Theme: The Sermon on the Mount
“The Beatitudes”
Easter weekend sermon preached by Jeff Huber
April 10–11, 2021

Weekly Memory Verse:

6 The angel said, “Don’t be alarmed. You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He isn’t here! He is risen from the dead!” –Mark 16:6

My name is Jeff Huber and I’m Lead Pastor at Summit Church and we are so glad you have joined us for worship. As we begin a new series of sermons today, I am reminded of a story I’ve shared with you before about a pastor who had just moved to a new church. His first week, he preached what the congregation thought was a GREAT sermon. The next week, he preached the same sermon. The congregation thought it was still pretty good, but a bit strange he did the same sermon two weeks in a row. Week three he preached the SAME sermon again, and this time the leaders of the church approached him after worship to ask him why he had preached the same sermon three weeks in a row.
His response was simple, “Well, I’ve been in this community for a month and watched many of you working and going about your lives in town. After you get this sermon down and start living it, I’ll move onto the next sermon.”

We are going to have a chance over the next 6 weeks to go back and look at the most important and influential sermon of Jesus, and one that he clearly preached more than once. We’re going to study the words of the Master and try to understand how those words impact our lives. What does Jesus expect of us and what does life in him actually look like? We will be challenged to ask tough questions about what it means to be Jesus Christ to our world. You see, this Sermon on the Mount gives as an up-close look at how Jesus lived, and how he dreams us to live.

I want to begin by recognizing several things about the Sermon on the Mount. First, as Jesus ascends the mountain in Matthew’s gospel, we are supposed to think of Moses going up Mount Sinai to receive the 10 Commandments. Matthew’s audience was primarily Jews who had become followers of Jesus.

**SLIDE** We are supposed to connect Jesus with Moses in this sermon.

Moses brought the law down from the mountain, and now Jesus is going back UP the mountain to re-interpret it for us and show us how we are to live it out. Jesus is going to show us in this sermon that it is not just about following the law, but it is more about what your heart is like. Here is where I want us to see the second important point about this sermon.

**SLIDE** This is a hard set of teachings.

Jesus actually makes life HARDER in this sermon! He says, “*You have heard it said of old, ‘Do not commit murder,’ but I say to you, if*
you hate your brother or speak angrily to your sister, then you have already violated this commandment.” Good grief, which of us in this room has not violated that?! How many times have we become angry and spoken a harsh word against someone that is our brother or sister?

Jesus said, “You have heard that it was said of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery,’ But I say unto you that if you so much as look at another human being with lust in your heart you have already violated the spirit and intent of this commandment.” Very few, if any of us, have not violated the spirit or intent of that commandment!

Jesus goes on and says that unless your righteousness exceeds that of the of the Scribes and Pharisees, you can’t enter the kingdom of heaven. Those folks were so particular about following the words and letter of the law, and our righteousness must exceed that!? Finally, he says you have to be perfect, just as your father in heaven is perfect.

I’m sorry, but when I think of the Sermon on the Mount, I can’t fathom any single person in this room who could actually follow this perfectly, which is why some get discouraged by this sermon. They say this ethic is just too hard for us to live by. Martin Luther, the great reformer, said that was the point of the Sermon on the Mount. He said this sermon was meant to drive us to a place where we say...

SLIDE “I must have a Savior, because I can’t do this alone. I need what Jesus Christ offers.”

Luther had a great point, but if we dismiss the sermon at this point, we miss what Jesus was really saying. I think Jesus meant for us to take this seriously. I think he was casting a vision for us of what the Christian life is supposed to look like. Jesus called it the Kingdom of Heaven, or the Reign of God, that begins here on earth.

Those of us in leadership in the corporate world, or some other arena of life, know that part of what leaders do is cast vision. They then
motivate and inspire people to pursue those visions and do everything it takes to accomplish them. The great visions are always so far out there that we will never really accomplish them. But they so inspire us that we dedicate our lives to leaning into them and striving to reach them. Here at Summit Church, we say our vision is...

**SLIDE** **To be Jesus Christ to the World.**

Do we ever really think there will be a day when we can check that off and say, “Well, we did that one...now what’s next!?” One of my favorite organizations is Habitat for Humanity. Do you know what their vision is?

**SLIDE** **Every single person would have a simple, decent place to live.**

Do you think we will ever get to a day when we can check that off and say, “Good, now that we’ve accomplished that, what’s next!?” Probably not, but does that mean Habitat for Humanity is a failure? No, it simply means they have a God given dream that has been put on their hearts and they will continue to work towards that vision, which truly is what the Kingdom of God will be like.

A great vision is always out there and gives us something to strive for and I think that is how the sermon on the mount is meant to be read. This is Jesus’ moral and salvific vision. This is his picture of what life as a follow of Christ looks like. Will we ever get there? Not this side of eternity, but we can lean into it our whole lives. Aren’t we glad Jesus cast a moral vision that is beyond our capabilities, and that we are always moving towards it? Isn’t that better than a vision which ends after we’ve been a Christian for a few years? We could say, “Okay, I’m finished now!” What fun would that be?!

**SLIDE** **You can’t separate Jesus from his teachings.**

The third point that is critical about the Sermon on the Mount is
that Jesus’ life and his teachings go together. It would be unfair to ask people to accept the Sermon without accepting Jesus, and vice versa. If it is our intention to leave Jesus out of our life, it would be good to not even read this sermon, for apart from him, his Sermon really is senseless idealism—an impossible, frustrating, ethic. It might even make you bitter and cynical. If we have already accepted Jesus but have not realized and committed our lives to the tremendous personal and social teachings of the Sermon, this series of sermons might save you from an unreal, emotional mysticism. Here is the deep truth about this sermon.

**SLIDE**  
**Jesus puts action into the core of the Christian life.**

Jesus tells us that real learning comes through doing. With that in mind, let’s take a look at the first part of the Sermon, which contains what we call, “The Beatitudes.”

**SLIDE**  
**blessed = beatitudo = beatus = “to be happy”**

Beatus is the root word which simply means to be happy or fortunate. It is a state in which our life is fulfilled. There is a certain contentment or abundance in our life. There is a sense of satisfaction in life. Isn’t this what we’re all striving for in our lives? Don’t we all want to reach that place where we find our lives filled with significance, and joy, and happiness, and contentment? What Jesus is saying in the beatitudes is, “Here is what it looks like and where we find the secret of happiness.”

The world tries to paint us all kinds of pictures of what happiness looks like. “You’ll be happy if you do this, or that!” Jesus’ recipe for what will make us happy is quite different from what the world offers us. As a matter of fact, when you read these verses carefully, you discover that what Jesus teaches us about where to find happiness is almost the exact opposit of what the world teaches us. David Butrick,
who wrote many of the textbooks on preaching, said...

**SLIDE**  **“The Beatitudes are a picture of the great reversal.”**

The world says that if we don’t have any suffering in our life, then we’ll be happy. Jesus says, if we have suffering in our life then we will find happiness. The world says, if we are strong, self-assured and in control, then we will find happiness. Jesus says if we’re meek and gentle, and if we surrender our life to God, we will find happiness. The world says that if everybody likes us, and we’re popular, and no one says anything bad about us, then we find happiness. Jesus says that if we do the things that make for happiness people aren’t going to always like us. People will say bad things about us, but our reward will be great.

Here’s an important reality in the promise we receive in the beatitudes. The blessedness we receive today is based upon a future promise. There is a promise of a future fulfillment that when we accept it by faith, causes us to find a blessedness today. Jesus doesn’t say today we WILL be blessed in the future kingdom of heaven WHEN this promise is fulfilled. Instead, Jesus says...

**SLIDE**  **“You ARE blessed NOW, in these circumstances, because of what God WILL DO in the future.”**

When we believe and trust in this promise, we will be blessed NOW! Let me share with you a secret. All of us have faced difficult circumstances in our life at one time or another. We wonder, “Why is God letting me down? Why is my faith not working for me? Doesn’t the Bible promise that God is going to take care of me and nothing bad will happen to me? Isn’t my faith supposed to make me feel better? Isn’t that what it means to be a Christian? Doesn’t the Bible promise this?”

The answer is...NO! Faith doesn’t work that way. What the Bible promises is simply this...
SLIDE  God will walk with us in whatever we face. (FLY IN)
We can trust God in all things.
Life will not always be like it is today.

In the end, those who mourn will be comforted. Those who are pure in heart will see God. Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness will be filled. That’s a future promise that affects the present. Let’s look at that for a minute. How does that promise effect the present? How are we blessed today because of those promises?

SLIDE  We are blessed today because we believe those promises and we trust in them.

When we are grieving or mourning, the comfort that comes from God is not that God will take away our pain. The comfort comes because we know what the future holds. We know my loved one is with God. We know we will see them again face to face. When we are put down because we are a follower of Christ, we find a blessing in that because we know what the future holds. We have faith in the “assurance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.” And we find blessings even in this life because of that hope.

Christians sometimes disagree about the purpose of the beatitudes. Are these things we should be pursuing? Do these things happen to us? Are the blessings here? Are the blessings in the future? How do we read them?

Once more, it’s important to read the context of the scripture. Let’s look at what is happening as Jesus begins this sermon. If you have your Bible, you may want to turn to Matthew 4:23 and following. We read these words...

BIBLE

23 Jesus traveled throughout the region of Galilee, teaching in the
synagogues and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom. And he healed every kind of disease and illness. 24 News about him spread as far as Syria, and people soon began bringing to him all who were sick. And whatever their sickness or disease, or if they were demon possessed or epileptic or paralyzed—he healed them all. 25 Large crowds followed him wherever he went—people from Galilee, the Ten Towns, Jerusalem, from all over Judea, and from east of the Jordan River.

BIBLE

5 One day as he saw the crowds gathering, Jesus went up on the mountainside and sat down. His disciples gathered around him, 2 and he began to teach them.

3 “God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him...

Jesus looks at the people in front of him and offers them blessings in their current condition. It’s important to remember that most of these people were the lower strata of society in their day. They were broken. They had experienced pain and suffering and mourning and grief. They had been pushed around by the Romans. They had no power of their own. They couldn’t even lift up their head to Roman rulers and they lived in poverty.

They knew what it was like to be powerless. Jesus looked at them and said, “I know you think your life is hard and it is. But if you could only see what God sees, you would come to see how blessed you are, because it won’t always be this way.”

Many years ago, I saw the movie, “Mean Girls.” Have any of you seen this movie? It’s not a classic by any means, but it does have a great point and if you have 13-year-olds living with you it might be a good one! Most of us can relate to this movie about a group of girls who are
the most popular kids in high school. They are beautiful and perfect, and let everyone else know it. The push the other kids around, and make certain girls feel bad about themselves. They talk about other people behind their backs.

**GRAPHIC ** Mean Girls

Even if you’ve never seen this film, from what I’ve described to you, how do want this film to end? There are kids in the film who have been pushed around and considered to be the losers at school. Then you have these popular kids who are always pushing the others around and making them feel bad. Don’t you want the popular kids to be brought low? And the ones who are seen as worthless, don’t you want them to feel worth? Part of what we see in the beatitudes is a picture of the reversal of fortunes in this world, and the way God’s sees people which is far different than the way the world sees them. So, when you see “Mean Girls”, just remember this is a picture of the beatitudes and how they might be lived out in Hollywood!

I think that’s how God’s heart works. And when Jesus is sitting and giving the Sermon on the Mount, saying “Blessed are you...,” he’s saying God’s heart goes out to you. God loves people just like this—those the world thinks are losers and not worthy.

One of the most helpful ways of looking at the beatitudes is in this wonderful little book by Clarence Jordan, *The Sermon on the Mount*. Unfortunately, this book is out of print or I would have had some copies here for you to buy. Jordan says that the beatitudes should be looked at like stairs, one building upon the other.

**SLIDE** The Beatitudes are a Stairway to Spiritual Life

The first step then is the first Beatitude which reads...

**SLIDE** *God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.*
There is a wonderful little book by Johannes Metz called *Poverty of Spirit*. It’s a short read, and in it, Metz maintains that this phrase, “Blessed are the poor in spirit,” which is how we read this in many of our translations, **IS the gospel**. This is the character God is looking for in us, and everything else in the gospels is commentary. Metz describes it in this way:

*The poor in spirit are those who accept that they are spiritually destitute apart from God. They have emptied themself of all pretense and pride. They don’t think, “God is so lucky to have me as his follower!” Instead, they say, “How can I be so fortunate that God has called me his child?”*

This idea of humility and poverty of spirit is a constant theme of Jesus and is central to the gospel. It does NOT mean we shouldn’t feel good about ourselves. It does mean, as Rick Warren writes to open his book, *The Purpose Driven Life*, “It’s not about you!” Say this prayer out loud with me, would you?

**SLIDE**  
“It’s not about me! Amen!”

There’s a danger in this beatitude. In Luke’s gospel, this beatitude simply reads, “Blessed are the poor.” So, if we have a lot of money, we may think the poverty Jesus is talking about is spiritual poverty. If we have little or no money, we will probably say Jesus is talking about physical poverty. If we are rich, we will thank God for Matthew’s gospel. If we’re poor, we will thank God for Luke. But both responses are basically saying, “It’s about me and the fact the God has blessed ME! One attitude says, “I don’t need to be poor in things, I’m poor in spirit.” The other attitude says, “I don’t need to be poor in spirit, I’m poor in things.” Both attitudes miss the point because it’s not about ME and what I NEED!

Jesus talked about this on several occasions. He says, “The first
shall be last, and the last shall be first.” Another time he said that if we would choose to be great, we must become each other’s servant. We know with our head that humility is really important, but often as we become successful the easier it is to lose that.

Many of us have nice homes, nice cars, nice jobs, and we live in a nice place in Durango. Somewhere in there a voice takes over in our head. It says we really are better than somebody else. We begin to act that, even though we don’t mean to. We don’t even recognize it, and we would never say the words out loud, but in our heart that thought begins to take over.

Jesus says blessed are the poor in Spirit because we don’t find happiness when we are looking down our nose at everyone else. This not only happens with material things in life, but it happens spiritually as well. Sometimes, we begin to grow spiritually, and we begin to think we have it figured out. It’s subtle and when the devil begins to see people grow in their faith, he starts to whisper in their ears, “Hey you’re doing really good in your spiritual life! You’ve really got it, and did you notice all those people around you that didn’t even know how to pronounce that word in the Bible! Did you notice that?” You know what I’m talking about, don’t you?

I received an email several years ago from someone who worshiped with us for a few weeks. They had decided to not be a part of our church because as they looked around at Summit Church, they saw folks who not really “mature” in their faith. I have to tell you that you can write a letter and say anything you want to about me, and I probably won’t respond. But if you write me a letter criticizing people in our congregation, I probably will write something back!

I tried to hold the spirit of the beatitudes with me in my response, but it was a bit challenging! I wrote back and asked them to be very careful about judging other people’s spirituality. We can’t see people’s
hearts, and, in every church, you will find the same thing. This is a dangerous path we can easily head down if we are not careful. Then I did something that wasn’t very nice. I recommended they read the story Jesus tells in Luke 18: 9-14.

**BIBLE**

9 Then Jesus told this story to some who had great confidence in their own righteousness and scorned everyone else: 10 “Two men went to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee, and the other was a despised tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed this prayer: ‘I thank you, God, that I am not like other people—cheaters, sinners, adulterers. I’m certainly not like that tax collector! 12 I fast twice a week, and I give you a tenth of my income.’

13 “But the tax collector stood at a distance and dared not even lift his eyes to heaven as he prayed. Instead, he beat his chest in sorrow, saying, ‘O God, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner.’ 14 I tell you, this sinner, not the Pharisee, returned home justified before God. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

I think that’s what Jesus meant when he said God smiles on those who are poor in spirit. God smiles on those who GET IT and recognize they need God regardless of their circumstances. This is why this is the first, and most basic, step in our spiritual life. If we are not poor in spirit, recognizing that everything comes from God, we will never get the spiritual life. With this understanding, nobody else gets the Kingdom of Heaven EXCEPT the poor in spirit. God does not force God’s Kingdom on anyone, but gladly will give it to all who know they’re losers without him and humbly seek his help.

**BIBLE**
4 God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

This beatitude has always caused problems because it makes religion look like a weepy affair that is all about sadness. We often think of this as someone who cries or weeps, and while that may be true, it misses the bigger picture. The bigger picture is that those who mourn are moved by what is going on in the world around them.

SLIDE Mourners are people who are MOVED TO ACTION.

In many ways, the Beatitudes are a picture of who God smiles upon. They are a picture of God’s heart. They say, “When God sees someone like this, God’s heart goes out to them.” Have you ever felt that way, where see somebody in a difficult situation, and your heart just goes out to them?

One of the reasons I’m so proud of this congregation is because you are so giving. You are willing to give away our Easter and Christmas offerings because we see things that need to be addressed in the world and we are moved. We see what is happening on the Navajo Nation, or at Manna Soup Kitchen, or any of several other areas and we are moved to do something.

Having worked in downtown Denver with folks on the streets for several years while I was in seminary, I kind of got used to people begging. I knew that some would use the money for booze or drugs, so I would just pass on by. But my wife Tami won’t do that. She doesn’t really care what they might use the money for. Her heart goes out to them and she gently, and sometimes not so gently, reminds me that we have to do something. What if this were my sister, or my daughter?

That’s how mourners look at the world. Millard Fuller was a great mourner who could not stand to see people sleeping in cardboard shacks, so he started Habitat for Humanity. Let me be clear that mourning is about taking action and doing great things for God. It is
NOT simply about tears of sadness.

Milton is a pastor who has served Methodist congregations faithfully for more than 40 years. He was with his wife Grace, celebrating their 40th wedding anniversary with their son, daughter and two grandchildren on a small showboat on Lake Pomona, Kansas, when a freak tornado capsized the boat. Grace, daughter Sandra, and granddaughter Melissa all drowned. In an instant, women from three generations of family were suddenly gone. In the week that followed, someone said to Milton, “I don’t know how you can go on.” He replied...

SLIDE “There isn’t any alternative. All my ministry I’ve told others that God is good. God loves and cares. God’s grace is sufficient for every need. Now I know there is nothing else on which we can rely.”

It is at these moments of radical need the God’s love truly comes to life, and those who mourn find comfort. Followers of Jesus Christ find comfort in being moved to be part of God’s kingdom when there is nothing else to rely upon.

BIBLE

5 God blesses those who are humble (meek), for they will inherit the whole earth.

In the popular musical Camelot, King Arthur’s illegitimate son, Mordred, dishes up a satirical song called, “The Seven Deadly Virtues.” With comic sarcasm he sings...

SLIDE “It’s not the earth the meek inherit, it’s the dirt!”

Those who consider themselves realists will agree with his line! Meekness is something we often think of as weakness, but that really is not the case. Meekness in the scriptures really is more like gentleness.
Somebody once described it as “velvet covered steal.” Meekness is about having a strong resolve and great character. There is a gentleness to the resolve. Did you know the only two characters that were referred to as meek were Jesus and Moses! Hardly wimps, were those two!

When a horse is saddled, ridden, and directed by a ride, it is said to be “gentled.” Here’s a more accurate definition for meekness...

SLIDE People may be called “meek” to the extent that they have surrendered their wills to God and learned to do God’s work.

Meek persons have power because God’s will is now their will, and so when we mess with them, we are messing with God! This is why the meek and humble will inherit the earth. If we are willing to surrender our life to God, we will be called meek like Moses or Jesus. Do we really want to be Jesus Christ to the world? Then we must learn to be meek.

BIBLE

6 God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will be satisfied.

This brings us to step four in the stairway to spiritual life, found in the next beatitude which is the profound idea that happiness is found in pursuing the right thing? Our culture often says that happiness is looking to find what is going to make me feel filled up! Jesus says that if we pursue the right thing, we will be fulfilled and satisfied. Our world teaches, and it offers us all kinds of pathways to happiness. If we bought this; or lived there; of if we just had this kind of job; or if we had this kind of wife or husband, well then, we would be happy...right!

Jesus says if we follow this path—if we pursue what we THINK will make us happy—we will find ourselves continually empty. Blessedness, or happiness, is found by doing the will of God and doing the right
thing. Happiness is a by-product of doing the next right thing. Often in our world we are taught that it is okay to cut corners, and compromise our faith, so long as we’re pursuing what will make us happy.

I was reminded this last week of C.S. Lewis’ wonderful children’s books, the Chronicles of Narnia because our family watched The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe on Easter. Edward is a little boy who meets up with the White Witch. The White Witch is bad company, and just plain evil. Whoever comes under her sway ends up experiencing death. The White Witch gets him under her spell by offering him candy, called Turkish Delight. She offers Edward a piece of Turkish Delight and it tastes so yummy he just has to have some more. He takes another piece, and another, and then is consumed by wanting more and being willing to do anything to please the White Witch and get more.

Edward finds is that no matter how many pieces of Turkish Delight he eats, he never feels filled up. It never satisfies him. As a matter of fact, he feels even hungrier than before. It’s an unsatisfying experience, but he must have more. Soon, the White Witch discovers that if she withholds Turkish Delight, Edward will do whatever it takes to have just one more bite.

This is what sin looks like in our lives when we try to fill ourselves up with the empty promises of the world. C.S. Lewis wanted people to get this metaphor in this story. If I will just pursue what makes ME happy, then I will be filled, right? Jesus says, “No. When we pursue what God wants and do the right things that we find fullness, happiness, blessedness.” Those who are hungry and thirsty, long for a new way to live that truly fills them up. That is the fourth step in the spiritual life.

**BIBLE**

7 *God blesses those who are merciful, for they will be shown*
Let’s be honest and recognize what our natural inclination is when somebody wrongs us. We don’t just want to get mad. We want to get even! Chriss Matthews when one step farther when he put it this way. Maybe it’s how you feel.

For many of us, we feel that if somebody cuts us off, we have to lay into the horn. If somebody hurts us at work, we have to get them back. If someone makes fun of us at school, we have to make fun of them behind their back. The truth is that people are going to wrong us in life. We will experience injustice. We will be in the workplace, and people will take the promotion we deserve. Almost every day someone will slight us or hurt us, and we must decide the answer to this question...

The world challenges us to live in a way where we get even. Is that how we are going to live? Are we going to inflict violence, or try to get ahead of them? Are we going to harbor hurt feelings and turn our back on those who hurt us? Jesus tells us that blessedness is not found there. His words are very powerful and very hard to live. But the idea is that when we offer mercy, we begin to find the blessed life.

Recently, I was at a restaurant and the place was as full as it could get with the limited capacity these days. In addition, there was just one waitress. As we went to leave, there was a long line waiting to pay, be seated and get their food. People were complaining and grumbling, and the one lone waitress was about to cry. As we watch that young woman sweat and blush, how do we treat her? Do we act they way most of those in line do and get impatient? Do we act like we are the most important person in line? Or do we remember Jesus’ words that it is
best to serve than to be served? Those who are merciful, who see the person before the situation, who love in the midst of crisis, will receive mercy. Jesus makes it clear that...

SLIDE  The merciful want to share what they have discovered withe everyone.

Why would we want to keep the secret to blessedness a secret? More importantly, why would we withhold it? When we think about this pandemic and masks and vaccines and the associated issues with it, there is a question Jesus us I believe wants us to ask. “What do I think God wants us to do about these things?” Do you know what answer I get? I hear very clearly this echo from the Sermon on the Mount.

SLIDE  God cares less about our actions towards things, and more about how we treat people.

Mercy is about our character, and if we will learn to be merciful and treat people with kindness (sometimes undeserved) then we will not only be blessed, but we will receive mercy. Here is something else I have learned which Jesus is pointing to in this beatitude. It’s the only beatitude that uses the same word twice for a reason.

SLIDE  We cannot receive what we have not learned to give.

In the next beatitude, Jesus tells us...

BIBLE

8 God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God.

You may have heard the story of the little girl who went to the pediatrician’s office for her yearly check-up. As the doctor looked in her ears with an otoscope, he asked, “Do you think I’ll find Mulan in here?” The little girl didn’t say a word.

Next, the doctor took a tongue depressor and looked down her throat. He asked, “Do you think I’ll find Nemo down there?” Again, the
little girl did not respond.

Then the doctor put a stethoscope to her chest. As he listened to her heartbeat, he asked, “Do you think I’ll hear Elsa in here?”

“Oh no!” the little girl replied. “Jesus is in my heart. Elsa’s on my underpants!”

What is in our heart? This is the question Jesus is really trying to address in his sermon. In this beatitude, Jesus is telling us this truth.

SLIDE The pure in heart have eyesight that is focused only on God.

God want a new nature formed inside of us. Later in this sermon, Jesus uses the example of a tree. An evil tree CAN’T bring forth good fruit. Bad fruit on a bad tree is natural; good fruit on a bad tree is hypocrisy—the worst form of evil. The only remedy is to make the tree good. This is done by giving it a new nature, or making it, “pure in heart.” The idea is that what we are on the OUTSIDE matches what we are on the INSIDE. Make no mistake, this is NOT easy. Jesus makes it clear that being a lukewarm Christian is worse than being a cold one! Being pure in heart means that we can focus fully on God and can see him NOW, not just in the future.

BIBLE

9 God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God.

This beatitude reminds us that peacemaking is what God does, therefore what God’s children should be doing. Our task is to literally brings God’s peace, God’s presence, to the world. This is why our purpose statement in this church is to be Jesus Christ to the world—because we have the audacity to feel we can make a difference.

SLIDE Peacemakers are bent on the salvation of the world.
You may have heard the story of the Rabbi who asked his students to tell him how they knew when the night had become day, and darkness had given way to the light. One student said it was day when the sun was up and night when the sun was down. Another said it was day when you could read, and night when you could not. After letting them argue for a while, the Rabbi said, “You know it is day and light has come when you can see the person sitting next to you and realize they are your brother or sister.” This is what peacemakers do—they see God in each other—and others see God through them!

Jesus wraps up these powerful blessing with these words.

**BIBLE**

10 God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

11 “God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers. Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted in the same way.

Jesus was preparing his disciples for the fact that they would be disliked and even persecuted for their faith, and for living this kind of life. Jesus said that if we live this kind of life, there will be people who don’t like us. There will be people who feel uncomfortable hanging around us. If we are a kid, we may not be invited to some parties when we live this kind of life, and that will be hurtful. If we are in the workplace, if we pursue the right thing instead of the convenient thing, there are times when we may lose a job or promotion over doing what is right. In this closing beatitude, Jesus makes two things clear.

**SLIDE** The persecuted are realists and understand that conflict leads to growth.
The greatest danger to the Christian faith is not that we might be persecuted, but that we might become irrelevant!

We know that early Christians were beaten for their faith, yet they left rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer for Christ. What kind of person rejoices when they are beaten and abused? Someone who has put their trust in the future promises and finds blessedness during trials and hardships. When we find ourselves in conflict with the world is when we will really grow in our faith. If what we want is an easy route to happiness, then we will be disappointed in the beatitudes and in Jesus’ message.

Next year is my 40th high school reunion and I saw folks on Facebook planning for it. My first thought was, “WOW, it’s been almost 40 years since high school. Man, I’m old!” Maybe some of you remember your 40th high school reunion. Everybody is a little bigger, has less or different colored hair, and is a little more wrinkled than they were when they were in high school. One of the things on the Facebook post was a trivia survey. They ask who our homecoming queen was; who was voted most likely to succeed; who was class president. I know I’m getting older because I COULDN’T REMEMBER any of those things! I actually don’t think it was because I’m older.

Do you know what I do remember about high school? I remember those kids whose lives stood out as different from the rest. I remember those kids who did something sacrificial for me or demonstrated a certain kind of love for me. I remember those kids who helped Dinah carry her books to class, when everyone else laughed at her because she had Cerebral Palsy. This is what I remind anyone who is young who will listen to me. “20 years from now, you’re going to wish you were that kind of kid—a beatitude kind of kid—and not the kind of kid who was only concerned about what other people said about you.”

The world offers us one recipe for happiness. It says that if we are self-confident; if we are free from suffering; if we are strong and in positions of
power; if we seize the day and grab life as it comes, not letting our conscience get in our way; if we’re worldly, wise, hip and cool; if we’re strong enough that our enemies have to do what we ask them to do; if nobody ever says anything bad about us—then we have found the “beatus”, or the blessed state.

There is only one problem. That doesn’t really work, and the eternal consequences are disastrous. Jesus offers a better way. It’s a kind of faith that is sacrificial and often is in conflict with the world. Here’s what we need to remember about the beatitudes as we wrap up this time of looking more closely at each of them. When we really start to live them out, we will find ourselves in tension with the world. While the world says, “keep everything that you want and spend it on yourself because you deserve it,” Jesus says, “give yourself away because it is what is right and how you will find happiness.” If what we want is a state of blessedness that will last for eternity, then listen closely to the words of Jesus.

My prayer is that you will discover a life that is as full and rich as these beatitudes, and that they may be your steps to a spiritual life which leads us to becoming Jesus Christ to the world. I want to end with these Beatitudes written or the time of COVID by Maggie Thomas. Let’s pray...

**SLIDE**  **Prayer**

“Then Jesus began to speak, and taught them, saying:

*Blessed are the poor, who are on the margins living day by day, wondering how they will care for their children and put food on the table, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*Blessed are those who mourn, who are finding this time to be full of grief and lament, isolated from loved ones and alone with their racing thoughts, for they will be comforted.*

*Blessed are the meek, the ones who bring a listening ear and helping hand to*
those in need, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, those who dare to ask hard questions of our leaders and dream of a future of radical change and neighbor-love, for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, the doctors and nurses and hospital staff, the sanitation workers and custodians, the grocery store clerks and shelf stockers, the gas station attendants, the line cooks and restaurant servers, the social workers, the farmers, the caregivers, the teachers, the ones who are putting themselves out there for our sake, for they will receive mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, the ones who bring joy amid sorrow, the children who laugh and the adults who cry, the dogs and cats and pets who keep us company during the day, for the ones who embrace complicated emotions and cling to scraps of hope, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, who offer prayer and solace and who advocate for justice and peace and care for all, for they will be called children of God.

Amen.

April 17-18 Order
Ely Welcomes people
First Song and Prayer
Welcome by Jeff and invite people to wave and be seated.
Announcements by Jeff (Check News Section on Website)
  • Easter Offering total of 20K to Adaptive Golf and the
Food Bank

- Native Hope Food Drive Next weekend as part of Native American Awareness Weekend – Saturday 10 to 3
- Still register for worship if possible
- More Pocket Crosses are available.
- Morgan’s departure May 1

Invite congregation to prepare their hearts for the message.

Video bumper plays.

Sermon