

**The Character of a True Christian, Part 1**

Scripture: Luke 6:20-23

Code: 42-84

Let's open to the sixth chapter of Luke. Sunday after Sunday, my heart is so thrilled to be able to teach from this book. Having spent days during the week in preparation trying my best to distill down and get to you the riches that are here is a challenge and a privilege. We come to Luke chapter 6 in verse 20. And from verse 20 to the end of the chapter is a great sermon by our Lord. It is the same sermon recorded in Matthew 5 through 7 called the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew recorded this sermon. In fact, Matthew gave more words of Jesus from the sermon than Luke. Luke is a shorter version of the sermon, though it follows exactly the same flow and progress. The truths recorded by Matthew and by Luke from this great sermon are very similar, and as we go through these verses, from verse 20 to 49, we'll constantly need to make comparisons with Matthew's account.

This is that famous Sermon on the Mount. There are people who treat this sermon as a statement of ethics, but it isn't. It's a sermon about salvation. In fact, it's the most definitive sermon that Jesus preached, identifying who is saved and who is not. In the end, it's about who is going to heaven and who is going to hell. It's not about who is religious; it's about who is saved. It's not about who is living an ethical life; it's about who knows God. And so it is a critical sermon from the lips of Christ Himself. There are variations between Matthew's account and Luke's account. And there are reasons for that. Jesus actually preached it in Aramaic. But both Matthew and Luke wrote it in Greek, and so they might translate an Aramaic word a different way using synonyms.

It is also true that neither Matthew nor Luke give us the full sermon. I can read Luke's version of it in three or four minutes. I can read, and so could you, Matthew's version in ten minutes, read through Matthew, 5, 6 and 7 in ten minutes. And I know that Jesus didn't preach ten minutes. I hope He didn't preach ten minutes. I know He didn't preach ten minutes. Matthew gives us a condensed summary with precise statements, but it's an edited version. It's not everything He said. And sometimes there are variations between what Matthew says and Luke.

For example, even in the Beatitudes there are variations, but the answer to that is simply this. That in the process of Jesus' preaching, which could have been at least 50 minutes, an hour, an hour and a half...He could hold a crowd riveted for two or three hours, unquestionably, particularly in an era when there was no media and people learned how to listen, knew how, knew how to do it well. And in preaching for many minutes or even many hours, Jesus would have cycled back through the truth of

His sermon and restated it in many ways so that what you very likely have in Matthew and Luke in the Beatitudes...Matthew gives nine, Luke gives four; Matthew gives them one way, Luke gives them another way...is simply Matthew recording one statement of those by Jesus and Luke recording another restatement by Jesus.

I know as a preacher sometimes I say something very often. I say something and immediately say it another way, editing a little bit because you already know what I said the first time. I can enhance it or reduce it the second time I say it. And so if you see variations, those are some of the reasons they occur. But I'm pretty well convinced that this is the same sermon, although it's reasonable to think that Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount a lot of other places. Some commentators even call this the Sermon on the Plain, thinking He preached the one in Matthew on a mountain, preached this one on a plain.

I don't think there's any reason to be dogmatic about that. I don't know why they would say that. I think it's more likely that it's the same sermon; it's just Luke drawing from it from it, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, those matters out of the sermon that fit his purpose. But Jesus certainly did preach these truths everywhere He went. No doubt the content of this He repeated again and again and again and again, place after place after place because it's so basic.

And so, we're going to begin this morning with a look at this classic sermon from Jesus. Now why does Luke give us this? Well the answer, first of all in a general way, is because Luke is carefully, systematically, completely and convincingly demonstrating argument after argument, evidence after evidence, proof after proof that Jesus is the Messiah, God in human flesh, the Savior of the world. That's Luke's purpose. His gospel, as with the case of Matthew, Mark, and John, is written to prove Jesus is the Messiah, God in human flesh.

Proofs come from His miracles, from His casting out of demons, from His control over the natural elements, from His virgin birth, from all of those things which Luke has lined up in the opening chapters. But there is no more convincing proof of the deity of Jesus, the Messiahship of Jesus than His teaching. His teaching is so profound, its character so evidently divine, its content so opposite the way men think, and His authority so unyielding and absolute as to indicate that this is in fact the voice of God. This is pure divine truth from the lips of the God/Man. And so Jesus spoke with an authority that people were not used to. He spoke with authority about everything. Everything He said had absolute and final authority. Nothing that Jesus taught was subject to debate or discussion or argument.

The people were so shocked by this authority that at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew records, they were stunned because He spoke with such authority. He never quoted anybody but God, and then He didn't quote God as if God was a distant authority; He simply spoke as God. All His teaching was to be received as absolutely authoritative, without debate or without alteration, or

without question. And the people said, “No man ever spoke like this man.”

In fact, He spoke with the very same authority that He spoke when He created the universe. John chapter 1 says that everything that was made was made by Him, by the Lord Jesus. And Genesis chapter 1 says it was all spoken into existence. When He spoke authoritatively at creation, He spoke everything in the universe instantaneously into existence. Whether He, in His incarnate form, spoke to the sea to still a storm, or whether He spoke to a demon to flee, or whether He spoke to a disease to go away, or whether He spoke to men to transform their lives, His authority was absolute. That unalterable, unassailable authority was present when He spoke on spiritual matters. When He talked about His Kingdom, when He talked about salvation He spoke with the same authority.

The spiritual teaching of Jesus, or if you will, the theology of Jesus, the gospel, everything He said about that which was spiritual, everything He said about the realm of salvation, the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of heaven was absolutely the last and final word. And that is why in the end of the Bible it says if you add anything to what's written here, take anything away, you're going to receive the plagues that are written in this book.

But what made it so hard for people to hear and understand, and still does today, is the fact that what Jesus taught was absolutely opposite human thinking, even the thinking of religious people. In fact, the religious Jews, the leaders of the religious Jews, the most theological astute of all found the teaching of Jesus repugnant. They found it offensive. They found it threatening. They even determined that it was so wrong that He was speaking from Satan. Now why would they ever conclude such a thing? Because everything He taught was so utterly opposite everything they thought. In fact, they determined that they had to silence Him by killing Him before He upset the entire religious Judaistic system.

You see, the teaching of Jesus doesn't add a little to conventional religious wisdom. It doesn't just subtract a little. It replaces it. The teaching of Jesus then and the teaching of Jesus now...because it's the same...it's here in Scripture recorded for all time and eternity. The teaching of Jesus then and now shatters all man's basic foundational thinking. It destroys his motives whether they are secular or religious. It turns man's world upside-down. It turns his thinking on its head. The teaching of Jesus then and now is not PC; it's not political correct. It's not CW; it's not conventional wisdom. In fact, the teaching of Jesus is alien to everything we consider to be true in the natural mind. It runs counter to everything. It is the antithesis of human ideas. It is the antithesis of human motivation.

So when Jesus spoke about spiritual issues, when He spoke about His Kingdom, when He gave the laws and principles of His Kingdom, when He talked about how to know God and how to inherit eternal life, what He taught literally toppled the very carefully constructed ideological fortresses that men had established, and then it blasted their foundations to rubble. It's just not what we normally think. And this passage makes it evident as He begins this great sermon. The first few verses are

paradoxical, and they show how Jesus overturned conventional religious thinking, and even conventional secular thinking.

Listen to what He said, verse 20, “Turning His gaze on His disciples He began to say, ‘Blessed are you who are poor for yours is the Kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now for you shall laugh. Blessed are you when men hate you and ostracize you and cast insults at you and spurn your name as evil for the sake of the Son of Man. Be glad in that day and leap for joy, for behold your reward is great in heaven; for in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets. But woe to you who are rich, for you are receiving your comfort in full. Woe to you who are well fed now, for you shall be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for in the same way their fathers used to treat the false prophets.’ ”

Now to the average person that sounds crazy. Since when are poverty, hunger, sorrow and rejection a blessing? And since when are riches, satisfaction, happiness and popularity a curse? I mean, basically everybody in the world lives their lives to turn poverty into riches, hunger into satisfaction, sorrow into happiness and rejection into popularity. But that is precisely the point, isn't it? The world and all its thinking is exactly opposite the truth. That's why the apostle Paul said, in 1 Corinthians chapter 1, that the wisdom of God is foolishness with men and the wisdom of men is foolishness with God. Romans 1, Paul said man professes himself to be wise, but in fact he is a moron. That's the Greek. It isn't again that Christianity adds something to man's brilliance; it replaces it.

So here Jesus quoting nobody, speaking authoritatively as God, defines who is blessed and who is cursed. And it's exactly opposite conventional thinking. Now this is not a sermon about ethics; this is a sermon about salvation. This is an authoritative word from God that sets the standard by which anybody can discern their spiritual condition. I assume you're here in church this morning, you have some interest in discerning your spiritual condition. I...I would assume that you're here because you have some interest in the Kingdom of God. It's very interesting to see a nation that for many years has worked hard to get God out of the public discourse, now putting His name in almost every statement that it makes. And I'm assuming that you're here because you have some interest in how you're related to God and what that offers you concerning hope for the future.

Well if that's the case and you want to know your condition, here is the standard by which you can determine it. Here is the test. This sermon, by the time we're down to verse 49, will in no uncertain terms lay the plumb line against which your life can be measured, and you will be able to determine whether you know God or don't, whether you're headed for heaven or hell, whether you're saved or lost. And of all the things you could know, this is the most important. You need to know whether you're the blessed or the cursed.

Now, frankly, for the Jews in the day of Jesus, as well as everybody else, including today, what Jesus says demands an...a very dramatic change. In fact, it demands, I guess, what you'd call a paradigm shift of monumental proportions. You've got to get outside your normal box and you have to think differently. Sadly the Jewish people to whom Jesus taught this in place after place through His ministry, including the leaders, never ever were willing to get outside their normal box. They never would make that paradigm shift, and so they rejected Jesus. They demanded that He be executed to get Him out of the way because He was such a disturbing person. And the world is still that way today. Whether you're talking about Jews or the rest of the Gentile world, everybody who is not a Jew, the most of the world still rejects what Jesus taught. But if you want to understand the heart and soul of His message, then you need to grasp this issue of the paradoxes of blessing and cursing and discern whether you're among the blessed or the cursed.

Now the idea of blessing and cursing wasn't new to the Jews. They had Old Testament. They knew whether God had distinguished the two. Sure He had, Deuteronomy 27 and 28. There was a time when God said if you obey Me I'll bless you, if you don't I'll curse you, and He laid it out in no uncertain terms in that section of the Old Testament. But though they understood that there was a place of blessing and a place of cursing, their religion had apostatized so far from the truth that they didn't understand what that place was. In fact, they had just the exact opposite view. And so Jesus here is straightening out everybody's thinking and overturning all human conventional wisdom.

Let me set the stage for you. Verse 20, Luke tells us that "Jesus turned His gaze on His disciples and began to say –" Now this sermon is primarily directed at His disciples. Now let me define that for you. Disciples are one of the three groups that are around Jesus. Go back for a moment to verse 17. Jesus had just identified the twelve apostles. They are called apostles. He named them as apostles according to the end of verse 13. So He had just identified the twelve apostles. They are the most intimate group and He descended with them. He came down, He'd gone up the mountain, He had prayed with the Father. He'd come down a little further. He called the disciples out, took them up the little hill, called them out of the larger group, and identified them as the twelve apostles. That's the word for messenger, sent one. They became the preachers in training, the closest most intimate associates of Jesus, the twelve.

So He came down with them. And when they came back down to a level place on the mountain, there was a great multitude of His disciples, to be distinguished from the apostles. And as I told you last week, this is the mixed crowd of people who have been attracted to Jesus by His power over the physical world, His power to heal, His power over the spiritual world, His power to cast out demons and by His profound and authoritative teaching. They are committed to some degree. They are disciples, mathetes, learners. They are Jesus' students. They have gone to school. They've left the various areas of their home and work, and they're now in school with Jesus, traveling, moving as He moves and listening to Him day after day. The third group is a "great throng," verse 17 says, great mass of people from all over Judea, Jerusalem, the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon, and these are

the curious. So the intimate group is the apostles, and that middle large group, the learners the students. And then the fringe group is the curious.

Now Jesus directs His message to the disciples, to that middle group. People in that group are at all points along the way of believing in Jesus. They're infatuated by Him, enamored by Him, attracted by Him. They...believing to some degree that this could be the Messiah. Some of them have already come to true salvation, embracing Christ fully. They've eaten His flesh and drunk His blood as He said. In other words, they've taken Him in fully. Some of them are on the way to doing that. Some of them have heard so much it bothers them that they're sort of on the way out. Some of them are sitting in neutral. But they are the mixed multitude who are all over the place.

Now they would be very much like you this morning. We have a congregation of people here. And there is that intimate group of very intensely involved people, the sort of the people who are serving the Lord with their whole life. They're the faithful witnesses. They love Christ. They serve Him. They live to serve Him. And there are also the fringe group, people who are sort of just looking in, curious about what's going on here, curious about what we teach, what the gospel teaches, what the Bible teaches. And they're attracted by whatever the phenomena is they've seen in somebody's life or heard about in the church and you're here as part of the curious.

But there's also that group of people in the middle who are the learners. You're here maybe week after week and you take it in. And many of you know Christ, and you're in the process of spiritual growth. And some of you are coming to know Christ. And some of you are just sitting in neutral without making a commitment to Him, but you're still here. Some of you may be getting disillusioned enough because you don't want to deal with your sin that you're sort of getting ready to back out. But that's the group to whom Jesus spoke and that's the group to whom I speak, because what Jesus wanted them to know was there is a criteria by which you can determine your spiritual condition, whether you're the blessed or the cursed. You want to know that. Here's how you can know that.

So that is, essentially, the group to whom He directs His teaching. In fact, verse 20 says He fixed His gaze on them, the learners, to varying degrees devoted to following Him on a regular basis, drawn by His teaching and display of power. Now they weren't all real believers because we already know, for example, in John 2:23 to 25 it says, "Many believed on Him but He didn't commit to them because He knew what was in their hearts." What He knew was that their belief was not a saving belief. It wasn't a complete confident trust. So He made no commitment to that shallow kind of faith. And in John 6, in verses 66 and following, you remember that Jesus gave some teaching that was more than some people could swallow. And it says that His disciples, many of His disciples walked no more with Him. They disappeared. And then in John 8:31, there were those who believed in Him but He said to them, "If you continue in My Word, then you're My real disciples."

So we know this is a mixed group, even as the church is mixed. People on the way to knowing Christ, people who know Christ, people in neutral, and people who are on the way out because they're not willing to make the commitment. And so to all of you I pass on the words, the authoritative words of Jesus, in this masterpiece of spiritual truth called the Sermon on the Mount. It is what you need to hear because you need to know whether you're among the blessed or the cursed. This stands, this truth, for all time as a benchmark test for true salvation. As obvious as that is to me, it is not apparently obvious to many commentators who write on this passage with serious confusion. It isn't confusing; it is simple and straightforward.

Now to demonstrate the purpose of Jesus in the sermon, you need to look for a moment at the end of the sermon, because any good preacher is going to bring everything to a conclusion and make his point clear. The sermon ends, verse 47, "Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and acts on them, I'll show you whom He's like. He's like a man building a house, dug deep, had a foundation upon the rock and the flood rose, torrent burst against that house, couldn't shake it because it had been well built." Those are the people who hear His Word and do it, they apply it, they live it. It takes over their life and their life is built on a rock foundation, and when judgment comes they're not touched. But, verse 49, "The one who has heard and has not acted is like a man who built his house on the ground without any foundation and when the judgment torrent burst against it, it collapsed and its ruin was great." When judgment comes you either stand or fall, based on whether you're among the blessed or the cursed.

So let's look more closely at how Jesus opens the message. Two words dominate, blessed and woe. And under each of those there are four statements. There are four blessings and four woes. And it is a strange paradox; it is an opposite paradox to human thinking. Blessed are the poor, the hungry, the sad, the rejected and cursed are the rich, satisfied, happy and popular. It just is completely opposite how people think. Now take the word "blessed." It's the Greek *makarioi*. It means "most favored, most favored." It speaks of somebody who is in the most beneficial condition, somebody who's in the most beneficial condition. Then the other one, "woe," *ouai*, almost a transliteration in the Greek, it means "most unfavored." It means the person who is in the worst condition. The blessed are enjoying the most beneficial condition and the cursed are enduring the pain of the worst condition. Those are the only two places people live. You live in one or the other. You're either among the blessed or the cursed; there is no middle ground.

Now let me hasten to say, when we read "Blessed are you who are poor, and woe to you who are rich and weeping people and hated people," and "O God, please bless poor people; O God, please bless hungry people and weeping people and hated people," and "O God, please curse rich people and satisfied people and happy people and popular people." It's not a prayer. It's not like "God bless America," which we're hearing so much, which is a hope or a wish or a prayer that God would do something that apparently needs to be done. Certainly not wrong to pray that prayer, but that's not what this is.

These are absolute statements of fact. The poor are blessed. The hungry are blessed. The weeping are blessed. And the rejected are blessed. And the rich and the full and the happy and the popular are cursed. It is a statement of fact. It is an authoritative divine decree by God's determined judgment. It is a verdict rendered. These are absolute facts given authoritatively pronounced on people's lives. Some people have received eternal blessing and favor from God that is a reality. And others have received eternal cursing and disfavor from God, and that too is a reality. And the question is; which group are you in? For the desperate, there is blessing. For the self-sufficient, there is cursing.

Now let's begin by looking at the blessed. When I went through this material on the Beatitudes in Matthew...in fact, when I went through the Sermon on the Mount, it took me over a year to teach that here because it went into such great detail. When I went through the Beatitudes, it took me months. But I've done that in Matthew, and if you want all of the possible details and nuances of understanding the Beatitudes, you can get the Matthew commentary or the tapes on the Beatitudes from the study of Matthew because I'm not going to go back through that again. I'm going to move rapidly through this.

In fact, I'll move through the very text in front of us just in two Lord's day mornings together. And the rest we'll move rapidly through as well because we've done in the past a more extensive treatment. And this is good because sometimes when you get into too much detail and you string it out, you kind of maybe lose the point. This will come a more cohesive way to you, and you'll see the big picture and, hopefully, grasp the sermon much like the people who heard it may have grasped it. I would like to think Jesus preached this in five or six hours because, at the most, I think that's what it would take me.

Let's start out with being blessed. Let's start out with being blessed. First is the blessing of poverty, isn't that paradoxical? The blessing of poverty, verse 20. Jesus begins the sermon, Luke's record of it, "Blessed are you, or blessed are you, who are poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God." Now you say, "Well, I don't quite understand that. I've been poor and I didn't like it. Aren't we going all over the world trying to relieve poverty? And poverty...I don't necessarily find poverty as a blessing, even in the Bible. Doesn't Proverbs chapter 30 say, 'Two things I asked of these - ' verse 7 - 'do not refuse me before I die. Keep deceptions and lies far from me, give me neither poverty nor riches. Feed me with the food that is my portion, just give me enough lest I be full and deny you and say who is the Lord or lest I be in want and steal and profane the name of my God.' "

And there is a righteous man saying, "Lord, don't give me poverty, or in order to survive I'm going to steal and then I'm going to profane your name." Poverty in itself is not necessarily a blessing. What's the point? Well, He's not talking about material poverty. He's not talking about economics. What kind of poverty is He talking about? Well Matthew gives us another statement that Jesus made in that same sermon, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." That's what He's talking about. God doesn't bless



people just because they're poor. These are statements of fact. The poor are not blessed. And not all the poor people, by just being poor, are going to receive the Kingdom of God. You don't get converted by poverty. It's not talking about that.

God doesn't give salvation to people because they're deprived economically and materially. He's talking about spiritually poor. The people that are blessed are people who understand their spiritual poverty. They understand the bankrupt condition of their soul. They understand that they have absolutely no resources with which to buy God's favor. They understand that salvation is not by works, good deeds, righteous acts, ceremonies, ritual, religious thoughts, feelings, etc. They understand that when all is said and done no matter how much human goodness they may manifest, no matter how much religion they may involve themselves in, no matter how many ceremonies they engage in, they are bankrupt. None of that has any purchase power with regard to salvation. This was the very issue.

Go back to chapter 4, to which we continually must refer. When Jesus went to the synagogue in Nazareth, His own hometown...chapter 4, He went into the synagogue there. These were His neighbors, friends, extended family, people knew Him. He grew up there. Went right back to Nazareth, right back to His own town, His own synagogue, the people who knew Him best. They'd watched Him grow up to the age of 30 and then leave to begin His ministry. He came, He said to them, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me," and He is quoting Isaiah 61, He is the fulfillment of that. He says that in verse 21, "Today the Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing, I am the Messiah, I am the one anointed by the Holy Spirit who would come. He has anointed Me to preach the good news. And here's the good news. The good news is forgiveness, the good news is righteousness, the good news is the promises of God are going to come to completion and fulfillment. But this good news is to the poor and to the captives and to the blind and to the oppressed or downtrodden."

I come to present good news, but the only people for whom the good news is applicable is those who see themselves as poor, prisoners, blind and oppressed. Well, huh. The synagogue crowd was offended at that. They were more than offended; they were mad. They were more than mad; they were enraged. They took Jesus, their own hometown boy...they knew Him well; these are His relatives and His friends that He grew up with...out to a cliff and tried to throw Him off a cliff to kill Him because He said they were poor, prisoners, blind and oppressed spiritually. That is they were the bankrupt, and He said that and they would not accept that. And it made them so angry, they were so self-righteous, so convinced that they had achieved all kinds of things that pleased God, that they had in their self-righteous way earned their right relationship with God that they wanted Him dead. That's how hostile they were to Him. They tried to kill Him, throw Him off a cliff.

The blessed are not those who think they're spiritually rich, not those who think their own personal righteousness is sufficient to buy them salvation. In fact, the word for "poor" is *ptchos*, *ptchos* from *ptss*. *Ptss* means to cower and cringe like a beggar. It is a word that speaks of someone who is

reduced to begging, and with that reduction to begging it is a shame, is a humiliation so that the person cringes and cowers. It's not the picture of some slick conman, phony beggar who's plying his trade with some guile and craft. This is the person who is at the bottom of the bottom. There's no lower to go. You can't get lower than the Greek word *ptchos*. You can't be poorer than that. You have nothing, absolutely nothing.

Not only do you have nothing, but you have no capability to earn anything and so you're reduced to the humiliating life of begging. And because it's so humiliating and so shameful and so despicable, you don't even look up. You just cringe, you cover your face, you put your hand up. Jesus said those people are blessed, the spiritual beggars who know they have nothing to offer God, no works, nothing, nothing to earn His favor. It conveys the level of life so low that you cannot get lower, so bankrupt that you can't get more bankrupt. You have nothing and no capability to earn anything. You're like that Publican in Luke 18 who went into the temple to pray, and what did he do? It says he wouldn't so much lift his eyes. Why? He is the picture of the cowering, cringing beggar who just puts his hand up and says, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner. I'm too embarrassed, I'm too ashamed, I'm too humiliated to even look at You." This is the man with the poor and contrite spirit of Isaiah 66 verse 2. This is the one who knows he has nothing.

Boy, the Jews didn't see themselves that way. They were spiritually elite. They thought their good works had earned them righteousness. They thought their religious observances had earned them righteousness. They were absolutely wrong. Jesus overturned that completely. It is those who know they have nothing and are beggars who are blessed. Why are they blessed? Because, "For yours is the Kingdom of God." You get the Kingdom. Boy, that's amazing. You don't get stuff out of the Kingdom. You get the Kingdom, the whole thing. You become heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ, possessors of everything in the Kingdom, all the Kingdom has to offer. Eternal life, forgiveness, grace, mercy, joy, hope, security, comfort, peace, love, righteousness, all that is yours. It's all yours.

Those who in humility realize that they have nothing to commend themselves to God, who cower and cringe and keep their face low and put up an empty hand and ask God to fill it by grace and mercy, those are the spiritually poor who are blessed because salvation, friends, is a gift, it is not by works. By the deeds of the law, nobody has ever been justified before God. But for those who like beggars reach out a hand for a gift of grace, they receive the Kingdom right here, right now, all the blessings of salvation.

And in the future in its millennial form you will reign in the earthy Kingdom of Christ for a thousand years. And beyond that, you will enjoy all of the riches of the eternal Kingdom in the new heaven and the new earth. It's all yours. It's all yours. Notice the verb "yours is the Kingdom." The millennial part is yet to come, the eternal part is yet to come. But the Kingdom is ours now because the Kingdom is righteousness, joy and peace in the Holy Spirit, Paul says in the book of Romans. And we have all of that now, righteousness, joy, peace in the Holy Spirit.

And the second characteristic of the people who are blessed comes in the second Beatitude, the blessing of hunger, the blessing of hunger. Verse 21, "Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied." Again the point is not physical food but spiritual. Matthew 5:6, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after – " What? – "righteousness." Jesus said that once, and that's all He needs to say. We understand what kind of hunger He means. It's an intense desire for righteousness. It's saying, "Look, I have nothing. I am bankrupt. I am a beggar. I can't earn my salvation, but I hunger for righteousness." I mean, if you don't hunger for righteousness, then you're not going to come after it.

So the blessed are those who have a deep consuming, longing for acceptance with God. They want to be right with God. They want a relationship with God. They want forgiveness. They want their sin to be dealt with. They want fellowship with God. They want eternal life. We have a lot of people in our country who just don't want to get blown up. They just don't want to go down in a plane. They just don't like their stock falling. They don't want to lose their job. That is far different than hungering and thirsting after righteousness. This is the soul painfully aware of its emptiness with a gnawing hunger with the life that pleases and honors and knows God.

It's like Psalm 42:1 and 2 where the psalmist said, "As the deer pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after You, O God, my soul thirsts after God, for the living God." Or Psalm 63:1 and 2, "O God, You are my God, I shall seek You earnestly, my soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You in a day...or in a dry and weary land where there is no water." In fact, Mary when she was praising God after the announcement that she would be the mother of the Messiah, praised God, chapter 1 verse 53 of Luke, as "the one who has filled the hungry with good things." He fills the spiritually hungry heart. This is a hunger for forgiveness, a hunger for righteousness, a hunger for holiness.

So first, there's a recognition of poverty, bankruptcy spiritually, and then there is a hunger for righteousness. You first recognize what is wrong and what you don't have; you then recognize what you desperately need and long for. And where there is that hunger that says, "I must have Christ or die. I must have salvation or die," that hunger is the indicator of blessing because the Beatitude says, "For you shall be satisfied." Satisfied is the word, *chortaz*. It means to be foddered up, used of an animal. We don't all eat like that. Sometimes we do. Sometimes we just eat until we literally can't eat anymore.

But mostly in our culture the goal of our eating is somewhat tempered by the desire to achieve a certain form physically. And so it...most of you people don't stop eating when you're stuffed every time you eat. You control that so you won't have to suffer some adverse consequences physically, either in your appearance or in your health. Animals don't do that. Animals don't care what they're shaped like. They just keep eating till they don't want to eat anymore. And that's the word that's used for that. The idea is to be completely satiated. And so He says if you're really hungering for righteousness, I'm going to give you that righteousness to the point where you will be absolutely

satisfied. Psalm 34:10, "They that seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing." Psalm 23:1, "The Lord is my shepherd so I shall not want." Jeremiah 31:14, "My people shall be satisfied with My goodness, says the Lord."

Read through Psalm 107; you can read it yourself. "O give thanks unto the Lord because He fills the hungry soul." This is the image of full satisfaction. In Isaiah 25 and Isaiah 49 there's a picture of a messianic feast. When Messiah comes, we're all going to go to the table and we're going to get to the table and we're just going to eat all of the wonderful provision that God will give us at the messianic table. It's not an actual banquet. It's a metaphor, it's a picture, it's an analogy of satisfaction that comes from the Messiah to the one who is in His Kingdom. Luke records the words of Jesus that addressed this. In chapter 12, for example, verse 37, "Blessed are those slaves whom the Master shall find on the alert when He comes. Truly I say to you, He will gird Himself to serve and have them recline at the table and come up and wait on them." When the Messiah comes back, there's going to be this incredible banquet and we're going to go and Jesus is going to wait on us and feed us until we are fully satisfied. That's a picture of spiritual satisfaction provided through our Savior.

Chapter 13 verse 29, again the words of Jesus. "They will come from east and west, north and south and recline at the table in the Kingdom of God." Chapter 14 verse 15, "And when one of those who are reclining at the table with Him heard this he said to Him, 'Blessed is everyone who shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God.'" There was this idea of a messianic feast for those who were God's. We're all going to a place of full satisfaction at the table of God in His Kingdom. True believers long for that, they hunger for that righteousness which satisfies the empty heart.

Third Beatitude, end of verse 21, "Blessed are you who weep now for you shall laugh." Blessed are you who weep now. Matthew records Jesus saying, "Blessed are those that mourn." These are the people who are sad about that condition. They're sad about their spiritual bankruptcy. They're sad about the absence of righteousness. They hunger for that. They see themselves as the poor prisoners, blind and oppressed of chapter 4 verse 18. They are burdened. They are disappointed. They are fearful. They are in pain. They are pitiful. And this is the sorrow of repentance. This is the sorrow of repentance. This is that kind of sorrow of which James wrote. James 4:9, "Be miserable and mourn and weak, let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord and He will exalt you." That's the humiliation and the humbling and the sadness of repentance.

Paul wrote of it in 1 Corinthians...2 Corinthians chapter 7 in, really, what is probably the best definition of true repentance in Scripture. Second Corinthians 7 verse 10, "For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret leading to salvation." The sorrow of the world just produces death. And here's a definition of this true repentance. What earnestness this godly sorrow has produced in you, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal? It's this tremendous passionate desire to be clean, to be cleansed, to be changed, godly sorrow.

So here is the picture of the blessed...understanding spiritual bankruptcy, longing for righteousness, weeping over his sinful condition. The weeping is God-centered, not man-centered. It's God-centered. They sigh and cry over their sin before God and they long that He would forgive. And what does Jesus say? "People who weep like that will laugh." You will laugh. You'll not only be comforted, as Matthew's Beatitude records Jesus saying, but you'll laugh. This is the laughter of the forgiven. This is the laughter of the unburdened. This is the laughter of the free. Jeremiah 31:13 says, "I will turn their mourning into joy and comfort them and give them joy for their sorrow." I suppose the purest, dominating emotion for the believer is joy. It is our salvation, it is the peace that we have with God, it is the hope of eternal life that produces ultimately our joy. Joy then becomes the ultimate emotion, the product of all the blessings of the Kingdom.

So, you can do a little inventory on your life. Do you understand your spiritual bankruptcy? Do you have a profound hunger for righteousness? And is your life filled with sadness over your sin? And at the same time, has your poverty become riches because you have stepped into the Kingdom and now you know what is yours in Christ? Has your hunger turned into satisfaction because the very righteousness of Christ covers you and God has also imparted righteousness to you? And has your sorrow turned to laughter because you're filled with joy over what God has done? If that's you, then you're among the blessed.

There's one more. The fourth one, the blessing of rejection. Verse 22, "Blessed are you when men hate you and ostracize you and cast insults at you and spurn your name as evil for the sake of the Son of Man." Now this is an interesting Beatitude. This indicates that the work of the first three has been done. You have gone from spiritual poverty to riches, hunger to satisfaction, sorrow to laughter. Your life has changed. It's evident. And now comes the blessing of rejection. And this discusses not how you see yourself but how the world sees you and treats you, which also is an evidence of your blessed condition. You're going to have to wait till next time, however, to look at that and then finish up the "woes." Pray with me.

We can only ask, O God, that You would begin to do Your gracious work in all our hearts, the process of self-examination that can lead us to a true understanding of our condition. For those who smugly sit thinking they are the rich and the well fed and the happy and the popular, may it come home to them powerfully that they are, in fact, empty, hungry, sad and left out. O God, may You do a work of salvation in hearts. And it starts with understanding our spiritual poverty, our spiritual hunger, our spiritual sorrow as we come to You to receive the riches of the Kingdom, the food of righteousness that completely satisfies, the joy of knowing You. Father, do what You need to do in every heart for Your glory, and help readjust and completely overturn the thinking of all of us to understand how different Your truth is than the folly of the world. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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