

Bankrupt and Happy

Matthew 5:1-3

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Good morning. What a blessing it is to see you this morning. I invite you to turn in your Bibles to Matthew 5 as we begin a new series entitled Focus on the Heart. It is a study on what is called the Beatitudes which is the first section of the Jesus's famous Sermon on the Mount.

This is truly a focus on the heart because the Beatitudes speak to the condition or attitude of your heart. They do not focus on what you have or what you do, but rather who you are. So, we are going to begin today by reading the entirety of the Beatitudes (verses 1-12 of chapter 5), but we are only going to focus on the first Beatitude later on.

Matt. 5:1 Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, 2 and he began to teach them. He said:

Matt. 5:3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Matt. 5:5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. 6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Matt. 5:7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. 8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Matt. 5:9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. 10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Matt. 5:11 "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.

Matt. 5:12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

What word did you notice Jesus using over and over again at the beginning of his sermon? Blessed! He said "blessed" nine times. What does the word "blessed" mean? Happy. Now this is not the modern and diluted version of joy that we know.

This kind of happiness is a joy dependent on the assurance of God's blessings, which are sometimes present, but often future. It is not happiness based upon current circumstances. Rather, it is a

happiness that abides deep and undisturbed within the heart of a believer.¹ It is contentment in being highly favored by God.

It makes me think of my brother Tom Holden, who has gone to be with the Lord. I'd ask him, "Hey Tom, how are you doing?" He'd respond, "Oh, I'm blessed and highly favored!" The exuberance by which he shared it left you assured he was happy and content in the Lord.

Without Jesus, this type of happiness is not possible for the world because of brokenness. Humanity follows a broken system for attaining happiness. Here are three pursuits in the broken way to happiness. There may be more, but these are the ones that came to mind.

The Broken Way to Happiness

- 1. Possessions - Having what I want.**
- 2. Power - Controlling what I have.**
- 3. Pleasure - Doing what I want.**

The first is possessions. This is the belief that having what I want will make me happy. Money. Cars. Land. House. Job. Family. Followers. If I have all of these things, then I will be happy. It's a lie. Some of the wealthiest in this world are miserable. Some of the most polished looking families are actually imploding. All of these are broken ways to true happiness because they can disappear in an instant.

The second is power. This is the belief that controlling what I have will make me happy. Power over employees. Power with my job title. Power with decisions I make. Power over my own life. It is the "nobody is going to tell me what to do" attitude. It's a lie. It's broken because in an instant a weakness can arise and everything evaporates.

The third is pleasure. This is the belief that doing what I want will make me happy. This relates to personal pleasure - if I can go where I want, do what I want, whenever I want, and however I want, then I'll be happy.

This also relates to relational pleasure. If I can be with whomever I want, however I want, as many times that I want, whenever I want, then I'll be happy.

This also relates to spiritual pleasure. I'm just going to believe what I want. If it makes me feel good, I'll believe it even if it is completely pagan. Or the flip side of that is legalism or Pharisaism. I'm going to follow the rules and demand others do so even if my heart is not in it. And, I'm going to make myself look good while I'm doing it.

Now, I am not saying it is wrong to have things, be in a position of power, or pursue desires in your heart. But, you will never have a blessed kind of happiness if things control you, have power over you, or if your desires lead you away from the Lord.

¹Definition partially adapted from Stuart K Weber, *Matthew*, Holman New Testament Commentary, ed. Max Anders (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 58.

The Jewish audience to whom Jesus preached his sermon awaited the coming of the messiah, but their hope for happiness was not the same type of happiness he would bring. For centuries, the poor cried out for the messiah, hoping that he would bring happiness by ending their plight. They also believed the messiah would bring happiness by immediately securing their land when he defeated their enemies.

While they waited for the messiah, they pursued a desire for pleasure often equal to pagans in foreign lands who served false gods. They did whatever they pleased without considering the Lord.

The Pharisees also established power over the law and added requirements to it based on their own interpretations. They abused their responsibility to teach and uphold the law and in doing so became lawless themselves. They lorded this over the people harshly and cast strict judgment on people even though their own hearts were in the wrong place.

Yet still they hoped and waited for their messiah. However, the type of king they developed in their minds did not match the King who showed up ministering to people and preaching a different message.

How many of you like Western movies or books? I really like westerns, but not nearly as much as my dad. If he is watching TV by himself, he is either watching sports or a western like Gunsmoke, Bonanza, or John Wayne. If you go up into his home office and library, the entire top shelf on one side is Louis L'Amore novels.

Now, I like westerns, but certainly not as much as him. Of all the westerns though, I would have to say that my favorite is the story of Wyatt Earp, the famous lawman who came to Tombstone, Arizona during a silver boom. Upon his arrival, he realized that the town had been taken over and was controlled by a group of outlaws called the "Cowboys."

So, Wyatt Earp assumed his role as the town's sheriff and deputized his brothers and his friend Doc Holliday. The Cowboys quickly realized there was a new sheriff in town - a new lawman bringing law and order to lawlessness. After many run-ins and conflicts with the cowboys, the lawmen prevailed, defeating the cowboys in the famous gun battle at the O.K. Corral.

Now, I know this story pales in comparison to the gospel story that we are entering today, but for some reason that came to mind when I looked at the context of the sermon on the mount. A new King was in town. Not just any king, but the King of kings. The Lord of lords had arrived on the scene.

In Chapters 1-2 of his gospel account, Matthew shares his arrival with the birth narrative of the King. In the third chapter, John the Baptist, prepared the hearts of Israel for their King. Our King was also baptized in the third chapter to show his identification with humanity throughout the rest of the gospel. This baptism is also the setting for the Father's public affirmation of his Son.

In the fourth chapter, our King is tested by Satan with the worst kinds of temptation and our King's resistance provides a model for us to follow as we deal with spiritual warfare. And after this, he begins

his public ministry by calling his disciples and preaching his arrival as King and the nearness of his Kingdom.²

But, what was the King's message when he first arrived in public ministry? Discovering this will help us understand the context of the sermon on the mount. Let's look at a couple of verses leading up to his sermon. The first is Matthew 4:17

Matt. 4:17 From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."

The second is Matthew 4:23-25:

Matt. 4:23 Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.

So, from these verses we learn that the King's message was repentance. Why? Well, in our day Christians differ in their understanding of the meaning of repentance. This difference arises because there are two Greek verbs, each of which means "to repent."

One of these verbs is *metamelomai*. When it occurs, it usually describes an active change. The other word is *metanoeo*. When it occurs, it usually describes a contemplative change.³ So, when we read "repent" or "repentance" in our English Bibles, we have to ask ourselves whether a change of behavior, or a change of mind is primarily in view.⁴ Let me explain this a little more.

REPENT

1. ***Metamelomai* is to change your mind, or think again, by behaving.** (ex. Matt. 21:28)

Matt. 21:28 A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard. 29 He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented (*metamelomai*), and went.

This is the kind of repentance that you as a parent call for whenever your child comes in with an attitude, and you say, "you need to *metamelomai*." "You need to repent." "You need to think again and after you've *metamelomai*(ed), you can come back and try this again without the attitude." So, it is thinking again, or a change of mind, resulting in a change of behavior.

REPENT

1. ***Metamelomai* - change your mind, or think again, by behaving.**
2. ***Metanoeo* - change your mind, or think again, by believing.**

²This summary of Matthew 1-4 was partially adapted from Stuart K Weber, *Matthew*, 51.

³Thomas Constable, *Matthew. Dr. Constable's Expository (Bible Study) Notes* (Plano, TX: Plano Bible Chapel, p. 26-27) Access at <https://planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/matthew.pdf>.

⁴Ibid.

But the other word used for repentance is *Metanoeo*. This is the word that Jesus used in verse 4:17 that we just read. Let's look again.

Matt. 4:17 From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent (*metanoeo*), for the kingdom of heaven has come near."

So, Jesus is saying, repent - change your mind, or think again by believing. Another example is Mark 1:14:

Mark 1:14 After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent [*metanoeo*] and believe the good news!"

For this type of repentance, think about a loving Father of a family who decides he wants to adopt all the children from an orphanage in his town. So, he goes to the orphanage and shares this Good News with the kids. He says, "I already love you and have prepared a wonderful home for you." "And, I want all of you to come be a part of my family."

A few of the kids immediately get up, and in excitement, go pack their bags to go with their new Father to their new family. But some of the children talk amongst themselves, and declare they will not go. The Father asks, "Why?" Because we don't believe that a Father could be that good and his family could be that wonderful. So the father lovingly responds, "Repent" (*metanoeo*). Think again and change your mind by believing me.

This illustrates the heart of Jesus when he preaches his good news, Repent. You've been King of your own life, building your own kingdom, and pursuing your own way to happiness and fulfillment, but you need to repent (*metanoeo*) - think again, reject that way of thinking, and change your mind by believing in me that I am your King and I have a wonderful kingdom for you.

It is so important to understand this distinction when you consider who Jesus directs his teaching toward in the sermon on the mount. Let's look at it again. Matthew 5:1 says:

Matt. 5:1 Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, 2 and he began to teach them.

So who is Jesus teaching here? He directs his teaching to his disciples - those who have already repented (*metanoeo*), thought again, changed their mind and believed in Jesus as their King, thereby becoming citizens of the kingdom of heaven through faith in him. Now, we know that the crowds still hear his teaching, because in Matthew 7:28-29, it says,

Matt. 7:28 When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, 29 because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

So, he is teaching the disciples *directly* and the crowd *indirectly*. This is so important that you remember this for the rest of the series. If you read the sermon on the mount and the beatitudes as the way to become a Christian, you will leave every message with confusion.

Instead we must view his sermon as being addressed toward believers. Jesus's words are set within the context of grace, and gives us a picture of how a transformed man or woman will behave in the kingdom - how a believer will live his or her life on earth under the rule of God in their hearts. So, in summary, and you may want to write this down if you are taking notes:

The sermon on the mount is about the quality of a believer's discipleship, not about qualifications for becoming a believer.

As a believer in Him, Jesus wants you to have a life of the finest quality. He wants you to be truly happy. Anyone want that? Well, Jesus tells us how to experience true happiness. He says to his children:

Matt. 5:3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

How do I Experience True Happiness?

1. Declare Spiritual bankruptcy

What is bankruptcy? It is when you declare you have exhausted all your power and resources to pay your bills. Jesus is saying true happiness is found in poverty, but he doesn't mean financial destitution; there is nothing sensible about that.

Instead, he says, "Happy are the poor in *spirit*." Poor in spirit is an attitude of the heart in which you declare you have exhausted all of your own power and resources to pay your sin debt, control your life, or pursue godly desires without his help. Spiritual bankruptcy is saying "I have no ability to fill my spiritual bank account with blessings on my own strength."

Now, the unsaved person has some recognition of this when they repent by believing the Gospel. They think again about the empty pursuits of their own life, and shift their heart and belief to Christ as their Savior.

However, the recognition of spiritual bankruptcy doesn't just end with our conversion. I'm sure there are many here, including myself, who would testify, "I never really understood how poor I was in spirit until I became a Christian."

Why is this? Because God's Spirit then comes into your life and starts peeling back those layers of sin and sinful desires. He often begins with behaviors and then digs down to the deeper issues of the heart. Colossians 3:4-5 shows this:

Col. 3:4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

Sexual immorality is definitely a sin, but in this verse it also represents a category of sins which are the outward behaviors. Usually, the Holy Spirit helps you recognize those behaviors first, convicts your heart and peels back that layer.

Underneath it is a layer of impurity and lust which are representative of those thoughts and sins of the mind. Then he peels back another layer to evil desires and greed which represent those deeper issues and longings of our sinful hearts.

Then when you think he can't peel any more layers back, he gets all the way down to the first of the ten commandments. And, you recognize and declare, "I'm an idolator!" "Your actions demonstrate, and your heart reveals that you elevate other things above God. It reminds me of the prophet Isaiah when he saw the Lord and his kingdom in a vision.

Isaiah 6:5 "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty."

When you have this awareness and recognize your complete spiritual need, you are poor in spirit. You are desperately aware that you are bankrupt before God. But, it is not God's plan for you to stay there and wallow in despair. Listen to what Isaiah says next:

Isaiah 6:6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. 7 With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for."

Do you see how God comes to Isaiah in his despair and gives him forgiveness and removes condemnation for his guilt. Being poor in spirit means we declare spiritual bankruptcy, but it does not mean we stay in a perpetual state of accusation, guilt, and despair. But, how is this possible? Jesus tells us how in our Beatitude for today:

Matt. 5:3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

How do I Experience True Happiness?

- 1. Declare Spiritual bankruptcy.**
- 2. Delight in Your Inheritance.**

Did you know that Christians are rich? I don't mean that we all live in mansions, but we will one day! All Christians are heirs to an inheritance in heaven. There is a kingdom that God has promised as an inheritance for us to enjoy fully in the future - either by death or when we are raptured to be with Jesus at his second coming. 2 Corinthians 8:9 says,

2 Corinthians 8:9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

Jesus left the splendor of heaven to come to earth to pave the way for us to delight in the splendor of heaven with him. And, we get a glimpse of glory of heaven that God revealed to his servant, the Apostle John:

Revelation 21:1-5 Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.

2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.

4 ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

5 He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

The delight of his heavenly kingdom isn’t just for the future either because we can experience it right now in our hearts. This is the beautiful mystery of the kingdom. It is now and not yet. Even though we can’t experience the fullness of it yet, we can delight in it now by the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, guiding our hearts to the Father. Look at Luke 17:20-21:

Luke 17:20 Once, on being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, “The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed, 21 nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,’ because the kingdom of God is in your midst.”

When we declare bankruptcy, we become dependent children. It is in that dependent state where we truly find our delight in God. Hebrews 4:16 gives this blessed assurance to us:

Hebrews 4:16 Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Believers who are struggling with sin can come to God in confession, and from the storehouse of heaven comes his forgiveness and cleansing. And through the power of the Spirit of Christ within you, you can *metamelomai*. You can repent and change and experience life change.

Believers who are doubting can bring their questions to God and receive wisdom. The Christian who is sorrowful can cry out to Jesus and he will give joy. To the one who is anxious, pray to God with thanksgiving, and he gives peace beyond understanding.

At times He takes problems away. In other times He gives the strength to endure the circumstances. But please hear this today, and some of you need to write this down:

Don't trade the treasure of God's kingdom for trash of this world.

Brothers and sisters, don't go back to the old way of life - the broken ways to happiness. Happy are you when you come to the Lord spiritually bankrupt for you will delight in the blessings of the Kingdom, as you prepare to inhabit the Kingdom forever.

I talked with one of our small group leaders a couple of weeks ago. He said, "Andrew, I just feel so unworthy. I don't understand why I have what I have, and why God has been so good to me. I don't deserve any of this."

This isn't the first time I've had this conversation with him. Just three or four years ago we had the exact same conversation. The result was despair. The thought of his unworthiness led him to some depression and anxiety. So, we prayed and he kept pressing into God.

So, in this recent conversation, I was concerned that he was going in that direction again - unworthiness turning to despair. So I asked, "Are you starting a spiral downward? "Are you starting to drown in it?" With tears in his eyes he was quick to say, "No, no, no. It is just the opposite. I have so much peace and joy. I'm so grateful. God is so good to me and I am trusting in his goodness."

That is the transforming work of the Holy Spirit. It is available to all of us, all of the time. Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Let us delight in the goodness of his heavenly riches that are available to us every day. May our hearts be broken yet blessed, bankrupt and happy.