



THEIR FUTURE IS JOYFUL

January 17, 2021

Matthew 5

Pastor Brian Rayburn

MESSAGE NOTES

Jesus has just begun His ministry, and initially He comes on the scene as a teacher and a healer. While His teaching is noted as seemingly with “power,” it is His ability to heal that has drawn enormous crowds. In a pre-scientific world, when you have a sick loved one and have exhausted all known remedies, the tales of a teacher in a neighboring land who can heal your son or daughter or wife or husband must be greeted with a bit of fanfare and excitement. Chapter 2 of Matthew tells us that all of modern-day Syria and Jordan are talking about this Jewish teacher.

Matthew notes that we would read Jesus ascending as a second Moses about to give a new law or command, and He begins to offer His disciples (and those who would stop and listen among the crowd) a list.

Read Matthew 5:3 – 11

Read Luke 7:20 – 23, simply taken as an over-spiritualized personal holiness doesn’t seem to be how Luke heard the same teaching.

Here is a synthesis of these blessings (lists). Proposing that this list is 3 things:

1. A description of Jesus as the Son of God and Sacrament of the Word. He is poor in spirit, He is one who mourns, He is meek, He hungers and thirsts for righteousness, He is merciful and so on. This is who we are meeting as disciples.
2. This list is descriptive of those Jesus is calling around Himself.

The beatitudes is not a list of requirements, but rather a description of the list of a people gathered by and around Jesus. To be saved is to be so gathered. — Stanley Hauerwas

Given WHO Jesus IS and the kingdom He is bringing, this is a description of the community it will gather, those who are poor in spirit, those would be mourning, those who hunger and thirst.

3. These things are implored of those who follow Jesus; we should seek these gifts by the Spirit.

Look back at the text, verse 3 – 4

As we have said the “blessing” is an exchange. This is a well known Hebrew literary device, used in the Old Testament meaning “it will go well with or it will be well with.” I admit that I AM THIS, and God responds by giving us this. This is how God works; we do not demand but receive.

This is what is called INAUGURATED ESCHATOLOGY — something has begun in the WORD coming to earth and taking on flesh that we have not seen the end of! We are living in the in-between. That means that while we experience some of this exchange NOW, we do not have it in its fullness.

Verse 3 — is FUTURE oriented — the Kingdom, that I am inaugurating, is not here.

Verse 4 — they “will be” a future passive-meaning a verb indicating “in the future this will take place.”

It will go well with those who mourn; now and especially in the future they will be comforted.

I cautioned earlier that this certainly can and should be a contrition for our sins. A gut level regret and repentance for leaving a covenant faithfulness to God and chose idolatry of some kind. Idolatry of comfort, of self, of hate or revenge. We mourn that these are the distorted versions of God’s creation that we have become and in doing so declare that we are in need of redemption, in need of forgiveness.

Mourn refers to the repentant and those who grieve for their and others’ sin, but certainly, the term must apply to those who are broken, who suffer, have sustained some kind of personal grief. — Stanly Hauweras, theologian/pastor

The Greek word for “comforted” is to be addressed or spoken to.

A few things this verse does and doesn’t say:

The promise is to be comforted, eventually. It is rooted in outcomes and perspective. We can experience comfort NOW, but comfort and grief come in waves, and until the Kingdom arrives we must seek comfort anew each day. Inspiration draws us to God; habit keeps us there. The pain will come in waves and the comfort will too. This means there will be ebb and flow and when you are not inspired to stay close, habit will usher you near.

It doesn’t say your mourning is wrong or sinful. Or as a therapist friend of mine is fond of saying, “you have to feel it to heal it.” Loss, death, and grief will be our experience this side of recreation. Jesus promises to address it, not neglect it.

To the only two people who are listening to me today; those that are mourning and those who are not.

If you are experiencing a season of mourning. You have lost something, someone let me propose a way forward:

- The Jesus we have experienced so far on this earth was that of a victim. He will come again as a conquering King, but when He took on flesh and died at the hands of angry men and women, restraining power to protect Himself, He did so that we would know He identifies with us in our pain. God’s primary work in taking on flesh was to identify with our humanity and frailty. God’s home is with victims. But His story is that hard things can become good things. He was a suffering servant.
- Second, silence can be a place-holder for an experience with God. While the Western church prefers to articulate with words what God is like, the Eastern Christian Church has an entire category of theology called “apophasis” speaking silence or mystery to God. God can and will address your mourning in a wordless way. Jesus became a victim while here on earth His first time to remind us we don’t travel alone and it will end better.

Finally, those who are not experiencing mourning right now:

- Grief must be witnessed to be healed. Do the hard work of bearing witness to someone’s grief by walking with them and not preaching or judging them. Offering truisms, that which is true but unhelpful, can be the nervous twitch of the on-looking believer. Remember the exchange is God’s to bring, God’s to heal. YOU are to be the one who waits WITH the mourning and grieving and intercedes on behalf of them.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What has stuck out to you about the New Kingdom People series so far (Matthew 5:1 – 4)?
- Name a few significant ways Matthew’s list differs from Luke’s list (Luke 7), and why that matters?
- Pastor Brian mentioned that the word mourning in verse 4 was not only about contrition for our sins, but also included mourning we were experiencing now. Talk about or journal about a loss you have experienced in the last year that God has met you in.
- How has God aided you when you have been in a season of mourning previously?
- In what ways does seeing Jesus as a victim before a king helpful for us (as humans) until He returns with His kingdom?
- Pastor Brian mentioned “inaugurated eschatology” or the “already-not-yet” order that Jesus’ kingdom has begun, but not been fulfilled. Talk or journal about some other ways we are currently experiencing Jesus’ promises partially now and more later.