

The Beatitudes: Growing in our walk with Jesus (Part 2)

In continuation with the first beatitude:

Mathew 5: 3-12

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

What does it mean to be blessed?

All the eight Beatitudes start with the word "blessed".

In Greek – Makarios. It appears 50 times in the New Testament and is usually translated as "blessed." The King James Version occasionally translates it as "happy".

According to Strong's Concordance, the word can mean blessed, happy, fortunate, blissful, or well-off.

(makarios from root 'makar/ mak' = large or lengthy)

Two related words in Greek suggest the fuller meaning: **mak (extend) and charis (grace, favor). To be 'blessed' is literally to have God's grace extended to you.**

The Amplified Bible translates Matthew 5:3 extract the meaning from makarios in its full flavor: "Blessed (happy, to be envied upon, spiritually prosperous — with life-joy and satisfaction in God's favor and salvation, regardless of their outward conditions) are the poor, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven ".

'Makarios' was frequently used in pagan Greek literature. The understanding was Makarios belonged to only certain groups.

- Greeks used makarios to refer to their gods and thus "the blessed ones" were the gods. They were "blessed" because they had achieved a state of happiness and contentment in life that was beyond all cares of this world. The blessed ones were beings who lived in some other world away from the cares and problems and worries of ordinary people. To be blessed, you had to be a god. A state unaffected by the world of men, who were subject to poverty, weakness, and death.
- The Greeks also used makarios in reference to the dead who were "the blessed ones", men and women who, through death, had reached the other world of the gods and so were now beyond the cares and problems and worries of earthly life.
- Finally, the Greeks used makarios to refer to the socioeconomic elite, the wealthy, that their riches and power put them above the normal cares and problems and worries of the lower socioeconomic strata, who constantly struggled to make it in life.

In short, the Greeks felt that one had to be either a god, dead or really wealthy to be blessed (makarios)!

This was the understanding of makarios in Jesus' time. There were people living in sickness & poverty. Makarios (blessed) was the last adjective someone would think of using to describe the beggar, the sick, and those on the lower end of the socio-economic status. How can the poor be ever called blessed?

Makarios was out of reach for them, until a certain day on a plain in Judea. Jesus came down from another mountain gathering a throng of all needy people around him. Luke tells us that "A large crowd of his disciples was there and a great number of people from all over Judea, from Jerusalem, and from the coastal region around Tyre and Sidon, who had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. Those troubled by impure spirits were cured, and the people all tried to touch him, because power was coming from him and healing them all" (Luke 6:17-19). Try and picture the scene. The only one truly blessed of God, who in himself is God's incarnate Makarios (blessed God, source of all blessing), surrounds himself with a multitude of the accursed, the needy, the non-makarios.

Throughout the history of this word, it had always been the other people who were considered blessed: the rich, the filled up, the powerful. Jesus turns it all upside-down. **The elite in God's kingdom, the blessed ones in God's kingdom, the Makarios in God's kingdom are those who are at the bottom of human standards (the poor, the meek, the mourning ones, persecuted ones)**

Now remember whenever you bless someone you are literally saying "Lord let your favor be seen at large in his/ her life. To be 'blessed' is literally to have God's grace extended to you.

Theirs is the Kingdom of heaven: Jesus starts this message at the bottom of the way up, being poor in spirit. The way up is the way down. This is the Kingdom principle. Those who acknowledge their own need have positioned themselves to access what God has in store for them in His kingdom. Exaltation because of humility.

"God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:5-6)

Isaiah 66:2 All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the Lord. But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.

Isaiah 57:15 For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite.

Psalms 34:18 The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.

Psalms 51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Psalms 138:6 For though the Lord is high, he regards the lowly, but the haughty he knows from afar.

Matthew 23:12 Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.

James 2:5 Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him?

Beatitude # 2

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted”. Mathew 5: 4

Mourning is defined as a deep grief over the death of a loved one or the suffering of some other personal tragedy. For the middle easterners it is a highly visible, public, and even professional custom, also a well-attested practice in the Bible. Jacob covered himself in sackcloth following the death of his son Joseph (Genesis 37:34). In 2 Samuel 13:19, Tamar publicly lamented by putting ashes on her head, tearing her clothing, and crying. Shaving their heads, putting on ashes, beating on their chests were all established cultural customs of those times.

The Greek word (*pentheo*) : It is defined as the kind of grief which takes such a hold on a man that it cannot be hid. It is not just a sorrow which brings an ache to the heart; it is the sorrow which brings the unrestrainable tears to the eyes.

Here, Jesus is talking about the spiritual mourning that comes from a broken & contrite spirit. Yes, in a natural sense, we all go through grief when a loved one dies or a tragic incident, a divorce, an unexpected medical diagnosis, shakes us up completely. We have a God who comforts & strengthens us. We can come out of these situations because of God’s unending grace. *When Lazarus dies, Jesus weeps alongside Mary and Martha. “Jesus wept” (John 11:35, NKJV) is the shortest verse in the Bible, yet it speaks volumes about the Lord's compassion and empathy for our human experiences of loss and sadness.*

Spiritual mourning: It is moreover our heart’s attitude.

- Spiritual mourning follows naturally from becoming poor in spirit.
- Mourn over things that hurts, displeases or dishonors the heart of God. Peter, Isaiah, and others grieved over their sin. Jeremiah wept over a nation. Jesus wept over Jerusalem. We should be saddened by the things that sadden God. Sin is no laughing matter. What breaks God’s heart ought to break our hearts as well. Don’t just ignore, tolerate, or revel in sin. Don’t hide sin.
- A supernatural or godly sorrow always leads to repentance (2 Corinthians 7:10). Paul said sorrow, but not as those who have no hope. Mourning always precedes genuine repentance. God’s kindness always leads us to repentance (Romans 2:4). The riches of His kindness toward us are intended to lead us to run from sin.
- Godly sorrow will lead you to act. And one of the best actions you can take is to pray. In our homes, offices, community, church setting.
- Satan uses the grief/ sorrow to brings you to despair of self (self-pity, self-centered) but never to hope in Christ. Worldly sorrow causes you to focus on how terrible of a sinner you are rather than how

gracious of a Savior Jesus is. The Holy Spirit always leads us from despair to hope in Christ—“Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15:57).

James 4:6 But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” 7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

2 Corinthians 7:6 But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming but also by the comfort with which he (Titus) was comforted by you, as he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced still more. For even if I made you grieve with my letter, I do not regret it—though I did regret it, for I see that that letter grieved you, though only for a while. As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.

Examples of men who grieved by their own sin or people sinning:

1. Manasseh –one of the vilest men who ever lived. Nobody in the Bible approached, Jew or Gentile, approached the wickedness he engaged in throughout his lifetime. Yet when he was disciplined: ***When [Manasseh] was in distress, he entreated the favor of the Lord his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. He prayed to him, and God was moved by his entreaty and heard his plea and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord was God. 2 Chronicles 33: 12-13***
2. King Ahab : was one of the wickedest men in the Old Testament. But when he learned he was going to be judged by God:
“He tore his clothes...and fasted and lay in sackcloth and went about mourning. [God said], ‘Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not bring the calamity in his days.’” 1 Kings 21:27-29
3. Ezra : He ate no bread and drank no water, for he mourned because of the guilt of those from the captivity. Ezra 10:6
4. David : Considering the terrible sins David committed, we might wonder why God would refer to him as ‘a man after mine own heart’. Part of it had to do with David’s repentant heart, but the bigger reason is David had a deep love for God and this was shown through the grief he felt over other’s sins.
5. Nehemiah experienced grief over sin when people started intermarrying with the surrounding people. Nehemiah 13:25

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The word for 'comforted' in Greek is parakalēō (from pará, "close-beside" and kalēō, "to call") – "make a call" from being "close-up and personal. To call to, to exhort, to encourage, to comfort, console, to call to one's side, call for, summon

[3870 (parakalēō) /paráklētos ("legal advocate"), likewise has legal overtones.

The Holy Spirit, as our paraclete, means that the Spirit is our comforter and counselor. Jesus ascended to heaven, He promised to never leave us and what He meant was that the Holy Spirit will be with us as our paraclete. He comforts those who mourn.