

Seeking True Happiness

(Updated 5/2021; Dr. Baines, Jr.)

Read: Matthew 5:1-12

Summary Highlights: In vss. 1-2, the setting for Jesus' teaching the crowd is set. Jesus saw a great crowd that had gathered to see what He would say or do. Jesus took a position on a mountain side, and His disciples came to Him. Jesus began to teach.

In vss. 3-6, four different types of people are said to be blessed. First of all, to be blessed means to have God's favor, not simply to be happy. The four people to be favored by God are those who are poor in spirit, who mourn, who are meek, and who hunger and thirst for righteousness.

In vss. 7-9, Jesus talks about the blessings or favor bestowed on those who live godly lives. More specifically, there is favor for those who are merciful, pure in heart, and peacemakers.

In vss. 10-12, Jesus goes on even further to talk about how the persecuted are blessed or favored. Specifically, those who are insulted and have false and evil things said against them because of their relationship with Jesus are blessed. In fact, the persecuted are to rejoice about both the rewards to come and their being like the persecuted prophets before them.

Introduction: A key idea in today's lesson is that there is favor or blessings for those who are conscious of needing the Lord, those who live godly lives, and those who are persecuted for the Lord's sake. Prayerfully, we will be challenged to acknowledge our needing God, work on our godly living, and trust Him when things get rough for His sake.

Applications:

1. Teaching the crowd. Notice in vss. 1-2 that Jesus taught the great crowd that gathered around Him. First, we should work on developing a crowd for Jesus. Every member inviting and bringing unchurched loved ones is a step in the right direction. Second, we should work on teaching the crowd, instead of simply entertaining them or serving them. Service is important and entertainment's cousins – comfort and encouraging – have their places. But without teaching, it is difficult to have sustained discipleship. Third, when we see the priority that Jesus gave to teaching, we should give priority to learning. When people complain about being taught and trained to serve the Lord, it may well give evidence of how far they are from where God is calling us to be. *Let's work on being a church that teaches the Jesus crowd.* The best measure of how well people are learning is not the grade on their tests but how well they obey God's word, which centers around loving God and others as we love ourselves.

2. Poor in spirit. Notice in vs. 3 that the poor in spirit shall have the kingdom of heaven. God loves those who are poor. When we mistreat them, we mistreat their Maker. And when we bless them, God becomes indebted to us (see Pro. 19:17). Poverty can be a

reference to a lack of material possessions. But it can also be a reference to lacking what you need in other areas of your life. In fact, it may be a poverty of spiritual strength or perspective. It may be a poverty that essentially says, "God, I need You in every area of my life. I cannot make it without You." Those who are poor in spirit, as described, will experience God's favor. They will be those who enjoy the place where God rules – the Kingdom of heaven. *Let's acknowledge our poverty of spirit.* The reality is that we are in great need of God for direction and strength to live our lives.

3. Mourning. Notice in vs. 4 that there is comfort for those who mourn. The commentator reads into this idea that there is comfort for those who mourn for not only what or who has been lost but mourn also about the sins that led to such loss. I am not dogmatic about this point. But it is true that God has comfort for those who trust Him, in the time of mourning and grieving. And it is true that God will accept and comfort those who turn from their sinful ways, whether that was the point of this text or not. *Let's work on living godly lives and trusting God to comfort us, in our times of mourning.* When people whom we loved die, it hurts. When great opportunities pass us by, it can be very painful. However, Earth has no sorrow that Heaven cannot heal for believers.

4. Meekness and hunger. Notice in vss. 5-6 the emphasis on meekness and desiring righteousness. Jesus gives us a great model of being both strong and meek (i.e., gentle, submissive, humble). Too many think that you cannot be both. Because there is a hunger and thirst of the human soul that will not be satisfied without proper fellowship with God, we should find ourselves eating and drinking the word of God and living by such, so we can be filled. *Let's work on our meekness as well as seeking and living by God's righteousness (i.e., right way).*

5. Mercy, pure heart, and peacemaking. Notice in vss. 7-9 the emphasis on being merciful, pure in heart, and peacemakers. Time and space will not allow us to go too deep into these three areas of application. However, notice how being merciful to others leads to one receiving mercy. Notice further that having a pure heart leads to close, intimate, and privileged rapport with God. A clean heart is one that is focused on loving God and others as one loves oneself and with the blessed assurance of being saved because of one's faith in Jesus' substitutionary death. And finally, look at how being a peacemaker leads to being blessed. Too many do not qualify as peacemakers, because they either spread gossip, listen to gossip, or don't help those whom God has placed in authority to solve the problems. *Let's work on being merciful, having a pure heart, and being a peacemaker.* Sometimes being a peace maker means bringing issues to light, so they can stop growing and involving others.

6. Rejoicing when persecuted. Notice in vss. 10-12 the urging to rejoice in the face of being persecuted for Jesus' sake. First, sometimes our troubles/persecution is not for Jesus' sake and therefore should not lead to our rejoicing. When smoking leads to lung cancer, we should not rejoice. Or when stealing leads to us getting fired, we should not rejoice. Second, you can be a great Christian and yet experience trouble. Think about the prophets and most of all Jesus. Third, our suffering is only for a season that will be followed by great rewards. Fourth, we can rejoice in our hope, even if we rejoice with

tears in our eyes. *Let's work on trusting God enough to rejoice, despite the troubles that come from being on the Lord's side.* Church ought to be a place where we can find some encouragement and support to live by this difficult application.