

BLESSED IN TWO WAYS

- I. The blessedness that is ours through faith in Christ;
- II. The blessedness that is ours as we live for Christ.

Matthew 5:1-12

TEXT: *Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them, saying: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

In Jesus' name, my fellow redeemed:

A couple of weeks ago I mentioned that the sermon Peter preached on Pentecost was one of the most powerful sermons ever preached. It was so powerful that the Bible says: *Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.* Ac 2 Three thousand converts in one day! Peter told them: *"Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."* The Bible says: *When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And THREE THOUSAND came to faith! Ac 2*

Before us are a few verses from another famous sermon. It is famously known as Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount." Matthew spends 3 chapters on what Jesus said in this famous sermon, but nothing is said about any mass conversions, no desperate pleas for salvation, not even a Gospel promise of forgiveness! Read the 3 chapters of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and it is all Law. This doesn't mean that Jesus did not preach any Gospel while preaching this sermon, but if He did, none is recorded by Matthew. What this means is that NO ONE can read and understand the Sermon on the Mount as it is to be understood UNLESS HE IS ALREADY A CHRISTIAN!

How true this is when reading the most famous portion of the Sermon on the Mount that is often known as "The Beatitudes." It's all about, (be careful, now), NOT what we should be as His disciples, but WHAT WE ALREADY ARE as His disciples. We are the blessed! BLESSED IN TWO WAYS. They describe I. The blessedness that is ours through faith in Christ; II. The blessedness that is ours as we live for Christ.

I. Whenever I read these statements of blessedness, these verses called "The Beatitudes," I feel so ashamed. Don't you? That's because we are Christians who know that by our own goodness we fall short of the glory of God. For example: *Blessed are the poor in spirit... Blessed are those who mourn...*, The poor in spirit are all who mourn over their own spiritual poverty. Never will the words, "Why does this happen to me...?" NEVER cross our minds! Nor are those covetous longings and desires erupt with the words: "It must be nice!" *Blessed are the meek ...* Never is there the lust for

attention. Never is there even the thought that no one seems to recognize what I do! ***Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness ...*** I have such a hunger and thirst for righteousness that I spend hours and hours searching the perfect Word of God. I never miss a Bible Class opportunity nor complain about the length of a sermon that is to instruct me on God's Word! ***Blessed are the merciful ...*** Never am I selfish! I will gladly give, no not give, but GIVE UP what I have and treasure for the welfare of others! You can tell that by the offerings that I give so that the ministry of the "one thing needful" is mercifully offered to the lost and dying. ***Blessed are the pure in heart, ...*** ***Blessed are the peacemakers...*** Never does an impure thought penetrate my heart and mind. Never does my heart well up with a feeling of revenge because I know that vengeance belongs to the Lord who will judge heaven and earth with justice and righteousness.

And that does indeed terrify me! That terrifies me because the God demands perfect obedience to His commandments. The Blessed Ones who can read these verses without fear, but with confidence and joy are those who are judged perfect in the eyes of God. And that would not be me, except for what God has done FOR me through the blood and righteousness of Jesus who kept all that God demands for all mankind and then paid for the sins of all mankind with his crucifixion and death. Then Scripture reveals this: ***God will credit righteousness-for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.*** Ro 4 The greatest blessing for anyone ever conceived on the fact of this earth is this that we know and believe in Jesus Christ as our Savior from sin and death. This means that it is by faith alone that we are counted among the blessed and counted by God as righteous, as good as our Lord God Jesus Christ Himself, for through Jesus we are JUSTIFIED here and now!

Suddenly, these "Beatitudes" take on an entirely different perspective. No longer are they a list of my failures that exclude me from the Blessed Ones, but a confession of my need for Jesus who has made me a member of the Blessed Ones, by faith in His name. Suddenly, I can read these verses with the confidence of knowing that even now, as a repentant sinner, I can enjoy blessings upon my life as a Christian as I simply live my life as a Christian here on this side of heaven!

II. The fact that this is true is clearly revealed in the blessing that is ours through faith in Jesus: ***Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*** To put this in more simple terms we can say: You and I can suffer whatever this world and God's enemies can throw at us because we are going to live forever and heaven. God has promised this to you and you believe Him! So if and whenever they come at you with hatred and fury, simply smile and rejoice. The best is yet to come, while sadly and tragically, they choose to go to hell.

Yet there is something that you and I can do for those who are bent for hell. If we live and as long as we survive on this earth, we can remind others as to the blessings we do have as God's Blessed Ones. While we do indeed "have it all" in Christ Jesus, we also are under the written assurance of the Almighty God that He is our Heavenly Father and we are His own dear children.

How blessed we are that God not only promises to hear and to answer our prayers in the best interests of His Kingdom and those we love, including ourselves, but He has commanded us to pray! If He has commanded us to pray, then can we ever doubt that He stands ready to answer? Jesus Himself has taught us to pray that perfect prayer we pray daily, at least once, I'm certain. We call it the Lord's Prayer, and it covers everything we need for both body and soul, for now and for eternity. Pray it; pray it thoughtfully. And if you've forgotten what it is that you are praying, pick up Luther's Small Catechism and review those blessed words under Luther's "What does this mean?"

How blessed we are to have the Psalms! Prayers written by the Holy Spirit through ancient prophets like David. You and I can go through this dangerous life with the confidence of a Christian soldier walking into battle: *A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked.* You can stand before the Global Warming scientists and politicians and the storms and tornados that come into our lives with the confidence of God's promise: *If you make the Most High your dwelling-- even the LORD, who is my refuge-- then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.* Ps 91 Now, whom will you believe? And as the expectations of a major economic collapse, the fall of the stock market and another depression loom before us, you have this blessed assurance: *Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"* He 13 Are you so blessed as to believe what God has promised?

Then let us live like we believe it! Perhaps others will ask us about this hope that we have and then they will be listening when we tell them how it is that we are so blessed. Amen.