Luke chapter 4 records the same point in Jesus' ministry that Matthew chapters 3 and 4 do.

In Luke chapter 4, Jesus went back to his hometown of Nazareth for a Sabbath-day service.

Luke 4:18-19 records that Jesus read the following from Isaiah the prophet:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Jesus claimed that this passage was fulfilled in him. He didn't come to work miracles for hometown folks or to make their lives work out. Instead, he came to bring good news to those who had not had any good news in a long time. The crowd was surprised and became angry.

Jesus also proclaimed that the Kingdom of God was surprisingly close.

Back again in Matthew 4, Jesus said bluntly that the Kingdom of God was at hand.

The Kingdom of God is the place where God is in charge, where everyone knows that God is in charge, and where God's being in charge shapes everything.

When Jesus said that the Kingdom of God had arrived, people were surprised.

No one could see or touch it. There was no territory, no capital, no land. The Roman empire was still occupying the land. Where was this Kingdom Jesus said was "at hand?"

When Jesus said that the Kingdom of God was "at hand," he meant that it was in him. The Kingdom of God was only available in him. We have to accept him and live out his teachings.

If the Kingdom of God is at hand, then we must resolutely hope in the blessed life.

Why? Because accepting Jesus and his message is not easy.

We have to look past the fact that many people do not know that God is in charge, they disobey God, so the world is still a broken place. That isn't easy.

Accepting that the Kingdom of God is near means that we look forward because in many ways, the Kingdom of God is yet to come when Jesus returns. That isn't always easy to do either!

It isn't always easy to believe, and it isn't easy to keep believing.

Both require hope. To get the blessed life, we must resolutely hope.

The way we hope probably resembles the way I rode the Batman rollercoaster (minus the fear).

I don't like roller coasters. I'm afraid of heights.

Every time I ride a roller coaster, I think I'm going to fall out or hit my head on something.

Then I rode my first Batman Roller Coaster. On the Batman roller coasters, instead of being strapped into a car, you are strapped into a seat and hang.

That makes all the difference to me because I feel in control. On a Batman rollercoaster I tell myself that I can hang on no matter what happens. I put a death grip on those handles and feel much, much safer.

Now, take the fear of falling out of the experience and you'll see how we hope. We hold onto hope with the same kind of ferocious determination that I hang onto the Batman roller coaster. We resolutely hold to hope in the blessed life.

Stop trying to earn the blessed life.

Next, Matthew 5:3-12 records the first section of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

What does it mean to be blessed?

The word "blessed" implies being favored by heaven, being filled with the life of heaven, or living a life that feels so good that it's like heaven on earth.

In the Bible it implies that we are in the Kingdom of God and have great joy as a result.

Who are the blessed ones?

Jesus' teaching style was very concrete; he takes things that are present, tangible, and understandable to communicate big, difficult-to-understand concepts.

In this case, Jesus may have been touching certain people as he taught to illustrate his points. If he didn't touch them, he likely pointed them out or indicated them somehow.

The Beatitudes imply that the blessed life is given to surprising people.

Jesus said that the poor in spirit are blessed. The ones who are bruised and beaten by life and those who have nothing spiritually to offer get the Kingdom of God.

Those who mourn—they have lost someone or something, they have been judged, they have been beaten to tears—they will be comforted.

Those who are meek—they never assert themselves and never get noticed—they will inherit the earth. It's theirs!

Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness—they don't have it because it's tough to hunger and thirst for something you already have—they will be satisfied.

Those who are merciful—they forgive freely and are sometimes taken advantage of—they will receive the same kind of mercy that they have given but in divine quantities.

Those who are "pure in heart"—the perfectionists who are never satisfied with themselves, with anyone, or with anything else—they will see perfection in God himself and finally be satisfied.

Those who are peacemakers—they avoid conflict, they bring people together, and they find themselves caught in the middle when the shooting starts—they will be called sons of God.

Those who hurt because they did the right thing, they get the Kingdom of God.

To this point, Jesus has been looking out at the crowds, helping his disciples to see just how wide the invitation is to the Kingdom of God. Next, Jesus turns to the disciples themselves.

They too are blessed; they know they're blessed in the moment because they are with Jesus. However, when he is gone and people hate them and reject them and make their lives miserable, they will still be "in" and will still be "blessed." They will have a reward in Heaven.

The Beatitudes confirm that the blessed life is something we cannot earn.

Jesus hammers away at our assumptions about who is in and how we get there.

It doesn't go to the top dogs in society or to those who are confident in their own spirituality.

Blessed are those with nothing to offer, those who have lost everything, those who are walked on, those who are never happy, and those who are always caught in the middle.

We don't earn our way to the blessed life; it's offered and given as a gift.

Stop trying to earn the blessed life.

You can't earn the blessed life.

Trying to earn the blessed life stops us from accepting it in the first place.

If by some miracle we stop trying to earn the blessed life and accept it from God as a gift, then earning still somehow sneaks its way back in. We then tell ourselves that we must straighten up now and prove that we can be good enough, that we really always were good enough.

However, Jesus' Beatitudes remind us that our thought is a lie. We can't earn the blessed life.

So, if you want to live the blessed life, stop trying to earn it.

Get comfortable being different.

What does the blessed life look like?

While the Beatitudes serve to remind us that surprising people are in the Kingdom of God, they also serve to guide us toward the character and perspective of a disciple.

Disciples are poor in spirit; we recognize our need for God. God likes when we know that we need him.

Disciples mourn; we mourn our own sinfulness and the condition of the world. We are comforted by the fact that we are saved, and by our resolute hope.

Disciples are meek. The same word is translated as gentle when Jesus uses it of himself.

Disciples hunger and thirst for righteousness. God satisfies hunger and thirst for him.

Disciples are merciful; God has mercifully spared us from the punishment that was ours, and we are to make that kind of mercy our template for how we forgive others.

Disciples have pure hearts, meaning that they are clean (because Jesus made them clean) and remain clean (because the Holy Spirit keeps cleaning us up).

Disciples are peacemakers; we make everything more just and righteous, which brings peace.

Disciples may be persecuted for what we do and say; if we are, we stand up under persecution.

Disciples may be rejected; Jesus was. If so, there is a reward that waits for us.

The blessed life differs from the life most people want to live.

The values of the Kingdom of God differ from the values of the world.

This world doesn't value being pure in heart or meek.

No one likes to be persecuted or rejected.

If we live the blessed life, then we will be different from people around us.

No one wants to get caught wearing the "Zoom mullet."

The "Zoom mullet" is a wardrobe choice that is business on the top and loungewear on the bottom.

The "Zoom mullet" became commonplace and popular during the pandemic.

Some of us still like wearing the "Zoom Mullet," but we get discovered when we forget what we are wearing. We're doing fine. We tuned into the earnings call, we're making our presentation, and everything is going fine. Then we stand up to get a document from the printer and everyone sees that we're wearing crazy pajama bottoms. Now we're embarrassed. We're different.

Most of us are not comfortable with being different.

Get comfortable with being different.

We are disciples of Jesus.

We live lives based on the values of the Kingdom of God.

It's nothing to be ashamed of and nothing to fear.

We are different. It's okay. In this case, different is good.

Stop wearing Zoom mullets, though. It's time to dress like adults for work.

Life overflows when you live the blessed life.

It's like what happens in the Geico commercial when the Gecko discovers a ceiling leak in a home.

In this commercial, the Gecko is in a home and notices that there is water on the ceiling. The Gecko hypothesizes that the house must have a leaking pipe in the ceiling. If the homeowner doesn't have the right insurance, the repair could be expensive.

As the commercial ends, though, we discover the real source of the water.

Upstairs, the kids are having an indoor pool party.

They have blown up an inflatable pool and filled it with water.
They are still filling it with water. They're also jumping in and pushing down the sides.
When you keep adding water and other things to a full pool, the water overflows.
Hence the puddles on the floor leaking through to the ceiling below.
Now you understand the overflowing life Jesus mentions as he describes the blessed life.

In Matthew 5:13 Jesus tells us that we are the salt of the earth:

"You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet."

Jesus called us salt, the salt of the earth.

Here he is talking about salt as an ingredient in cooking. It has taste. It adds flavor.

We add the flavor of God to the world.

Then in Matthew 5:14-16 Jesus adds that we are the light of the world:

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

We are the light of the world the way a city lights up the sky and cannot be hidden or the way a lamp lights a home.

We bring hope to the darkness, hope to hopeless places.

Life overflows when you live the blessed life.

Jesus said, "You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world."

He didn't say, "Go become salt! Go become light!"

God declared us blessed. He forgave us, adopted us as his children, gave us new life, and promised us eternal life.

God has continued to bless us. He has given us his Holy Spirit, made us holy, given us a new purpose, and helped us to live righteous lives.

When God pours so many blessings into us, they naturally overflow and spill over to others.

We are blessed to be a blessing.

It's one of the fundamental aspects of a biblical lifestyle.

Why has God blessed us so?

Because he intends for those blessings to overflow to others.

Blessed are you! That's the good news of the Beatitudes. It's a gift we receive in Jesus Christ.

May the blessed life God has poured into us overflow and bless others.