

“The Blessings of the Kingdom”

Matthew 5:1-2

Jim Alexander

Over the past couple of months, we've been looking at sermons taking first the King and his kingdom while working our way through the second half of the book of Romans. Most recently, Paul has called us in Romans 12 to be living sacrifices who use the spiritual gifts that we have received for the strengthening of the church. And as we return to Romans 12 next week, we're going to find out what Paul gives us as the marks of a true Christian.

However, this morning we're going to step away from Romans, and we're going to go to Matthew 5 to look at what Jesus says are the blessings of the kingdom of heaven. He gives us, he gives us eight different characteristics which mark the lives of all of those who belong to him.

Please follow along as I read aloud Matthew chapter five, beginning with verse one.

Seeing the crowds, he went up the mountain, and he sat down. His disciples came to him. He opened his mouth and taught them, saying, blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. And blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you, and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven. For so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

This is God's holy and inspired word. Please pay careful attention to it by his grace and mercy it is now preached for you.

I think we all can appreciate whenever we hear a good public speaker who stands up and gives something of an introduction that just kind of grabs our attention and holds our attention throughout everything else that he has to say. Well, Jesus here, models that. He knows very well how important that is. He's not about to let anyone in the crowd to whom he is speaking on this mountain side fall asleep while he's teaching. He engages them with language and terminology that they understand, and yet he takes them further than what they thought they would go. Even as he continues to teach what we have before us this morning in Matthew 5:1-12.

Commonly called the Beatitudes, is just the introduction of Jesus first and longest sermon, which we have given to us in Matthew 5, 6 & 7. We know it as the Sermon on the Mount, but Jesus immediately grips the attention of those who have come to hear him. Those crowding around him to hear what he has to say, by the way, that he communicates to them so much so that by the end of the sermon, the last word we see in Matthew 7 is that the people were astonished, having never heard anyone teach with such authority.

Now, certainly some of the impact that Jesus had as he preached came because of the life that he lived before he began to preach. Jesus recently had arrived on the scene, living as no other rabbi had done in the first century. He was gentle, and he was tender hearted. He embraced children. He spoke to women. He healed the sick. He freed people from demon possession. And he welcomed people from every walk of life. So crowds naturally began gathering around him, wanting to learn more of this rabbi. And from this rabbi, as he continued to do miracles and to preach. And as was typical throughout Jesus earthly ministry. Every time that a crowd gathered to him, Jesus was moved with compassion, and he was driven to action.

He saw more than just throngs of people who were just fed up with the whole home, mundane, everyday life that they lived, in fact. He saw when he looked at the crowd individuals. And as he saw individuals within this crowd, he saw people in need. Matthew tells us later that he saw people harassed and helpless, wandering like sheep without a shepherd. There was the need. So, at times he would meet the needs simply by healing the sick. Other times he met the need by feeding the thousands. And very often, as in our passage this morning, he meets the need by declaring to the crowd himself in a way that they find their deepest spiritual need being addressed. Look with me again, please, at the opening words of Matthew 5, where we are told Jesus, seeing the crowds, went up on the mountain and when he sat down, his disciples came to him.

Here's where we, I think, benefit by identifying ourselves with the immediate audience of Jesus day. So you to the Jews making up most of this audience. Mountains had great significance. Mountains were where people went to worship. It was to the mountains that even David of old would look to the mountains, in hopes that from there would come his help when he was in times of distress.

People went up the mountains in order to have encounters with God. And I believe in Matthew's day, every Orthodox Jew this sees Jesus now ascending this mountain, this rabbi going up and sitting down so he can begin to teach. They can't help but think of Moses ascending Mount Sinai, where he met with God and received from God. Written by God's own hand.

The Ten Commandments, written on tablets of stone. So to see Jesus go up and take his seat where they could easily see him and begin to hear him, I believe it just heightened the expectation of this crowd. Quickly they followed him, and quickly they gathered to hear and eagerly engage with whatever it was he had to say. Listen again as Jesus, in the words of one author, begins describing the character which the Holy Spirit produces, and all those who follow Jesus, as well as the blessings which finally come to his people.

Look again with me at verse three. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. We have here the first three have no less than nine times that Jesus calls his followers blessed. And seeing this concise list, this compact list of various blessings that belong to those who are part of the Kingdom of Heaven, has led Bible scholars to call this section of the Beatitudes.

The Beatitudes is not a word that we find in our Bibles in the original language, however, it's a word from the Latin, which means simply to experience a state of supreme blessedness and utmost happiness. Aptly named the Beatitudes. However, to be blessed, I think, goes beyond simply being happy. I really can't remember or count the number of times that I've had occasion to say to somebody, well, how are you doing?

And they give me the hip shot. Well, I'm so blessed. I never have quite fully understand. I don't think what they really mean when they say, I'm so blessed. I guess it means that they're happy at the moment. Life seems to be going their way. Life's good. They can't really expect to ask for anything more. And so they're they feel good in the moment.

So I'm blessed by being blessed as Jesus uses. This term goes far beyond our being okay with the circumstances of life as we face them. Being blessed means you have an awareness of a deep inner peace and an unwavering joy which transcends all of life, circumstance because you know you are right with God. That's what Jesus means. And every one of the Beatitudes when he says, blessed are you, when to be blessed is to know that you have peace with God.

That you are in right standing with God through Jesus Christ, the one who now is teaching. So each of the Beatitudes, I think, presents something richly satisfying, something which we can experience now once we have been made right with God. By faith in Jesus Christ. So in the first beatitude, Jesus begins with words that they understand. He says, blessed are the poor in verse three.

Well, the crowds tracking with him because they understand what it means, most of them to be poor. Many of them were needing food. Many of them needed encouragement. Almost all of them needed hope because they were still living under the oppression of Rome. So they often

went looking for anything to occupy their minds, to distract them from the bleak realities of their daily lives.

And Jesus now says to a large majority of the crowd who identifies with him immediately is blessed to be poor. But then he adds, poor in spirit. Now that's something they didn't see coming. It's one thing to say I might be able to find peace in my soul if I'm if I'm poor physically. But how in the world could I be impoverished in spirit and still be blessed?

But this is what Jesus says is the first blessing of belonging to the kingdom of heaven. In fact, this must be the starting point to belong in the kingdom of heaven. What also I read, put it this way. There must be emptiness before there can be fullness. So poverty of spirit precedes riches and grace in the kingdom of God.

You see, the only way that we can have peace with God is to admit that we are spiritually destitute, utterly undeserving, and incapable of doing anything to change our condition. You see, we aren't the working poor who have hope that by sheer white knuckled effort, we can somehow amass enough that we can get out of being poor. No, we are those who are the poorest of the poor, who have no hope whatsoever to be able to make ourselves right with God by anything that we could ever dream of or begin to try to do.

If someone doesn't show up and do for us what we cannot do for ourselves, this is our forever condition. Yet this message was Jesus first century audience here's still would have been something that they track with because they knew, didn't they? They knew what it meant to be in a position that they can't do anything about. Here they are.

They're being ruled by Rome. They've been looking for a messiah. They've been hoping for some earthly king of some sort to come on the scene, to deliver them from Rome, to set them back where they think they belong, back in charge of their own destiny. Here is a people that when he says, blessed are the poor in spirit, they're still tracking with him.

I am poor in spirit as a Jew because I can't do anything about my sad situation. But Jesus goes on to offer them much, much more. He has this hopeful promise. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven, not on earth, but heaven. He lists their thinking beyond the things of this earth, and it sets their minds on things above.

He points them to God's eternal right to rule over all creation. Then Jesus continues, and he gives them a second blessing. And the second beatitude which his audience again can easily identify with. He goes on to say, blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Well, with life expectancy is being short, with children often never reaching the age of becoming teenagers.

With everything that we've ever heard about being the good old days of Israel, being in charge seemed like a dream that was just totally removed. And with us eking out a living under Roman oppression in such a way that even our very relationships themselves are being damaged and destroyed. We know what it means if we're part of this crowd to mourn.

But Jesus plans to take them deeper than what they understand. There's a progression of thought here throughout to be attitudes. Jesus begins laying out one blessing on top of another. They necessarily one lead to the next, to the next. When we see that we are impoverished in spirit, when we see that we are spiritually bankrupt and destitute and can do nothing about it, then and only then are we in a position to mourn over our sin.

We can grieve over our spiritual poverty. See, so many in this crowd had not yet begun to mourn for their sin, much less to mourn for the consequences of their sin. William Barclay the theologian, has this perspective by telling us the Greek word used here for mourning is the strongest word translated mourning in our English language. It is the word often used for mourning the dead, for the passionate lament over one who is deeply loved.

Well, I know many of us in our congregation in the last couple of years have experienced this type of grieving, this type of mourning, whether it's through the loss of, of a son or daughter, a husband or wife. Someone that we have deeply loved. You know, we've even shared this type of mourning, haven't we, as a congregation in the homegoing of our pastor, reader just now, nearly two years ago.

We can identify with what Jesus means when he says, blessed are those who mourn. But how long has it been? How long has it been since we've actually had that same gut wrenching grief over our sins against God, and over our inability to do anything about it? Such grieving comes only as the Holy Spirit first convicts or pierces our hearts and shows us the depth of our sins, and then goes deeper still to produce in us a godly sorrow over our sins that leads to confession and repentance.

Well, confession, we know, is saying the same thing about our sin that God says about it. And repentance is a turning from sin and a turning to God. This is the work of the Holy Spirit. We need the Holy Spirit in order for us to do this on our own. It's our tendency to just trivialize sin. We tend to shy away from it.

We don't want to look at it long and hard and stare at the depth of our sin and see it for all that it is, because we think it would be too depressing. But the Holy Spirit is the one who enables us to take a long, hard look at sin and grieve over even the slightest offense that we think we've ever committed as being the biggest travesty of the eternal, holy nature of God.

But Jesus has a blessing to all those who experienced such grief. These. These are the ones who shall become fitted. You see, the Holy Spirit is the Paraclete, the one who is called alongside of

us as the Paraclete. He has two primary roles. He first convicts us of sin, but then he also comforts us of sin. Are we glad that the Holy Spirit when we take God's Word, when we listen to sermons preached as he is working in our hearts and our lives, as we are interacting with each other and someone speaks truth and love to us.

It is the Holy Spirit who doesn't leave us in our sin, but he convicts us of our sin so that we might grieve and repent and turn. But then he doesn't just leave us there. He also gives us the very comfort that he alone can provide. He speaks peace into our hearts and into our souls. He reminds us, there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

We are forgiven. We stand in Jesus Christ. We are in Jesus Christ, complete, even as he sits beside His Father and rules from his throne. Well, this peace, this comfort, is possible and available only to those who grieve first over their sin. But Jesus, now, as a third beatitude, is saying, and in verse five, blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Now, as Jesus spoke to this immediate audience, I'm not entirely sure that those in his audience really understood what he was saying, but I know they would instinctively tend to think of Moses, the meek US man who ever lived. And I'm not real sure that even us today, sitting and listening to Jesus as he speaks to us, understand what it means to be meek.

I think far too often we tend to relegate being meek to being weak. But that's far from the case. Meekness involves knowing and using your God given strength in balance and with self-control. Meekness is a humble, unimpressed with ourself way to live, which allows us then to put others first as we exercise our God given strengths. Moses was such a man.

He had great strengths. Holy boldness. God's power was a work in him and astonishing ways. God declared to Moses with him I speak face to face as friend with friend. Yet Moses employed his strength with great self-control. It's kind of like in Moses I see the black stallion, the one that you know, there's just so much power underneath the sheen of that horse's coat, so much power that it could trample you and crush you, if not for the bit and the bridle of meekness that was in Moses mouth, because he was a meek man.

He was able to channel his strengths, to bless others, rather than ever, to point and make a name for himself. Well, in Jesus day, as well as in many circles today, the mantra might equals right tends to rule the day. Oh well, it's the strength in numbers, or whether it's by sheer force of will. Pride and self-promotion seem to be the attributes that we clamor for today, even in leaders, as they steamroll over us.

But it is the meek rather than the weak or the strong who will inherit the earth. An article I read online recently put it this way. Those who inherit the earth sometimes are those whose stories on earth are never known. Yet one day, when we stand in heaven, we will find out. That little person sitting on the hill was the unlikely character God used to change the world.

We could go on for days just unpacking the first three beatitudes, which are the blessings of belonging to the Kingdom of heaven, which show us our need. An impoverished spirit mourning broken hearts and meek. These are the things that we need. But Jesus now moves on. He goes beyond showing us just the enormity of our need to showing us how the need is met, beginning with verse six.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. The first three beatitudes have been building upon each other, and one letter two to ledger three, and all three. Naturally to this the fourth. You see, whenever someone realizes they are spiritually bankrupt and have only sent to offer to the thrice holy God, whenever someone has been convicted by the Holy Spirit of the utter darkness of their sin, so that in repentance they weep over what they have done.

They become humble. The meek in the presence of the beauty of God's grace. And they now want to know more. Do you remember how it was when God first drew you to himself and showed you your need? And by faith you surrendered your life to Jesus Christ and received him as Savior? Like a newborn baby you crave, this is your milk of God's Word.

You just couldn't get enough of the truths by or that are bound in the covers of the book. This, according to Jesus, should be our continuous reality. You see, those who understand the enormity of God's salvation continually hunger for more of his righteousness. Those who stand in awe of such grace that God would choose and redeem them from a life of bondage to sin.

Those are the ones who come thirsting for more of the living waters, which alone give satisfaction to our past souls. Blaise Pascal wisely wrote, there is a God sized vacuum, or a hole in the heart of every man, which can only be satisfied by God. Yet this hole can never be filled simply by mere knowledge of God. In this crowd, listen to Jesus, even as he taught, were the Pharisees and Sadducees.

They made it their practice to make much of the way they looked externally, how they looked to you. They'd walk in and you would be wowed, but they didn't pay attention to what was going on in their heart while they were pursuing God's law. They were far from God, the giver of the law.

They were content to let tradition triumph over truth at the expense of their very souls. But those who hear Jesus and cannot do anything less than desire, then desire to become more like him with every thought, in every deed. Those who encounter Jesus in such a life changing way, they are the ones who now become satisfied by the righteousness of God.

It's not enough for Jesus to show us just our need. Oh, he intensifies. He increases the need. Our awareness of the need. It's there. It's real. But it can and will be satisfied when we turn to Jesus Christ by faith. Now, having taken these first four Beatitudes to help us address the

vertical relationship between man and God, it says almost as though Jesus is holding in his hands the stone tablets of the law, and he flips the tablet over.

Now he starts addressing the horizontal relationships between man and man. In the next four Beatitudes, a little more briefly. Now look at verse seven. Jesus continues to say, blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. I think it's good for us to remind ourselves. Mercy is God not giving us the judgment we deserve and recompense for our sins.

But when we realize that God has been so full of mercy toward us, we naturally should then be mercy filled toward others who have wronged us. I should be able to say to someone that's wrong there, you blew it. But I'm not standing in judgment of you. I'm not seeking revenge. I'm not looking for ways to pay you back.

Though there are still hard consequences that we have to deal with. I'm eager to apply mercy in the gospel to our relationship, so that I might see you restored to God and us restored to each other. That's what mercy does. You may be thinking, but, Jim, that's hard. Yes it is. Humanly speaking, we can actually expand the mercy that we as people have.

But the beauty is, we're not charged only to give mercy according to our standard. We're told in this verse, blessed are the merciful, and they shall receive what? Mercy. You see the cycle here? The more that we're willing to give mercy to those who have sinned against us, the more mercy we receive that we might have more mercy still to give.

It's not about me working out mercy on my own, in my own power, out of the well of my own life. It's about the mercy of God, freely given to me, flowing freely through me that I might give it to you as well. With this next blessing, Jesus turns up the heat. Not only on the Pharisees are there in this crowd, but I think on the closet Pharisee hidden in so many of us.

Look at verse eight. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. For all who'd rather look good on the outside, instead of becoming good on the inside, do the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus now has called them out. He says, what's going on in your heart is what matters for all eternity. You see our inmost thoughts, our desires, our goals, our ambitions, even our motivations for doing what we do.

Have you ever stopped to try to examine that? That blows my mind. Why do I do the things I do? Something I did felt like it was a good thing to do, the right thing to do. But why did I do it? Did I do it to get out of the way so that God alone got all the glory?

Or did I just kind of pat myself on the back a little? Somewhere along the way, when Jesus addresses the matter of the heart, because it is what's in our heart that drives our actions, these can only be assessed rightly when we look at them, in contrast to the unpolluted absolute

purity of God. He who is holy or completely separated from sin calls us to be holy, to be holy as I am holy.

Sounds almost like an impossible command, except for this when by faith we turn to Jesus Christ and we receive him as our Savior. Who is it? Which person of the Trinity indwells us? That's right. The Holy Spirit. The very thing that I naturally lack is the very one who indwells me, so that I can increasingly become more and more holy, sanctified, set apart more like Jesus, and less like the sinful one.

I was. You know, nearly a dozen years now as Papa, I have enjoyed telling stories to my grandkids. They'll come to me. Still no go. Papa, will you tell us a story? You know, when I tell them a story, I engage their minds as far as I can. I want them to. To feel like King Arthur. And the Knights of the Round Table pale in comparison to the adventures we're about to go on.

Well, except for Sir Galahad, the pure Tennyson said of him, his strength is as the strength of ten, because his heart is pure. We see every adventure that I spin a story and take the grandkids on has about one goal in mind. I want to help them value being pure, set apart from sin, set apart to God. I want them to have a right relationship with God as they come to know Jesus Christ as their Savior.

And then I want them to pursue it with all of their might, as though it is the biggest conquest they could ever be on. I want them to understand what it means to know more of God. Jesus now continues as his laying one beatitude upon the others and building this sure wall of godly character into our lives. He adds in verse nine, blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

Paul tells us we are ambassadors for Christ. God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. I think this is why it's critical for us, individually and especially for us as a church, to be on mission, on message and in ministry with Jesus Christ. He has entrusted us with the ministry of reconciliation.

Why? So that men and women can be reconciled to God so men and women can be reconciled to each other. So friend and friend can be on the same page, having put their failures and their sins behind them under the blood of the cross, so that they can now move forward together, unified as one. Taking on the dominion of the devil and seeing God's glory raised.

You see, it is the peacemakers who are willing to roll up their sleeves and do the hard work of confronting sin and championing truth until as much as humanly possible, we are now living at peace with each other. We know the difference, don't we? Between peacemaker. Peacekeeper. A peacemaker does the hard work, labors hard and long, sticks with it for the long haul until peace finally is won.

A peace keeper is just someone who appeases for the moment. Someone who is just there temporarily to maintain some semblance of peace. Not actually to see peace established when it takes so much effort. You see, a peace maker wants relationships to be restored to the way they would have been before the ravages of sin began to take their toll.

He restores shalom. That's what shallow means. It's not just the absence of strife. Shallow means the re establishing of things the way they should have been before everything went wrong. And when we do this, blessed are the peacemakers. They shall be known as sons of God. You see, when we live that way, they're so radically different from everyone else in the world around us that people can't help but see there's something different about him.

There's something different about her. You know, I just stabbed her in the back, and she still loved me. I just said something harsh about him that wasn't true. And he still reaches into my life like it never happened before. So that is a sermon and shoes. That speaks volumes every time we preach it. The last two beatitude, or blessed statements are found in the closing remarks of this introduction to Jesus Sermon on the Mount.

In verse ten, Jesus says, blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. And then he drills down deeper by adding in verses 11 and 12. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you, and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven.

For so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. You see, when we are persecuted for righteousness sake, not being persecuted because we're just kind of an adult who likes to offend people by the way we live. But when we are persecuted, wrongly, falsely accused for righteousness sake because we have put God in our relationship with God. On center stage, in contrast to a world that is filled with evil, when we are persecuted like this, ours becomes the blessing.

You know, we talked recently in the Global Ministries conference about the persecuted church. We heard about the pastor who had been arrested, beaten within an inch of his life, then released, only to be rearrested and beaten again, until finally some man who had clout stood up and says, release him to me or else. And he was released. We know we hear the stories of what it means to be persecuted because of our faith in Jesus Christ.

We also know what it means for us that we to be maligned because we stand for truth when no one else does. When we do what is right and someone says, oh, there it goes, holier than thou putting on airs again. We know what it means for whatever form of persecution the persecution takes those who consistently speak the truth and love have now the Kingdom of heaven with Jesus by returning says theirs now is the kingdom of heaven has just put a bow tie around everything he said in this entire section of Scripture.

It's called inclusion. He begins with a phrase, and he ends with a phrase to show us that he's tied neatly all together in one package. In verse three, he began by telling us, blessed are the poor in spirit. Why? For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Now in this verse, verse ten, he says, blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake.

Why? For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Those who enter the kingdom of heaven by faith should expect, even anticipate, measures of persecution as we humbly persist in following Jesus Christ. You know, since the world hated our Savior and crucified him, and since Jesus told us the servant is not greater than his master, we shouldn't be shocked or even surprised, and we should never be sitting around complaining when the world reveals us.

Last year, according to Open Doors, a ministry that tracks persecution of the church around the world, last year, 4476 Christians were murdered for their faith.

7679 churches and Christian properties were attacked, and 4744 Christians were imprisoned, and just the top 50 countries that they track. Persecution of the church. When this happens, and when others hurl false accusations against us because we stood firm for the truth, speaking the truth and love, Jesus says, rejoice. Now that got his audience attention, they didn't like the idea of rejoicing as Rome was still but oppressing, oppressing, oppressing.

Take a cloak and carry two miles instead of one. Are you kidding me? Rejoice! And the fact that we're being persecuted. But Jesus says, yes, the blessing is to be persecuted and you should rejoice. Why? Because you have been counted. Faithful and worthy to suffer something. A small, small bit of what Jesus Christ endured for you.

When we are persecuted and harassed for our faith, we stand with Jesus Christ, our Savior, in a unique way. According to this last beatitude, we actually join the ranks of the prophets and others who have been martyred for the faith. To the Jewish audience that day. That was the highest praise they could even dream of. They were just common, ordinary, everyday Jews and the prophets.

For those people that walked on water, miles above them. But to be said, when you suffer persecution and are endure, being slandered is liable for false accusations for my sake. You're like one of the prophets. He gives us highest praise. But there's one last truth. Or take away that we need before we wrap up today. And that's simply this Jesus.

The entire time that he's been teaching the Beatitudes. Jesus has been revealing himself. You see, Jesus became poor in spirit as he gave up all his kingly glory in heaven. Humbling himself to become man. Submitting himself to the father's will, even to death on the cross. Jesus mourned over the sinful blindness of Jerusalem, even as he wrote in in supposed triumph on that day, he wept at Lazarus tomb.

He identified and mourned with the bitterest edge of sin. Our Savior was meek. Exercising his omnipotent power with supernatural self-control. Patiently putting up with others as he said to his father, not my will, but yours. Be done. He hunger and thirst for righteousness with zeal, as you overturned the Money chamber's money changers tables and restored his father's house to being a house of prayer.

And he offered mercy upon mercy to those who didn't deserve it. And he was the only man who was ever spotlessly pure, who could willingly lay down his life in payment for your sin. Jesus proved himself to be the ultimate peacemaker, doing everything necessary so that we could be made right with God. And Jesus repeatedly faced persecution as sinful men refused to embrace him for who he was.

God on earth with us, making the way where we could be made right with him. You see, Jesus stood on the hillside before the crowd on that day, and Jesus stands before us even now as the embodiment of the Beatitudes, inviting us to come to him with every word he speaks of himself, with every word he offers himself freely to us.

And maybe Jesus teaching this morning has begun raising questions for you. Perhaps you unsure if you've ever entered the kingdom of heaven? If so, I'd like to encourage you. Go home this afternoon. Look again at this passage. Look at Jesus as he reveals himself through each and every one of these beatitudes, and ask God to show you how these blessings can also be yours.

And maybe even as a Christian, you've begun to realize that rather than living as a citizen of the kingdom, you've kind of gone along with the thinking of this world. The cultural norms of society have kind of crowded into your thinking and crowded out the blessings that God offers through each one of these beatitude rules. Be encouraged, knowing that the blessings again will increasingly mark your life as if we do what Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:33.

We seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Knowing that all these things, every blessing that Jesus just as shown us, and every blessing that we could possibly ever truly need. All these things will be added unto you.

Father, we do ask that you would continue to deepen your work in our hearts and our lives. Would you draw us ever closer to Jesus Christ, the one who is the living testimony and truth of every one of these beatitudes? And Lord, we thank you for all here who by faith have turned to Jesus Christ and receive Him as Savior. These Beatitudes now are ours. Oh, not because of anything we can do or have done, but because of everything you have done for us. Continue to do your work and let us, Lord, live as those who seek first the King and his kingdom. Let us be those who honor you and bring glory to you in everything that we do and say. And we'll praise you together in Jesus name. Amen.