

### ALREADY BLESS-ED

We said [last week](#) that it is essential to have a whole picture of the Sermon on the Mount to understand and apply the details. More specifically, we emphasized that it is in the introductory statements of his sermon that Jesus makes the focal point of his portrait of life experienced in God's intimate and purposeful rule. "When we get this introduction right," adds Eugene Peterson, "we will have acquired an accurate and comprehensive imagination with which to interpret virtually everything Jesus taught concerning [the] kingdom of God."<sup>1</sup>

We have to, as Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones urged us, "believe, accept, conform to, and live **the Beatitudes**"<sup>2</sup> if the Sermon on the Mount is going to bear its designed fruit. Here in these eight couplets and a ninth blessing comprised of "simplicity of word and profundity of thought,"<sup>3</sup> we have described for us **the character and quality of kingdom life**, an existence which is "blessed," happy, complete.

Jesus begins each of the nine brief statements pronouncing the title *blessed* on a person and then gives a matching condition to their "bless-edness." The Hebrew, *asir*, and *makarios* in Greek, describe not a wish or the invoking of favor, but rather "an existing state of happiness or good fortune."<sup>4</sup> The best way I have heard the already present quality of Jesus' declarations described comes from the middle eastern resident and new testament scholar Kenneth E. Bailey. Bailey gives this example to help us,

"As a group, the Beatitudes do not mean 'Blessed are the people who do X because they will receive Y.' The point is not exhortation for a certain type of behavior. Instead they should be read with the sense, 'Look at the authentic spirituality and joy of these people who have or will be given X.' Put in concrete terms we could say, 'Bless-ed is the happy daughter of Mr. Jones because she will inherit the Jones' farm.' The woman in question is already the happy daughter of Mr. Jones. She is not working to earn the farm. Everyone knows that a key element in her happy and secure life is that she and the community around her know the farm will one day be hers. The first statement affirms a happy state that already exists. The second statement affirms a future that allows her even now to live a happy life."<sup>5</sup>

Kingdom citizens are already happy because of what they have already received and will someday receive in full. Now, happiness is an entitled expectation for we Americans. The pursuit of happiness being "doctrinal orthodoxy,"<sup>6</sup> as one pastor put it. In fact, we assume that being unhappy is abnormal, something to hide for

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<sup>1</sup> Eugene Peterson, "Jesus Went Up the Mountain," in *As Kingfishers Catch Fire*, 237.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones: *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, 16.

<sup>3</sup> John Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, 30.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Brown, quoted in Kenneth E. Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: cultural studies in the gospels*, 68.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Peterson, 238.

fear that it makes us an outsider to the norm. The same was not true for those in the ancient world. In fact, the opposite is true. For the Greeks, happiness was not only not expected; it was limited to the gods. Only the gods could partake in and enjoy a complete, whole life. Humans could lead virtuous, courageous, and excellent lives, but they could not reach the ultimate good, “happiness,” at least not in the land of the living. After death, perhaps they could attain “bless-edness,” as they moved out of the brokenness of the world and into the realm of the gods. But to be a happy human was foolishness to the Greeks.

The Hebrew people, similarly, believed happiness was a divine experience, but unlike the Greek’s they understood that **God was sharing with them his “bless-edness,” his life.** The Jewish people used the words bless and blessing to denote this happy shared life with God throughout the descriptions of their communal existence. In fact,

“In their account of the creation of the world, they used it four times in critical places. They used it constantly in their prayers and hymns. They talked of being blessed by God and blessing one another. They perceived an essential rightness at the heart of things and an exuberant wholeness that flowed out of it into their lives. They became a source of blessing, of happiness for all nations, just as it was promised to their father Abraham. [And,] It was all odd and was largely ignored by [the surrounding world].”<sup>7</sup>

For the Jewish people, happiness was not an entitled expectation, but a gifted one. They expected to lead a happy, complete life because of their relationship with God, who would share his completeness (fullness) with them. Is this not the gospel? The good news? God with us, God for us, God sharing his life so that we can have life?

The fullness of this shared life with God could never be contained within their tiny tribe, or nomadic communities, or established nation. Instead, it was intended to spill over into the world they inhabited—the earth and its living creatures, and the nations and their living beings and systems. From the first “bless-ed” command to “be fruitful and multiple and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion” ([Gen. 1:28](#)) to its exilic re-articulation, “seek the welfare of the city...and pray to the LORD on its behalf” ([Jer. 29:5-7](#)) and its great commission, “Go therefore into the world and make disciples of all nations...” ([Matt. 28:18-20](#)) the happiness of shared life with God is always for more than those receiving it.

Jesus’ introductory statements hold to this pattern. God with us (Jesus being fully God and fully human) both bestows the title of “Bless-ed” upon the person, and God completes the matching condition of their happiness. As Eugene Peterson so aptly put it when describing the Beatitudes,

“God wills our happiness. He blesses. There is no question about that. He also graciously describes the kind of life that is **able to receive and live out the blessings that he wills.** He does not say, “I want you to be happy, but how to be happy is your business to discover by trial and error the best you can [contra, Aristotle! Now,] Good luck!” Not at all. He gives a precise description.”

And it is to this precise description that we now focus our attention this morning.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 239.

## **HAPPINESS RECEIVED & LIVED OUT**

It is no exaggeration to say that we could easily spend the next nine-plus Sunday mornings on just the Beatitudes and not exhaust their depth. But we are not going to do that. Instead, I will quickly and briefly outline for each Beatitude (which is “a rough transliteration of the Latin *beatus*,” which means *blessed*) *what we receive* when entering the kingdom and *how we respond* in our everyday living.

### **FIRST BEATITUDE**

*v. 3 Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*

**What do the poor in spirit receive?** | Membership, citizenship in God’s peaceful, just, and equitable kingdom. They are under God’s care, God’s rule, and God’s intent for the world.

**How do the poor in spirit live in their God enmeshed reality?** | With humility before and devotion to the voice of God.

Jesus borrows his language in this first Beatitude from Isaiah. Jesus is following the prophetic tradition of calling the people out of rebellion and into the kingdom of God. Isaiah 66:2 is one example and reads,

But this is the human to whom I [God] will look  
the person that is poor and contrite in spirit,  
and trembles at my word.

Isaiah repeatedly connects “poor” and “contrite in spirit” in his poems. Eleven times to be exact. Each time the person described correctly recognizes the authority of God, and fearfully, reverently submits to the presence and just decrees of God summed up as “my word.” *The poor in spirit stop playing god in their lives* and find dependent freedom within God’s caring (motherly) rule (see [Psalm 131](#)). Being poor in spirit is where we start to experience the realities of kingdom life, admitting we are not God, **humbly submitting to his voiced presence.**

### **SECOND BEATITUDE**

*v. 4 Blessed are those that mourn, for they shall be comforted.*

**What do those who mourn receive?** | Compassion, empathy, support—i.e., comfort from God—amid the inevitable sufferings of daily living. The Good News Bible translates this beatitude, “Happy are those who mourn; God will comfort them!”

**How do those who mourn live with God's comfort? |** Similar to God, they willingly enter into suffering. And they do so in three distinct ways.

First, *they let suffering teach and form them.* "Pain rearranges our priorities,"<sup>8</sup> and suffering molds character and firms up hope ([Rom. 5:1-5](#)); which is why the author of Ecclesiastes (7:2-4) can say,

It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting, for this the end of all mankind, and the living will lay it to heart.

Sorrow is better than laughter, for by sadness of countenance the heart is made glad.

The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.

We have lost this understanding of suffering in our culture, attempting to do everything we can to avoid it. While we need not seek out suffering, for it is sure that "Sufficient for the day is its own trouble" (6:34), we also must not fear suffering and allow anxiousness to keep us from experience the "bless-edness" of life.

Second, *those who mourn enter the suffering of others.* They do not close their eyes to the pain of others nor the injustices suffered by their neighbors. They neither protect themselves from feeling another's suffering nor do their tears dry out. They do not surrender to "compassion fatigue." Like Jesus, they weep. They weep for what has been and what could and should be ([Matt. 23:37-39](#)). And they weep alongside those who are weeping too ([Jn. 11:33-35](#)).

Lastly, *those who mourn recognize their contribution to the suffering.* They mourn, grieve, repent over evil in their hearts and actions. They know they do not always love God and neighbor well, and they enter the suffering of repentance that clings to God's compassion ([Ps. 51](#)). It is a compassionate presence that they seek, which they receive and which they extend to others.

### THIRD BEATITUDE

*v. 5 Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.*

**What do the meek receive? |** The harmony of place and purpose. Harmonious living with God's created beings and things. "the land," which Jesus speaks is life on and with the earth as God created it to be in Genesis 1-2. It is "the promised land," of God's peaceful, equitable, and just dwelling which overturns rebellion and restores order now extended across the entire earth to all that dwells on the earth under the cultivating care of his children.

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<sup>8</sup> Bailey, 70.

**How do the meek live under the re-established creation mandate?** | With respectful submission to God’s unique creativeness in people and places and weighed action of honed passions. Bailey contends that Jesus is “quoting and slightly revising [several] verses from [Psalm 37](#),” which read:

*but those who wait for the LORD shall inherit the land...v. 9*

*But the meek shall inherit the land and delight themselves in abundant peace...v. 11*

*for those blessed by the LORD shall inherit the land...v. 22*

*The righteous shall inherit the land and dwell upon it forever...v. 29*

While these verses tell us the origin of Jesus’ statement, the opening verses of the psalm (1-4) describe the disposition of the inheritors.

Fret not yourself because of evildoers;  
be not envious of wrongdoers!  
For they will soon fade like the grass  
and wither like the green herb.

**Trust in the LORD, and do good;**  
dwell in the land and **befriend faithfulness** (feed on faithfulness).  
**Delight yourself in the LORD**  
and he will give you the desires of your heart.

Those who inherit the harmony of place and purpose trust in God’s unique creativeness in persons and things, and seek to do good in respect to how they relate to, cultivate, and work with God’s designed intentions. Such befriending of faithfulness to how God has created people and places may not produce the quickest results, nor the most production, nor most riches (in whatever form). And yet, delight in God’s good creativeness leads to the fulfillment of your unique creation—how God has uniquely shaped and purposed you (the desires of your heart).

Wisely the meek find their place and purpose within God’s creation, in harmonious relationship with the persons and things God has created them to live amongst. This meekness, submission to God’s determination of good and just (in persons and even systems) does not manifest in timidity but in weighed action, a balanced and appropriate response to the world around us.

For example, Aristotle uses the word meekness to describe “the mean, or midpoint, between anger and an unnamed opposite extreme. For Aristotle, being *praus* [meek] was not about strength but about humility.”<sup>9</sup> Aristotle observed,

“Now we praise a man who feels anger on the right grounds and against the right persons, and also in the right manner and at the right moment and for the right length of time [think of Jesus turning over

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<sup>9</sup> Marg Mowczko, “The Greek Word ‘Praus’ And Meek Warhorses,” accessed here: [https://margmowczko.com/meek-warhorses-praus/#\\_ftn13](https://margmowczko.com/meek-warhorses-praus/#_ftn13).

the money changers' booths in the temple ([Jn. 2:13-17](#), [Matt. 21:12-17](#))). He may then be called gentle-tempered (πραῖος/*praos*) [meek], if we take gentleness (πραότης/*praotēs*) [meekness] to be a praiseworthy quality—for 'gentle' (πραῖος/*praos*) [meek] really denotes a calm temper, not led by emotion but only becoming angry in such a manner, for such causes and for such a length of time as principle may ordain although the quality is thought rather to err on the side of defect, since the 'gentle-tempered [meek] man' (πραῖος/*praos*) is not prompt to seek redress for injuries, but rather inclined to forgive them."<sup>10</sup>

While Aristotle missed the Jesus like virtue of the meek (seeing their propensity to forgive as a defect), he nevertheless ascribes a wise boldness to the meek as they actively stand for such causes and principles as God's good design and just dealings for all of humanity and creation. The meek do not take a backseat to the struggles for God's established rhythms to ring forth across all the world, joining with "creation itself" to "be set free from its bondage and corruption," when the children of God live fully into their place and purpose (see [Rom. 8:18-22](#)).

## FOURTH BEATITUDE

*v. 6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.*

**What do those who have a continuously striving passion for righteousness receive? |** God's covenant faithfulness through his saving actions and affirmation of righteousness.

Theologian Gerhard von Rad argues that the word used here for *righteousness* does not refer to "an absolute ideal ethical norm" but is "out and out a term denoting a relationship."<sup>11</sup> That is, says Bailey, "Every relationship makes claims on conduct and 'the satisfaction of these claims, which issue from the relationships and in which alone the relationship can persist, is described by our term [righteousness.]"<sup>12</sup> In other words, righteousness has to do with satisfying the claims of the relationship we are in with God and others—what we should expect from them and what they should expect from us based on that relationship.

As God's children, we can expect God to act to save us and "affirm our righteousness," or "declare us righteous." God acts to satisfactorily to the claims of our relationship, to his promised (covenanted) relationship with his people by saving us from our and the world's evil and granting us a new (righteous) status.

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<sup>10</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, (trans. Irwin), 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 61.

<sup>11</sup> Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. 1, 371.

<sup>12</sup> Bailey, 77-78.

As Rad would argue, the righteous “bestowed on Israel [God’s people] is always a saving gift,”<sup>13</sup> always a rescue from themselves and the evil of the world. And as Rudolf Bultmann writes,

“(righteousness) does not mean the ethical quality of a person. It does not mean any quality at all, but a relationship. That is, [righteousness] is not something a person has as his own; rather it is something he has in the *verdict of the ‘forum’ to which he is accountable*.

Mt. 5:6 obviously does not mean those who ‘ever striving, endeavor’ to attain ethical perfection, but those who long to have God pronounce the verdict ‘righteous’ as His decision over them in the judgment.”<sup>14</sup>

The conduct we can claim on our relationship with God is an expectation of him to act to save and to affirm—establish—our right relationship with him. God, too, has expectations, claims on our relationship with him and in his kingdom as well.

**How do those who have a continuously striving passion for satisfying relationships live amid God’s deliverance and affirmed status? |** They tirelessly seek to live rightly (righteously) with God and others.

“The unspeakable gracious gift of acceptance in the presence of God requires the faithful to respond.” Since there is an overlap between justice and righteousness in our scriptures, “it is clear that the righteous person is the one who acts justly,” in how they treat others.<sup>15</sup>

Such right relationship with others manifests in taking on the burdens of others, especially the outcast, the oppressed, the weak, the orphan, and the widow—the least of whom we, apart for God’s acting, would continue to be. Listen to this description of Job, “a blameless and upright” man ([1:1](#)) in Job 29:14-16,

I put on *righteousness*, and it clothed me;  
my *justice* was like a robe and turban.  
I was eyes to the blind,  
and feet to the lame.  
I was a father to the poor,  
and I searched out the cause of him whom I did not know.

God tirelessly preforms compassionate acts on behalf of the broken and exhausted. He pronounces us clean even when we know we are dirty. And, we hunger and thirst for him always to do so! In turn, we too “do justice” and “love kindness” (Mich. 6:8) as we walk humbly with our God and our neighbors. Knowing what Jesus knew, that as Isaiah said, “the effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result

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<sup>13</sup> Rad, vol. 2, 337.

<sup>14</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 272-273.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

of righteousness [relating rightly to one another and God is] quietness and security forever.” ([Is. 32:17](#)).

## FIFTH BEATITUDE

*v. 7 Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.*

**What does the merciful receive?** | Compassionate feelings and actions from God, i.e., healing and forgiveness.

Like the blind man in Luke 18, we cry out to Jesus, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” and receive both what we need and a new relationship with God ([18:35-43](#)). And like the lame friend, boldly brought before Jesus ([Mark 2:1-12](#)), we receive forgiveness of sin and what was broken made whole.

**How do the merciful live while experiencing healing and forgiveness?** | By responding to human need with compassionate feelings and actions that lead to healing and forgiveness.

While the idea of compassion composed of feelings and actions often brings to our imagination acts of service (which certainly is true), perhaps the most basic and most essential feeling and act of mercy is forgiveness. We have received forgiveness, healing, and restored relationship with our heavenly Father through Jesus, and so how much more should we be willing to forgive one another? This act of mercy is the most basic and most essential and the most difficult—especially for those deeply wronged. It requires a daily prayer (6:12) for God’s provision and power. But, as Bailey argues,

“the alternative is self-destruction through nursing grudges or seeking revenge. Such grievances are often passed on from generation to generation and become a destructive force in the lives of individuals and societies.”<sup>16</sup>

The root of bitterness, which grows deep, splits the foundations of relationship and divides and pollutes good soil ([Heb. 12:15](#)). Perhaps that is why, when forgiveness is bestowed, it brings forth new life. “The [already] blessed escape such self-crippling cycles, for they are merciful” because they have received mercy.

## SIXTH BEATITUDE

*v. 8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*

**What do the pure in heart receive?** | Transparency between them and God.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 82-83.



The apostle Paul describes what the pure in heart receive this way,

“when one turns to the Lord, the veil [that covering which clouds our sight of God] is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding (reflecting) the glory of the Lord, are being transformed from one degree of glory [an illuminated, darkness pushing out splendor and clarity] to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.” ([2 Cor. 3:16-18](#))

**How do the pure in heart live with the veil removed (with clear sight of God)?** | With a singular motive for what they feel, think, and do, “harboring no hidden agendas.”

The purity of heart is an interior purity, a singular motive for the glory (the beautiful, darkness piercing vision of )God in all that takes place in us and through us. The necessity of this interior purity for seeing God ruling is testified to in Psalms 24, which says,

Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD?  
And who shall stand in his holy place?  
He who has clean hands and a pure heart.

Clean hands, right actions, which is the most common association of what it takes to see God, is all but passed over by Jesus. Like the psalmist, he recognized that the right actions are not enough. Seeing God clearly, in his holy place, is the experience of those whose actions are accompanied by a singular motivation, an internal purity of heart. We’ll talk about his much more when we work through chapter six.

## SEVENTH BEATITUDE

*v. 9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons (rightful heirs) of God.*

**What do the peacemakers receive?** | The right to be called “children of God, who were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.” ([Jn. 1:12-13](#)) And thus, family responsibilities.

**How do the peacemakers live with (steward) their received heirship?** | By doing what they see the Father doing, bringing wholeness to a broken world.

Peace on earth is what the angels sang out at the birth of Jesus (Lk. 2:13-14), and peace is what Jesus said his death would bring (Jn. 16:33), and peace is what he pronounced as here at his resurrection (Jn. 20:19,21,26). Jesus’ life, from beginning to end to living again, was to bring the wholeness of God’s love

to bear upon the earth. “For,” as John Stott notes, “peace means reconciliation, and God is the author of peace and reconciliation.”<sup>17</sup>

Here is Jesus’ sermon is the lone appearance of the word peacemaker in the entire Bible. It is a word that means neither peaceful nor pacifist, neither docile in spirit or inactive in conflict. Instead, as Paul will describe, it is an active entering into conflict and division to reconcile (make whole), which is modeled for us in Jesus is “making peace by the blood of his cross” ([Col. 1:20](#)).

Jesus said that peace does not mean a life without trouble; the cessation of violence. Yet, peace does mean that wholeness of our humanity is possible. To be a peacemaker is having “eyes to see our role in repairing what is broken,”<sup>18</sup> bring the wholeness of God’s love to bear upon the divisions between individuals, within families, communities, and nations. This is what God’s children have seen him do and what they do as they follow in their Father’s footsteps.

## EIGHTH BEATITUDE

*v. 10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

**What do the persecuted for righteousness sake receive?** | Membership, citizenship in God’s peaceful, just, and equitable kingdom. They are under God’s care, God’s rule, and God’s intent for the world.

**How do the persecuted for righteousness sake live in their kingdom citizenship?** | With persevering hope.

Jesus begins and concludes his description of a life of received happiness with membership, citizenry within the intimate and purposeful reign of God experienced. Most commentators note the connection between children following in their Father’s footsteps as active peace bringers with the experience of hostility and ill-treatment. It seems that a life lived in submission to the Father’s voice, his way and order, a life of shared suffering with others, compassion, love, mercy, a drive to relate rightly and wholly to ourselves, others, the earth, and our God; puts us at odds within the world as it is then and today. There is an expectation that being conformed to God’s image is a non-conformist life.

It is the life lived consistently in submission through faith and love that draws hostility and ill-treatment. Not a life of pious arrogance, or noble good deeds, or kind dispositions, but because we are citizens of a kingdom to which there is opposition and rebellion. Living differently requires something of us, a firm hope in the future of where it leads, in what we will receive in full one day.

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<sup>17</sup> Stott, 50.

<sup>18</sup> Latisha Morrison, *Be The Bridge: pursuing God’s heart for racial reconciliation*, 11.

The assumption and experience of the Jewish people were that they would be, in their unique relationship with God...different. Their commitment to the kingdom would not be without opposition from within their own hearts and from the cultures in which they worked and played, married and had children, grew gardens, and planted trees. Yet their hope was in the reward of something more than the life in front of them, the promise of a future. The surety of such a promise let them live by faith and hope, and love.

## NINTH BEATITUDE

vv. 11-12 *Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

There is a reason why many commentators and scholars throughout history have interpreted verses 11 and 12 as Jesus expounding the final beatitude. After all, he uses the term persecuted again and speaks about the reward, the hope of their persevering. Yet, Jesus does something rhetorically brilliant here in these two verses.

This Beatitude differs in the “extra” material. The previous eight were just two lines: “Blessed are...for theirs is...” but the pattern changes here. However, if we removed the middle material, this ninth Beatitude would read:

Blessed are you when others revile you  
For so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

**What do the reviled receive? | an honorable place and purpose in salvation history.** They are counted with the faithful, the prophets whose role was to call people to fidelity to God’s intimate and redeeming rule, even as they demonstrated the damage of their oppression and rebellion. So, how then should the reviled respond to their plan and purpose in salvation history?

Well, the middle gives us a unique answer. These two verses form a ring composition or chiasm, with the climax in the middle. Let me show you:

Blessed are you when others revile you  
and persecute you  
and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely  
**on my account.**  
Rejoice and be glad,  
for your reward is great In heaven,  
for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Everything that has come before could be explained out of the Hebrew Scriptures. Jesus has not added on iota to the vision of the shared life God painted for his people from Genesis to Malachi (in our English bibles). “Yet,” as Bailey contends, “something has been creeping up on [the listeners and] the reader[s]. These eight lofty standards have their finest expression in the [person and] life of Jesus. The [listeners and] reader[s] gradually come to this conclusion as the list lengthens. In the ninth Beatitude, loyalty to the person of Jesus is openly introduced. That same loyalty is inevitable if the [listeners and] reader[s] turn to Jesus as a model for the fulfillment of the pattern of righteousness here portrayed.”<sup>19</sup>

**How do the reviled live within their place and purpose in God’s unfolding redemption |** With fidelity to Jesus.

And here is the amazing thing, the gospel thing, “The first eight blessings are designated for people in general (theirs, they, those). But...the ninth is personal—“blessed are you”—and leads into an intensification from the general to the personal throughout the rest of the sermon that Jesus preached.”<sup>20</sup> How do you receive and live out the “bless-edness” that God is sharing with you? By faithfulness, loyalty, to a person, to Jesus, to God-with you, never leaving you, nor forsaking you (Matt. 28:20).

Remember what we said at the beginning of today’s message? Quoting Eugene Peterson, “God wills our happiness. He blesses. There is no question about that. He also graciously describes the kind of life that is **able to receive and live out the blessings that he wills.**” The kind of life that can receive and live out the “already happy” life is a life that is found in Jesus. “it is no longer I who live, but Christ [Jesus] who lives in me” (Gal. 3:20).

Let’s pray.

## **COMMUNION**

You call us “bless-ed” because of your Son, who loved us and gave himself for us. May we live in equal measure to the gift given. May we live such lives that are able to receive fully the life you say is ours already through the broken body and shed blood of your Son for our sins and the sin of the world. In his name, we receive, and we live...

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<sup>19</sup> Bailey, 86.

<sup>20</sup> Peterson, 237.