

"COMMUNION – The Blessed Life Demonstrated"

(Matthew 5:1-12)

Intro ... Last Sunday we concluded our nine week investigation of the Beatitudes – that nine part lesson with which Jesus introduced his '*Sermon on the Mount*' which is recorded most completely in the Gospel of Matthew chapters 5-7.

The '*Beatitudes*' convey the essence of Christian Character – nine qualities of a life that is truly '*Blessed*'; nine qualities of the life of Jesus Christ; nine qualities Jesus would have characterize the lives of those who bear his name in this fallen, sin-filled world.

Like most things taught, description only goes so far. Most things that really matter need to be demonstrated if they are to be comprehended and implemented.

So today, as we prepare for our Time of Communion, let me draw your attention to ...

Today's Key Concept ...

In the **EVENTS** surrounding Christ's **SACRIFICE** on the Cross, every **QUALITY** of the "*Blessed Life*" was **DEMONSTRATED**.

Jesus experienced every aspect of the **BLESSED** life in the process of providing our **SALVATION**.

Jesus Christ was the ultimate '*blessed one*' ... His life clearly demonstrated and illustrated the points he was making regarding '*life that is blessed*'. Let's just walk our way through the nine '*Beatitudes*' and see how in fact his life matched up with his words ...

* Blessed are the **POOR** in **SPIRIT** ... the humble-hearted.

Blessed are those who do not possess a haughty or prideful spirit. Blessed are those who understand that their life is being lived in submission to the will of God and who bow themselves before that will. Blessed are those who humbly agree to the role that God would call them to play no matter what that role might be. Here's one key example.

In explaining the very process that provided our salvation, the Apostle Paul wrote these words to the Church in Philippi ...

"He humbled himself and became obedient unto death"

(Philippians 2:8)

Though he was the Son of God – though he held all the glory of heaven in his hand, he released his grip and let it go because the salvation of man required it. He demonstrated what it means to be "*Poor in Spirit*".

* Blessed are those that **MOURN** ... those whose hearts break over the things that break the heart of God.

As Jesus and his disciples and the crowd that attended them on Palm Sunday rounded that last bend in the road and their eyes caught sight of the Holy City for the first time, Jesus was overwhelmed with the compassion that characterizes His Heavenly Father. God's heart has not changed from the days of Noah when it was reported that God was 'grieved deeply' by the actions of man on the earth. Sin cannot be overlooked – the devastating effect of sin upon the earth and upon the hearts of men cannot be denied. The stubbornness of man to repent and receive the forgiveness of God cannot be ignored. Judgment will come though it breaks the heart of the Judge to release it.

Luke the great and careful Gospel historian reports in Luke 19:41 ...

"As he approached Jerusalem ... he wept over it"
(Luke 19:41)

And as those tears rolled down his cheeks, he demonstrated to his disciples just how God the Father feels about man's sinful persistent rebellion. He grieves – He mourns - and so do those who belong to His Family.

* Blessed are the **MEEK** ... those who keep a firm grip on themselves, who keep their strength under control, who possess great self-management, who submit themselves to a godly standard of behavior even when natural impulses would lead them to respond differently.

If anyone had the authority and the right to strike back at his accusers, it would be Jesus. He was accused unjustly; he was lied about; he was mocked; he had smelly soldiers get right in his face and yet (as the Apostle Peter who was an eye-witness would later report) ...

"When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate"
(1 Peter 2:23)

He had not come to 'win an argument'; he had not come to 'put people in their place. He had come to 'provide a place' for all who would believe. And so he '*meekly endured*' all they threw his way.

* Blessed are those who **HUNGER** and **THIRST** for Righteousness ... these are those who yearn to see God-Honoring, God-Pleasing life restored upon the earth. And this of course was the compelling passion of Jesus' life – his primary purpose for coming to earth.

Again the Apostle Peter becomes our instructor ...

*"He bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might
die to sins and live for righteousness."*
(1 Peter 2:24)

Jesus' death on the cross was a purposeful death – it was intended to produce life – righteous life – once again upon the earth. There is nothing that brings him more joy than to see his followers actually living out that life and honoring him as they do so. To see them do that satisfies the deepest hunger of his heart.

* Blessed are the **MERCIFUL** ... those who truly possess a '*bias toward forgiveness*' – who find pleasure in '*lifting someone's load*' and even providing for them a '*fresh start*'.

Jesus possessed such a 'merciful heart' that not even the agony of the cross could silence its expression. There on Calvary, he heard the appeal of the justly condemned criminal next to him and responded (no doubt with an inner sense of compassion and delight) ...

"This day you shall be with me in Paradise"

(Luke 23:43)

A last second salvation – Jesus will take it. It counts just like any other. Those who are merciful are not concerned about making someone '*earn something*' ... They are eager to give generously and freely what has been so freely and generously given to them. They are truly '*blessed*' upon the earth.

* Blessed are the **PURE** in **HEART** ... the pure in heart would not recognize an ulterior motive if it hit them in the face. They possess no personal agenda – no self-centered, self-determined plan for success. They have surrendered themselves to the perfect will of God and they contentedly live under His All-Wise Authority.

Nowhere did Jesus demonstrate this 'quality of blessedness' more dramatically than in the Garden of Gethsemane the night that he was betrayed and arrested. Making very clear that he did not relish the agony that awaited him – the separation from His Father that would nearly overwhelm him – he nevertheless prayed ...

"Not my will but yours be done"

(Luke 22:42)

The pure heart is (above everything else) a surrendered heart – a heart so focused upon the Will and Purposes of God that nothing else actually matters. And as a result it is a heart that is unsullied by personal ambition or rebellious questioning ... It willingly submits because that's its nature.

And as Jesus willingly submitted to the Father's Will that night in the Garden, he demonstrated to all who would follow just what it looks like to have a heart that is purely focused upon the things of God.

* Blessed are **PEACEMAKERS** ... those who can bring '*warring factions*' together in a lasting fellowship.

This was perhaps Christ's most notable 'blessed quality' ... He possessed the heart and he found the way to make peace between God and His Rebellious Creation. Restoring man to 'fellowship' has been the underlying theme of the ages – the main item on the agenda.

The Apostle Paul had the privilege of explaining to the Early Believers in the Colossian Congregation that the reason Jesus submitted himself to the agonies of Calvary was because he was ...

"making peace through his blood shed on the cross"

(Colossians 1:20)

Jesus Christ – the peacemaker – was providing a way that unholy human beings could be reconciled (brought back into fellowship) with a most Holy God. His shed blood would provide payment (atonement) for the sins of all who availed themselves of it. He indeed was the 'peace-provider' And he is truly 'blessed' when his provision actually 'makes' the peace he died to provide.

* Blessed are those who are **PERSECUTED** for **RIGHTEOUSNESS** ... These are those who, because of their commitment to live godly lives, suffer opposition from those who are not similarly committed.

Here again, Jesus demonstrated firsthand that of which he spoke on that memorable day on the mountainside. There are times when those who live rightly will be set upon by those who do not.

The criminal on the cross recognized that fact. Here's how Luke reports it ...

*"The other criminal rebuked him (saying) ...
We are getting what our deeds deserve but this man has done nothing wrong."
(Luke 23:40-41)*

'Persecuted for righteousness sake' – that's what Jesus was and he felt 'blessed' in the midst of it even as his followers can when they are similarly attacked for no other reason than that they are living proper, God-Honoring lives.

* Blessed are those who are **PERSECUTED** for his name's sake ... these are those who are attacked and set upon in the world simply because they are linked with Jesus Christ.

It's interesting that here too Jesus is our prime example for he himself was persecuted for the name he bore. Matthew reports the doings of the Roman Soldiers the night Jesus was betrayed, arrested and tried.

*"And they mocked him saying ... 'Hail King of the Jews'"
(Matthew 27:29)*

It's amazing how much venom the name of Jesus – the designation 'Christian' - can generate in certain places of the world. Try referring to him today as "King of the Jews" or "Lord of the Universe" or "Eternal Son of God" and see how far you get with certain groups of people.

He himself didn't get very far ... The Chief Priests condemned him – the Roman soldiers mocked him and beat him – the crowd demanded that Pilate crucify him.

Indeed he knew what he was like to be persecuted for 'His Own Name's Sake' and I firmly believe he experienced the 'sense of blessing' that he said would come from such persecution.

So this morning as we have walked our way through the events that surrounded the Sacrifice of Christ on Calvary, we have discovered the essence and the elements of the "Blessed Life" vividly demonstrated for us. Allow this "walk" to serve as a "Summary" of that life.

And remember – as our ***final thot*** says ...

Final Thot ...

In the cross is pictured all that we really **NEED** to **KNOW**.
COMMUNION serves to bring those things to the **FRONT** of our **MIND**.
OPEN your mind to them!