Text: Matthew 5:3-12
Title: "The Life God Blesses"

INTRODUCTION

Psalm 103:1-5 (NIV) - Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. [2] Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits…

At this time of the year it's important to thank God for our blessings. God is good. He wants to bless us … and He does bless us in so many different ways. But do you know that God has laid out a pathway to His blessings. It's not that we try to earn what God wants to give us by grace. No, rather it is to see that there are some things that God wants to give us, but He is waiting for us to position ourselves to receive them. There are some blessings that come to all people. But there is a special kind of life that God blesses in a powerful way. And that life is described by Jesus is His Sermon on the Mount. Turn with me to Matthew 5.

> In twelve short verses of the greatest sermon ever Jesus lays out the essentials to opening your life to the blessings of God.

Here are some things you need to know about the Beatitudes. By the way, "beatitudes" comes from the Latin word that means "blessed." They mark out the kind of life God blesses.

- **Each beatitude is <u>powerful</u>.**

  vv.1-2 - 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:

  "sat down … and he began to teach them…" - When a rabbi or teacher spoke while standing or walking it was considered to be informal. On the other hand, when he sat, the teacher was laying down authoritative instruction. So when Jesus sat down, He did so to indicate that He had something important to say … something that packed authority for His followers.

- **Each beatitude contains a <u>congratulation</u>.** When do you congratulate someone? When something good, something fortunate happens to them.

  "Blessed…" - Your translation may use the word "happy."

  "Blessed" is not a <u>superficial</u> feeling of <u>happiness</u>. "Blessed" is a <u>supernatural</u> experience of God's <u>peace</u> and <u>joy</u>.

- **Each beatitude is <u>radical</u>.** In the Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount Jesus lays out "extreme living."

Now let's get to the first beatitude. It tells us how to position ourselves to receive the blessings God wants to pour into our lives.

POSITION #1 - <u>HUMILITY</u> (v.3)

v.3 - "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Now there's a requirement and reward in each of the beatitudes.

<u>The Requirement</u>: Be <u>honest</u> and <u>humble</u> about your spiritual <u>condition</u>.

ILLUSTRATION – One day this past week I was watching an early morning network news show, and they had Alicia Keys on for a short concert and interview. She is a tremendously popular actress and recording artist today. In the interview Alicia Keys was talking about the inspiration for a new album she had released, and how she had been through some really tough times. But lately she said, "There has been an overall feeling that I've come into my own." She went on to tell of how she left her entourage for a solo journey to Egypt, Italy and Greece. Listen to what she said about her trip: "I saw all these temples, and tombs, and pyramids and I learned that we as people are really so powerful and it's all in our mind. We can really create and have anything that we want. That's what I learned and that's why I came back and made this music."

But the teachings of Jesus run in the opposite direction of her philosophy.

Jesus is saying that the way to be happy is to recognize your real and deepest need, to face it, and then discover that need can be supplied by God. Happy is the person who realizes that he or she is a spiritual failure … someone who admits their spiritual poverty.

So the requirement in this beatitude is to be honest and humble about your spiritual condition.

<u>The Reward</u>: <u>Enjoy</u> the full <u>benefits</u> of living under God's <u>reign</u>.

"for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" - now what does this mean? God has chosen to extend the benefits of His Kingdom to those who humble themselves and put their trust in Him.

I believe they are the promises that you find in the remaining beatitudes: comfort, inheriting the earth, spiritual fulfillment, mercy, seeing God, being called sons of God.

So if you want to have a life God blesses, position yourself by humbling yourself before God.

POSITION #2 - <u>BROKENNESS</u> (v.4)

v.4 - Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

You can see how neatly the beatitudes fit together. When we come to realize our true spiritual condition, it must cause us to be broken, not proud, but broken.

<u>The Requirement</u>: <u>Allow</u> yourself to be broken over <u>sin</u> and <u>suffering</u>.

1. **Over <u>sin</u> - my sin and the world's sin**

   The Bible says that a broken and contrite spirit God will not despise. Broken over what? Our sin.

2. **Over <u>suffering</u> - my suffering and the world's suffering.**

If we want the blessings of God, we must let ourselves be broken over our sin, over the sins of our world, over the incredible suffering that exists in our world.

<u>The Reward</u>: <u>Claim</u> the <u>comfort</u> that only God can <u>give</u>.

When we mourn over our <u>sin</u>, we can expect to receive God's comfort in the form of salvation and forgiveness.

> **2 Corinthians 7:10 - <u>Godly sorrow brings repentance</u>**

When we mourn over <u>suffering</u>, we can expect to receive God's comfort.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 - Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles…

When we come to God with a broken heart, we don't leave with a broken heart.

POSITION #3 - <u>SUBMISSION</u> (v.5)

Meekness, in the eyes of the world, is weakness. Just the sound of that word lends itself to that … meek. But don't be misled. Actually it is a word of great strength and power. In fact, Jesus described Himself using this word:

> **Matthew 11:29 - Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am <u>gentle</u> and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.**

<u>The Requirement</u>: <u>Bring</u> your entire <u>life</u> under the <u>control</u> of God.

Meekness doesn't mean "weakness," it means strength under control. It is strength yielded to the control of another.

ILLUSTRATION - Our rodeo started this weekend. If you go to a rodeo you'll likely see two kinds of horses: First, there are the horses in bare back riding or saddle bronc riding. These horses are as wild as they can be. There's never been any attempt to do anything but to keep them wild, because the goal is to test a cowboy's ability to stay on top of something that's totally out of control. Now the second kind of horse you'll see are the horses that compete in barrel racing or cutting horse competition. These animals are just the opposite. They are the epitome of control. Their massive strength has been harnessed and it's under the control of the one riding them. They can maneuver around barrels or cut a calf out of a herd with just the gentlest touch of the rider on the reigns. Is that

horse any less strong than the wild horse? No, the difference is that their strength has been harnessed and is under the control of another.

And there is a reward attached to this requirement.

The Reward: Rest in your future in Christ.

"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth."

One day God will completely reclaim His earthly domain, and those who have become His children through faith in His Son will rule that domain with Him. "Inherit" refers to the receiving of one's alloted portion, one's rightful inheritance. Our responsibility is to trust the Lord and obey His will. One day God will settle all accounts. We can rest in the fact that we do not have to bring about justice for ourselves. God will do it.

POSITION #4 - PASSION (v.6)

Matthew 5:6 - Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

To "hunger and thirst" speaks of strong desire, driving pursuit, and a passionate force within the soul. It has to do with ambition, the right kind of ambition.

The Requirement: Yearn for God's life within you.

That is what righteousness is … God's life within you.

Two kinds of righteousness:

- Imparted righteousness is the way God looks at us when we place our faith in Christ. This is salvation. And we must hunger and thirst for this righteousness. That's what drives a person to be saved.

- Practical righteousness is the outgrowth of imparted righteousness. This is sanctification.

So the requirement is to yearn for God's life within you.

The Reward: Experience ultimate satisfaction.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Righteousness produces satisfaction like nothing this world can offer. And though you never get all of it, this side of heaven, and you yearn for it every day you live, God gives you a satisfaction and contentment, even as you hunger for more of it.

ILLUSTRATION – I don’t know about at your house, but on Thanksgiving Day around our house we had this huge meal about 2:30. We sat down and watched the Cowboys game. And at half time

we were up rummaging around the kitchen, sniffing at the leftovers from the feast we had earlier. At one point we were satisfied, but that went away. That's the way it is with earthly food and earthly pleasures. There's only one thing that is ultimately satisfying … the life of God in us.

POSITION #5 - MERCY (v.7)

And what a Christ-like quality mercy is. Jesus was the most merciful person to ever live on the face of the earth. He reached out to hurting people. He made time for the sick, crippled, blind, lame, deaf and the sinners.

The Requirement: Show genuine compassion for others.

And it's not that we just pretend to care. We act with mercy. It's not just feeling compassion, it's showing compassion.

What does mercy look like?

- A shed tear (Rom.12:15)
- A helping hand (Mark 9:22)
- A kind word (I Thess.5:11)
- A zipped lip (James 4:11-12)
- A forgiving spirit (Col.3:13)

The Reward: God will show you mercy.

There is a law of reciprocity at work here. What you give is what you get back. I don't know about you, but I need mercy.

POSITION #6 - PURITY

Matthew 5:8 - Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Some believe that the sixth beatitude is the climax … the central truth toward which the previous five have been building, and from which the following two flow.

The Requirement: Pursue a heart of integrity.

It starts in the heart:

- Our thoughts
- Our attitudes
- Our feelings
- Our motives
- Our will

ILLUSTRATION - Refrigerator goes out while your out of town. You come home and there's this horrible odor that hits you in the face as you walk in the door. There's a bunch of meat in the freezer and some left-overs in the refrigerator. What do you do? Spray some deodorizer in the kitchen?

Repaint the refrigerator? Redecorate the kitchen? New flooring? New cabinets? You can do all that and things will still stink, because you've not gotten to the heart of the problem.

Pursue a heart of integrity.

The Reward: Personally experience the presence of God.

What does that mean? There's a **here/now** aspect to it and a **there/then** aspect to it.

HERE/NOW - We "see" God in nature. We see God in history. We see God in the person of Jesus Christ. We see God in the circumstances of our lives. We see His hand at work all around us everyday.

THERE/THEN - Paul said, "Now we see through a glass dimly. Then we shall see face to face."

> **1 John 3:2-3 - Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. 3 Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.**

POSITION #7 - PEACE (v.9)

Matt.5:9 - Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

You see the Jews had this idea that the coming Kingdom of the Messiah would bring about great national, military and political upheaval. Remember they are living as prisoners in their own land. The Romans held control of the land of the Jews. Everywhere you turned you saw the imprint of Roman domination. And for most Jews this was unacceptable. And their idea of Messiah was that He would step, crush the enemy and liberate the people. And in the end the Jews would be on the top, not on the bottom.

> And Jesus is saying through this beatitude, "If you want to be my disciple, you'll have to abandon that outlook on life."

The Requirement: Pursue that which leads to peace.

The Bible teaches us that there are three levels of peace:

- **Peace with God** - Throughout the Bible we see God's quest to have peace with us.

  Romans 5:1 - Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ…

- **Peace with others - Romans 12:18 - If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.**

- **Peace with self - Philippians 4:6-7 - Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**

Matt.5:9 - Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

<u>The Reward</u>: Share the <u>reputation</u> of your <u>Father</u>.

"sons of God" – those like their father. God is delighted to call us His children. And we develop a reputation in the world that we are sons and daughters of the King because we are peacemakers. Why? Because that's the nature of our Father in heaven.

Now, when you determine that you are going to make the pattern Jesus sets forth in the Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount the pattern for your life, don't expect smooth sailing. And Jesus certainly knows that when His disciples move into their world with these qualities it will throw them into the line of fire. And that leads to the last of the beatitudes.

Matthew 5:10 - Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

POSITION #8 - <u>PERSECUTION</u> (vv.10-12)

On first glance this beatitude doesn't seem to have much relevance for Christians living in the USA where religious freedom is supposedly protected. But as we saw last week in our Missions Forum, in a great many places on this earth, the church is under fire.

2 Timothy 3:12 - In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted…

The Scripture tells us that there is such a tension between the Gospel and lifestyle of Christians on the one hand and the attitudes and ways of the world on the other that conflict will happen.

<u>The Requirement</u>: Endure <u>suffering</u> for Christ's <u>sake</u>.

Now Jesus expands verse 10 in verses 11-12. The kind of persecution Jesus seems to highlight is verbal assault.

> **"insult you"** - NASB translates this "cast insults." And that's pretty accurate … to hurl abusive words in the face of another. Jesus frequently endured such mocking from his enemies.
>
> **"persecutute you"** – The word means to put under pressure.
>
> **"falsely say all kinds of evil against you"** - the idea seems to be to talk behind someone's back … to say things that are blatantly untrue.

Now you may be asking, "Why would people do this kind of thing?"

The <u>reason</u> for our suffering - "because of righteousness" (v.10); "because of me" (v.11)

When Jesus is at the center of your life … when Jesus flows through your lifestyle … righteousness is the fruit. Remember what we said about hungering and thirsting for righteousness. Righteousness is the life of God, the life of Christ, in me.

v.12 - 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 other words, "You're in good company. The faithful people of God have always experienced hardship. But there's a reward that's "out of this world" literally.

That leads to …

<u>The Reward</u>: <u>Enjoy</u> the full <u>benefits</u> of living under God's <u>reign</u>.

v.10 - "Theirs is the kingdom of heaven"

The reward is exactly the same as the very first beatitude. We come full circle.

ILLUSTRATION - Who could forget the powerful story of Jim Elliot and his missionary comrades who were speared by headhunters in Ecuador? Jim Elliot said those powerful words: "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

And great is your reward in heaven. When you surrender your life to God's will and endure whatever you have to endure for the sake of faithfulness to God, you join a long line of great men and women of faith who have done the same, left the mark, and received their reward in heaven.