

# Matthew 5:1-12

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[ 0 : 00 ] So do open your Bibles to Matthew 5 and verses 1 to 12. And what I want to do tonight is I want to speak to you on one word. One word. It's the word we find eight times in the passage.

And it's this word blessed. Blessed. It's the Bible's word for happiness. Everyone of course wants to be happy. That goes without saying.

But it's rather like looking for the end of the rainbow. It's rather elusive in our world. Happiness.

Where do you find happiness?

The word blessed that you see here eight times is actually the word that's used somewhere else in the New Testament to describe God. He speaks of the glorious gospel of the blessed God.

And so God is the happy God. That means that for us tonight, true happiness is to be found in the happy God.

[ 1 : 10 ] And not somewhere over the rainbow, wherever that happens to be. The source of true happiness and joy, according to the Bible, is God himself. God cannot give us happiness apart from himself.

Because it's not there. There is no such thing as happiness apart from God. And so if you're looking for happiness tonight, and you're looking at anywhere else except God, you're looking in the wrong place.

Because in the end, there's no such thing as happiness apart from God. God is the happy God. He is the source. He is the fountain of real joy. And maybe that comes as a bit of a surprise to you, that God is such a God.

Because I think as Christians, we are often very guilty of misrepresenting God. So do you remember the shorter catechism tells us that the chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

To enjoy him. Maybe you're surprised by that. Maybe you didn't realize that Christians actually enjoy God. We enjoy a relationship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 2 : 27 ] Came as something of a surprise to C.S. Lewis. He described himself in his spiritual autobiography as the most reluctant convert in all of England. And you'll remember that he entitled that book, giving his testimony, Surprised by Joy.

Surprised by Joy. And it may come as a surprise to you, under so many people, that there is joy, there is real joy, real happiness, found in a relationship with the living God.

I don't know if you've heard the story of the little boy who was taken to church. It was one of those churches that had plaques on the wall. It's one of the things I am so thrilled about, about this building, that we managed to build this building without plaques.

All right. I don't think there's a plaque in the whole building. At least I hope not. But you've got lots of churches and there are plaques there. This little boy noticed at the front of the church there was a war memorial at the front.

And he asked his father, what is that war memorial for? What is that plaque up there? His father said to him, it's in memory of those brave men who died during the services.

[ 3 : 45 ] Little boy looked astonished and said, the morning service or the evening service. And so often like that, isn't it? A picture of the church and of us Christians, we often misrepresent God. And so the last thing that God was about was happiness and joy.

Sometimes if I can say it, I think we almost think it's unreformed to be happy. But the first point of our reformed confession is that it's the chief purpose of man to enjoy God.

There's nothing unreformed about being happy. And so when we meet together to worship or go about our Christian lives, we enjoy God. Someone has put it like this.

Joy is the flag flown from the citadel of the heart when the king is in residence. Joy is the flag flown from the citadel of the heart when the king is in residence.

So when you drive past Windsor Castle and you're driving along the M4 and you see the castle. And what do you look for? You look for the flag, don't you? Because if the flag is flying, the queen is in residence.

[ 4 : 49 ] And this Puritan writer is saying that happiness is the flag flying from the citadel of the heart to show that the king is in residence. And that's where true happiness is to be found.

Real joy in knowing Jesus. In having Jesus dwell in your heart by the Holy Spirit. Of having Jesus resident in your life. Blessed are those who know Jesus and follow Jesus.

And over the next few weeks what I want us to do is we explore this. We'll get more into it over the next few weeks. But we'll look at this definitive statement in the Bible of our Lord on happiness in these eight statements.

And so tonight I just want to introduce it and give a kind of general view. And first of all I want you to see just how appropriate the title is to the passage. I often think the titles aren't very helpful but this is, isn't it?

The Beatitudes. If you pardon the pun, they are attitudes that will be. That's helpful, I think. It's not mine. The Beatitudes are attitudes that will be in your heart.

[ 5 : 52 ] If you're a Christian, it's a very good way of putting it. Because the attitude of the heart that makes a person happy is not the smile on their face. We all know people like that, don't we?

They've got broad grins but inside they're really sad people. So one of the highest suicide rates amongst men is amongst stand-up comedians, isn't it?

Funny men. People who've made other people laugh. The jolliest and the funniest of people on the outside, deeply, deeply unhappy on the inside. And so true happiness is not on the surface of life. It's not skin deep. True happiness has to do with the attitude of your heart. And I think we need to remember that as we come to this passage. We're not coming to Matthew 5, 1, 2, 12 to cheer ourselves up.

And we're not coming to give us just a little shot in the arm to help us on a Monday morning. It goes much, much deeper than that. It's not a superficial remedy. What Jesus does in Matthew 5, 1 to 12 is he takes you to your heart.

[ 6 : 58 ] And he says these are the attitudes that should be in your heart if we're to be truly happy. And so it's the attitude of heart that makes a man happy, not the smile on his face.

It's the attitude of heart that makes a man happy, not the circumstances, not the outward, not the external. So the English word happiness is not a very good word.

It comes from the old English word hap or chance. We could call it happenness or chanciness. And really that's what it is for so many people.

And that's all it is. For so many people, happiness depends on chance. Whether or not your luck is in, in terms of health or wealth or relationships or family, it's a very chancy business.

But this word blessed, the Bible's word for happiness, is a very different word. One writer says, it is that joy which has as its secret within itself a serene, untouchable and self-contained.

[ 8 : 02 ] Which is completely independent of all the changes, all the external things and chances of life. It's a joy that shines through the tears. Which nothing in life or death can take away.

And so we're not concerned with superficial remedies or recipes that the world has got to offer. We're concerned with our hearts. Because that's where true happiness lies. Now secondly, let's just see this.

It's not just a matter of temperament or natural disposition. I once read a paraphrase of the Beatitudes that I've spent all week looking for and I can't find it.

But I remember the first two phrases. And it went something like this. It said, blessed are the dormice and blessed are the doormats. I don't know if any of you have seen that. You can't find it anywhere. That's how it went.

It's very, very clever. Blessed are the doormats. Blessed are the doormats. It's very clever. It's very wrong. It's very wrong indeed. It's a total misunderstanding of what the Beatitudes is about. They're often preached in this way.

[ 9 : 06 ] The Lord is not describing a person's natural disposition. He's not describing a person's natural temperament and saying, well, that is the blessed way.

When he says in verse 3, for example, blessed are the poor in spirit. He's not saying blessed are the doormats. He's not saying blessed are those who are timid by nature. Blessed are those who've got a low self-esteem. Blessed are those who bite their nails and get all anxious. He's not saying that. When he says there in verse 5, blessed are the meek, he doesn't mean blessed is the person who just allows everyone to walk all over them. That person is a happy person. Well, we know that's not true at all, don't we? Jesus is not speaking psychologically. He's not speaking about people's natural personality type and natural disposition. He's talking about spiritual qualities and graces. So in verse 6, he talks about a person hungering and thirsting. Blessed is the man or the woman who hungers and thirsts for righteousness and truth. [10:18] That's good news for you tonight. It means that there's hope for us. It means there's hope even for the most miserable of us. Some of us, because of our background, I'm not going to look at anyone.

Some of us, because I don't know the state of our liver, whatever it is that determines these things. Some of us are naturally miserable people. Well, there's hope for you tonight. Because happiness, real happiness, true happiness, blessedness is not a matter of natural temperament. Or natural disposition. You don't have to be one of those kind of hail, fallow, well-met types of people. You don't have to be an extrovert. You don't have to be the outgoing type. It's not a matter of being an extrovert or an introvert. Whatever your temperament, whatever your natural disposition, the grace of God can make you happy.

And the very thing that you need to be blessed by, the happy God he himself will give you. And so God will create within you poverty of spirit, a godly sorrow for sin.

[11:29] These are the things that I mentioned here. Meekness towards God. So you stop quarreling with God all the time. Stop raising your fist at him. Stop complaining about him. You become meek before him.

And all these things that I mentioned here, an appetite for righteousness and truth. Those things, they don't come to us naturally. You're not naturally like the Beatitudes. These are things that God gives to us through his son, the Lord Jesus Christ, by the Holy Spirit.

And that leads me to a third thing in introduction. The sermon is actually just an introduction, so don't fear. The happy man that Jesus describes here. Can you see how different he is?

That's the third thing. Can you see how different? He stands out from those around, doesn't he? Even a cursory glance of this passage. How very different this person is from the average person in the street.

Or on Insta. Blessed are the poor in spirit. Well, that's not what the world says, is it? The world says happy is the person who's got it all together and is very confident in themselves.

[12:43] Who knows where they're going. The self-confident person. The person who believes in themselves. That's the man or the woman that the world admires.

We look up and we respect. And we're interested in those kind of people. Those are the kind of people that get interviewed in magazines. Who've got it all together again.

Those are the people that go on the chat shows. They've made it. Those are the people with millions and millions of followers on social media. And we're supposed to be impressed by that. Here's what the world regards as happiness.

People who are puffed up. People who sense their own importance. But Jesus says the exact reverse is the case.

That the truly happy man or woman or boy or girl realizes in and of himself or herself they're nothing. They've got nothing to commend themselves to God.

[13:46] They are poor in spirit. The blessed person knows that she is nothing. And she has nothing.

And she needs everything from God. She's poor in spirit. And she's empty of self. And so do you see the happy person?

Can you see the paradox? Verse 4. They mourn. And again it's such a paradox. Such a contradiction. As far as the world is concerned. That person's got a heavy heart.

How can that person with a heavy heart be happy? Well those of us who are Christians. We know that straight away don't we? We know what it is to look out at this world with a really heavy heart.

And we thank God that God by his grace has given us such a heart. And we thank God that our hearts are no longer insensitive. And we thank God that he's shown us that it's really foolish to eat, drink and be merry.

[14:50] Or to eat, drink and watch telly. To think that there's nothing you can do about it. And who cares anyway? Let's escape from it all. Let's live for myself. That's the way the world sees it.

That's happiness in the world's eyes. But true happiness and real happiness is a person who cares. A man who mourns. A woman who grieves.

Who's sorry for the state of the world. And sorry for the state of their own life. Can you see how different this person is? There's something totally different about the Christian, isn't there?

Take the description in verse 6. Look at the Christian's ambition. Look at verse 6. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst. About righteousness. And truth.

You talk to the person in the street. Your friends. About righteousness and truth.

[15:51] And they'll be interested. They will be interested. They'll be really interested in a general sense. Won't they? But when it comes personal. They're not interested.

They're really up for righteousness out there. In society. In culture. But actually when it comes to themselves. It's a different matter. People are really happy to talk about rights.

They're really happy to talk about the travesties of injustice. They're really happy to talk about the big issues. Out there. But when it comes to affect them. They're not actually that interested in righteousness.

And truth in here. Do you see how different the Christian is? Look at verse 8. Blessed are the poor in heart.

For they will see God. A person on the street. Then they're not interested in God. Are they? And they're interested in what they can see.

[16:50] What they can touch. What they can have. But they can't see God. And so they're not interested in him. This man. This woman. This happy man. Happy woman. Is totally different. And so the happiness that we're talking about in these verses.

You will not find out there in the world. It's a different breed of happiness altogether. Fourth thing I want to say in introduction is this.

It's one picture. It's one picture. You're not to read the Beatitudes.

And think you've got eight different people here. Here are the different personality types. Our Lord isn't giving you eight good ideas on how to be happy. He's not giving you eight different recipes for happiness.

He's not saying you pay your money. You take your choice. We need to see that it's all together. It's a composite picture. And so all of these qualities that our Lord describes here.

[17:48] Are to be found in your life if you're a Christian. And you mustn't come to this passage with a kind of sliding scale mentality. How many do I score out of eight?

Well I've got four out of eight. Maybe I've got five. How do I measure on the Beatitudes scale? It's not like that. The truth is Jesus is saying isn't it?

Unless you have all of these qualities you're not a Christian. And unless all of these eight qualities have been found in your life you're not a Christian. It's a bit like in Galatians where Paul talks about the fruit of the Spirit.

That's really key that we understand that he speaks of the fruit singular of the Holy Spirit. He goes on to speak about nine things doesn't he? And whenever the Holy Spirit is to be found those nine things will be present.

And so whenever Jesus is present in someone's life these Beatitudes will be found. All eight of them. Not one of them will be missing. Do you remember?

[18:57] I haven't seen it for ages. But it used to be just sometimes at the end of the news or you'd watch Crime Watch. And they would show you a composite picture of the criminal.

And they'd say we're looking for someone like this. Does it still happen? Policemen? They still do that? And so it used to be the person didn't even look like a human being very often. And they'd say we're looking for someone who looks like this.

And you'd look at them and think good grief. But do you remember that? There was a composite picture wasn't there? An identicate picture. And so what you've got in Matthew 5 is you've got an identicate picture of the Christian.

And so let me ask you to know. Would you be recognised? If there was a line-up? Would you be recognised as the woman or the man that our Lord describes here?

I found it really helpful this week to kind of step back a little bit and think. What about us as a church? It's an identicate picture of the church I think here as well.

[ 20 : 06 ] How do you recognise a living church? People sometimes come here and they think, well, we're a bit traditional, aren't we? We're not very trendy. And so this is an alive church.

But what is a alive church? What is spiritual life in a church? Well, here it is. Let me ask you these questions.

If you're thinking, if you're moving and you're looking for a church, let me give you some questions to ask when you go to a new church. Number one, is there poverty of spirit there? Or are these people really full of themselves?

Is there a mourning over sin in the congregation? Is there a meekness towards God and his word? Is there peacemaking? Are they living together across all the divides as brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus? The age gap, the ethnic gap, the class gap, all the divides.

[ 21 : 12 ] Are there peacemakers in that congregation? Are they hungering and thirsting for righteousness? Is that the ambition of these people? To live lives that are right with God? Are there people who care enough about the Lord Jesus Christ that they are willing to put up with being persecuted?

Do they believe it that strongly that when people speak all kinds of evil falsely against them, they're willing to stick with Jesus?

Well, if you want to measure life in church, I think the Beatitudes are a great measuring stick. This is life.

And so how do we measure up? Do you recognize yourself in the identicate picture? This is the happy man and the happy woman. The one who is alive instead of just existing.

Last thing I want to say in the introduction is I want you to see it's the picture of a king.

[ 22 : 24 ] That might surprise you. It surprised me. Just notice the way that the Beatitudes begin and the way that they end. Look at how they begin. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

The poor in spirit have a kingdom. At the end, the very last Beatitudes, it ends in the same way, doesn't it?

Blessed are you, those who are persecuted, verse 10, for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. And they may have goods taken away from them.

They may have their wives taken away, their children. They may get thrown in prison. They may become social outcasts. But they have a kingdom. And it's not just that they're in the kingdom. I don't want to minimize that.

That's what it means to be a Christian, isn't it? You come, you enter into the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. You come under his lordship and under his rule. Under his protection. That's what it means to be a Christian. It means you stop fighting him.

[ 23 : 30 ] You throw down the weapons of your warfare against him. You repent. You surrender to him. You come under his rule. And under his protection. And you enter his protection.

That's what it means to be a Christian. But what our Lord is telling us here is more than that, isn't it? He's saying, not blessed are the poor in spirit because they are in the kingdom. He is saying that. But it's much more. They have a kingdom. Theirs is the kingdom.

I think Romans 5 helps us. So Romans 5, verse 17 says, Because of one man's trespass. Because of Adam's sin. Death reigned through one man. But how much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life?

Through the one man, Jesus Christ. I think that's what he's talking about. About reigning in life. He's not saying reign in death.

That we kind of, we die triumphantly. He's not talking about reigning in some future kingdom. The other side of the grave. Or after the world has come to an end. He's not talking, in those terms, he's talking about this life.

[ 24 : 39 ] And he's saying that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ that's freely given to you. And available to us. When we come to Jesus Christ. You and I are made more than conquerors. And so tonight, if you are in Christ.

You reign in life. For the Christian person. Trusting in the Lord Jesus. Indwelt by the Holy Spirit. We're no longer dominated by our lusts.

And our own physical appetites. We're going to see that as we go through the Romans. We're no longer in slavery to those things. Those things still affect us. But we're no longer in slavery to them. The chains have been broken. And we reign. We live like kings. In this world. And so how is such a thing possible? Well, only by Jesus Christ. And he is the way into his kingdom.

In the New Testament, the kingdom is never mentioned. Except in connection with Jesus. And so when we talk about the kingdom of heaven. Over the next few weeks. We're not talking geographically.

[ 25 : 43 ] We're not talking politically. We're talking about a personal relationship. With Jesus Christ. We reign.

In Christ. In Christ. In the third part of Shakespeare's Henry VI. The king wanders around the countryside unknown.

He wanders around the countryside unknown. He meets two gamekeepers. And he tells them he is a king. And they don't believe him. And one of them says to him.

If thou be a king. Where is thy crown? And the king has got a great answer to that. This is what he says. My crown is in my heart.

Not on my head. Not decked with diamonds and Indian stones. Nor to be seen. My crown is called content. A crown it is that seldom kings enjoy.

[ 26 : 48 ] My crown is in my heart. Not in my head. Can you say that tonight?

Have you got a kingdom? Are you a Christian tonight? Is Christ the king. Dwelling. In your life.

Does he dwell. In your heart. By faith. And if he does. You are a happy person. You are blessed.

And you are rich indeed. Let's pray. Amen.