

# INI

St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
2100 16<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Austin, MN 55912-1749  
Pastor Ted Barthels  
Sermon preached on  
February 5, 2016  
5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany

Scripture Lessons: Micah 6:1-8, 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

Hymns: 20; 409; 416; 413:5,6 (248:1-3)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord  
and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Matthew 5:1-12

And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when  
He was seated His disciples came to Him. <sup>2</sup> Then He opened His  
mouth and taught them, saying:

<sup>3</sup> “Blessed *are* the poor in spirit,

For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>4</sup> Blessed *are* those who mourn,

For they shall be comforted.

<sup>5</sup> Blessed *are* the meek,

For they shall inherit the earth.

<sup>6</sup> Blessed *are* those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,

For they shall be filled.

<sup>7</sup> Blessed *are* the merciful,

For they shall obtain mercy.

<sup>8</sup> Blessed *are* the pure in heart,

For they shall see God.

<sup>9</sup> Blessed *are* the peacemakers,

For they shall be called sons of God.

<sup>10</sup> Blessed *are* those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake,

For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>11</sup> “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all  
kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be  
exceedingly glad, for great *is* your reward in heaven, for so they  
persecuted the prophets who were before you. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.  
Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: The Beatitudes

These opening words of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount are among the most often quoted and least understood verses of Scripture. Some look at these words as a prescription. If you do these things then you too will be blessed. If one looks at the beatitudes in this way they are nothing more than a declaration of the law. Rather than finding comfort and hope in these words of our Lord we would be left to despair, for we would see that time and again we fall short of the description that the Jesus lays out in these words. Indeed, we could hardly help but see within ourselves anything but what these words describe.

Well then if these words of Jesus are not a prescription for how we may gain spiritual tranquility and peace with God than what are they? Let us begin by remembering the content of the opening words of our text. Jesus **“went up on a mountain and when He was seated *His disciples* came to Him, then He opened His mouth and taught *them*, saying...”** (v. 1,2). It is essential to a true understanding of these beautiful words of our Lord that we understand that Jesus was directing the beatitudes to His disciples, to those who believed in Him, those who had come to Him for comfort. And yes, many of this larger group of disciples (it was not just the twelve) were the humble, the poor, the working class, even the down-trodden. These were people that were looking to Jesus for deliverance from the sufferings that sin brings into this life. Jesus was leading them to comprehend the privileged status of being a Child of God through faith in Jesus Christ. Apart from faith in Jesus these beautiful words are no more than a greeting card sentiment. Connected to faith in Jesus they are wondrous messages of life. --

**THEME: In the Beatitudes Jesus Reveals the Heart  
of the Child of God.**

It starts with

## I. Looking to Jesus for Salvation.

The first four beatitudes all direct our thoughts in this direction.

**Mathew 5:3-6** “Blessed are the poor in spirit,

For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 Blessed are those who mourn,

For they shall be comforted.

5 Blessed are the meek,

For they shall inherit the earth.

6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,

For they shall be filled.”

Those who are truly poor in spirit are those who do not see their merit as stellar and important for God to acknowledge. They are not like the Pharisee in Jesus’ parable who started his prayer with **“God I thank you that I am not like other men,”** and went on to list his fine works of the law (Luke 18:11-2). No, the poor in spirit are like the tax collector in that parable who didn’t dare to even lift his eyes to heaven, but smote his breast and pleaded with the Lord, **“God be merciful to be the sinner”** (Luke 18:13)! Jesus concluded that this tax collector, who was judged by society as such a terrible sinner, he was the one who was justified, rather than the Pharisee who was esteemed by all.

It is the poor in spirit, those who mourn over their sin, those who realize that they are not the center of God’s universe, they are not here to be served by God, they are not the ones who are *entitled* to all things, these are the ones whom God has chosen. These are the ones whom God has called to faith in Jesus. It is not that their humility has qualified them for salvation, but rather that the power of God has instilled in them these qualities as fruits of faith, as blessings from the Lord. So then they are the blessed by the Lord for it is the Lord who has given them a new heart that hungers and thirsts after righteousness. So the Lord declares that they are blessed because that hunger, that thirst is satisfied in Christ. Jesus fulfilled all righteousness so that through faith we might possess the righteousness of God. Jesus is the Lamb of God who took upon Himself the sins of the world so that through faith we might be declared righteous and holy. Herein lies the access to the kingdom

of heaven. Here is the comfort for the sin burdened soul. Here is found the hope of eternal life. Here in Christ Jesus is our righteousness!

We need to understand that *we* are the blessed, *we* are privileged ones in this world. We tend to look at the wealthy and famous and the power brokers of this world, be it in business or politics and conclude that they are the ones that have it made, they are the ones who are blessed. So people by the thousands line up to buy lottery tickets and enter sweepstakes thinking that if only they could hit the jackpot then they would have it made. These are **not** the ones who are blessed or happy or especially privileged. These are **not** the ones who shall inherit the earth. In the end “they” lose it all! In the end it is the child of God who has depended on Christ for righteousness and life, who has been kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation who is truly blessed. We are especially honored by God that in His grace He has called us children of God; that He has made us heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ.

This is the faith that fills the heart of the child of God. This is our hope of life. This is our joy in Christ Jesus our Savior. So then the heart of the child of God is --

## **II. Eagerly Following the Way of the Lord.**

Jesus moves on in this revelation of the heart of the child of God to how the Christian’s heart is revealed in life’s dealings with others. Listen again to the next set of three beatitudes.

**Mathew 5:7-9** “Blessed are the merciful,  
For they shall obtain mercy.  
8 Blessed are the pure in heart,  
For they shall see God.  
9 Blessed are the peacemakers,  
For they shall be called sons of God.”

Again this is not a prescription to try to win God’s favor. This is the heart of the child of God emulating Christ in this life. We are here to show forth the Lord’s glory to others. And yes, the world is watching. Professing Christians should appear to the world as Christ did. He didn’t look down His nose at some as being

unworthy. He didn't do that with the poor or the sinners, or the people of other nations. He loved and still loves them all. Even when Jesus was tortured and tormented He did not return curses upon those who cursed Him. He didn't revile those who mocked and reviled Him. Rather He prayed for them. In Jesus' most desperate hours His thoughts reached out to others, His mother, even a dying thief.

So we know our Savior as the perfect example of being merciful, of being pure in heart, the ultimate peacemaker, reconciling a fallen mankind to the most holy and just God. And what does the Spirit do within the heart of the Child of God but instill these qualities in our new hearts so that we no longer have cold stony hearts but hearts that are warm and alive with love and mercy, like Jesus' heart.

Yes, we still struggle with our old Adam who reacts to sin with sin, and yes, harsh words all too often fly out of our mouths. And for these sins we plead for forgiveness knowing that the Lord freely and fully forgives. Such forgiveness prompts our hearts once again to be Christ-like in all our ways. This is the blessing of the Spirit that lets the joy of salvation shine for all to see. So Paul also exhorts us in his epistle to the Romans.

**Romans 12:14-18** “Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. <sup>15</sup> Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. <sup>16</sup> Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. <sup>17</sup> Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. <sup>18</sup> If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.”

By the Spirit's working in our hearts through the Word this what we aspire to in this life. We are the blessed in this world. We are privileged to bear the name of our Lord. We present Christ to the world. People look at us and think, “Oh that is what a Christian is.” It is the same as thinking, “Oh that is what Christ is!”

With that also comes the world's rejection, for even as the world rejected Christ, so they will reject us. So the heart of the child of God possesses this stunning and blessed quality of --

### III. Joyfully Suffering for Jesus' sake.

**Matthew 5:10-12** “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. 12 Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

Are we still subject to persecution? It may not be in our time in our country that we are in any great danger of being beheaded as some in other countries of the world still are, or burned alive or scourged or stoned. However we still are subject to persecution. And perhaps we are more vulnerable to its subtle effects than if it were more drastic. It can be as simple as a comment like, “You go to that church? They say NO to everything!” or “They think they’re the only ones going to heaven!” or “That church is so backwards!” I’ve know people that were passed over for promotion because of their faith in Jesus. Business men have lost contracts, others have lost money in insurance investments. I have been personally laughed at because of my ignorance in not accepting evolution in some shape or form.

The Lord’s point is that these things and more will come our way. We should expect nothing less than what our Master experienced during His public ministry. Jesus said:

**John 15:19-20** “If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. <sup>20</sup>Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.”

We worship our Lord and praise His holy name for all He endured for us. What little the world might shove on us is nothing. It is our honor to suffer shame for His name’s sake. The doubts that arise in our minds about our ability to endure such persecution come from our weakness. Yes, we may wonder if we could endure true suffering for Jesus, but the Spirit promises to be with us and

strengthen us in our need, and God is faithful. Peter encourages us in his first epistle:

**1 Peter 4:12-14** “Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; <sup>13</sup>but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. <sup>14</sup>If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed *are you*, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified.”

Remember that the world may think they are abusing us good and proper as they blaspheme, but through it all our Savior is glorified, and others will know, including those who would torment us, that we hold unto the truth of God which cannot be taken away from us. In all this the child of God **is blessed**, and faith renewed, and ultimately hope fulfilled.

**Conclusion:** May the Beatitudes be an affirmation of our faith in Jesus. He is the one who has attained salvation for us and through His Spirit we have been given a new heart which first clings to Jesus’ righteousness. Secondly the heart of the child of God will reveal the love of Christ to the world as we follow in His footsteps. Finally we will joyfully endure persecution for the glory of His name. We confess with the hymn writer:

“I long to be like Jesus, Meek, loving, lowly, mild.  
I long to be like Jesus, the Father’s holy child.  
I long to be with Jesus Amid the heav’nly throng,  
To sing with saints His praises,  
To learn the angels’ song.”

(The Lutheran Hymnal 6542:4)

**AMEN.**

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Amen. (Romans15:13)