

**Matthew 5:1-12**  
**(Psalm 1; Ephesians 2:8-10)**  
**“The Good Life, According to Jesus”**

**Introduction**

How would you describe the good life? If someone asked you what a life truly blessed by God might look like, what would your answer be? When do you feel that God is blessing you, and when do you find it hard to believe that you are living under his blessing? Certainly, for most of us, it is easy to believe that God is smiling on us when we are healthy, prosperous and at peace with those around us. When we are sick or struggling to make ends meet or relationally embattled with those closest to us, it is easy to wonder where God is and why he doesn't seem to be hearing our cries and coming to our aid.

The Old Covenant believers lived under a different set of promises than do New Covenant believers. I do *not* mean that they lived under law and we live under grace. There was law and grace, law and gospel, in both Old Testament and New. But the Israel's mission was, in a sense, passive: they were to depict a particular life of blessing as they walked in obedience, and the nations were invited to come to them and see how God blessed a nation that walked in his ways.

Meanwhile, God was showing Israel and the nations that even the perfect religion of the Old Covenant cannot make sinners right with God. Because Israel could not perfectly keep the law, there had to be sacrifices and Temple service. When Christ came to fulfill the law for us and to offer himself in sacrifice for the sins of the world, a new age dawned: an age in which God's people were now called to an active mission of taking the gospel to the nations. And for the new covenant believer, the good life would now look radically counter-cultural in contrast to the good life under the old covenant.

This radically counter-cultural vision of the good life is on display in these eight beatitudes. Jesus is not describing eight different personality types or eight different life situations, but rather he is showing us how we will increasingly understand the good life if we have been brought by grace from death to life. He is giving us a sort of picture gallery of what his followers increasingly look like in relationship to God and to one another. It is the kind of vision that turns the world upside down.

To understand this passage, we must remember that we are two translations removed from Jesus' own words. Jesus spoke an Aramaic form of Hebrew, but the gospel writers translated his words into the common Greek of their day, which served throughout the Roman Empire as the language of the marketplace, much as English does in our day. Here Jesus used the word *asher*, just as David in Psalm 1 cries out, “How *asher* (“blessed”) the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked!” Matthew translated the Hebrew word *asher* with the Greek word *makarios*.

Both words are sometimes translated as “happy.” Now each word includes the idea of happiness, but means much more than happy. Happiness has in its root the little word “hap” which has to do with happenstance, one’s circumstances or situation. Happiness comes and goes; it describes an emotion rather than a settled state of being. And what Jesus is describing here is a settled state of the child of God who is increasingly realizing the life of grace.

To be blessed is to stand in right relationship to God and to others, and Jesus depicts such a life for us by giving four aspects of the blessed life in one’s relationship with God and four aspects of the blessed life in our relationship with one another. Note that each blessing has a promise attached to it and that the promises begin and end with the promise of God’s kingdom. All other promises are aspects of realizing the presence of the kingdom of heaven even now. The kingdom has begun to break in upon us wherever people receive God’s grace and begin to live the life of grace.

## **Body**

### **1. How does a disciple of Jesus Christ relate to God?**

*Poor in spirit, but heirs of the kingdom  
Mourning our brokenness and sin, but comforted by God  
Meek and submissive toward God, but inheriting the earth  
Hungering and thirsting for righteousness, but deeply satisfied*

### **2. How does a disciple of Jesus Christ relate to other people?**

*Merciful toward others, in anticipation of God’s mercy  
Pure in heart, in anticipation of the vision of God  
Making peace, in anticipation of their Father’s shalom  
Persecuted for righteousness’ sake, but heirs of the kingdom*

## **Conclusion**

Jesus uses this final blessing to make his application: “Blessed are *you*...” The implication is that the more we follow Jesus, the more we will be treated as he was treated. If people received him, they will receive us. If they rejected him, they will reject us. We want to be loved, appreciated and welcomed. But if we follow Jesus, there will be times when we are rejected and despised by a world that rejected and despised him. In such times we are to “rejoice and be glad, for [our] reward is great in heaven.” How strange that anyone would try to understand the good life, the life worth living, the life blessed by God himself, without going to the source, the Lord of life, who in these words invites us into the only life worth living, the only life that will never pass away.

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