

Blessing: Now & Not Yet

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Date: 15 December 2021

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[0 : 00] Well, if we could, this evening, if we could read from the Gospel according to Matthew, Matthew chapter 5. We're reading the Beatitudes.

For the last time, not the last time ever, but the last time in our study. Matthew chapter 5, we're reading from the beginning.

Now let us hear the Word of God. Seeing the crowds, Jesus went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him.

And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

[1 : 16] Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

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

Blessed are theieetest i behaving blessed. 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.

and so on. May the Lord bless that reading of his own holy word. Now, as you'd expect at this time of year, there's lots of excitement and enthusiasm in the run-up to Christmas. I'm sure that like our home, there are many other homes in our community, maybe like Stephen's home, and many other homes indeed in our country with children and also adults who are counting down the days until Christmas. And they're maybe using their advent calendars and they're counting down the days until the big day. And of course, I can only go by what I see and hear in my own house, because when it comes to the three little boys in our house, there's lots of excitement, lots of enthusiasm with all the trees and the tinsel and the lights and the loud Christmas carol singing that they're doing in the house all the time. And there's also lots of discussing and debating about what they're going to get for Christmas. And it's actually very interesting to listen in to all these conversations that they have with one another.

But what also adds to the excitement is that some of the presents from the mainland have arrived already. And they've all come, they're nicely wrapped, and some with ribbon ready to be opened on the big day. But did you know that all these gifts, they first of all, these gifts that have come from the mainland, they first of all have to be inspected before they're put under the tree.

[3 : 25] That's what we were told. They have to be held and handled and then shaken a bit and then shaped so we work out what they are. And it's also that the recipients of these gifts can try and work out what they have received before the big reveal on Christmas Day. And you know, in relation to that, I was thinking, well, that's how we should view these Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount.

Because over the past number of weeks, we've repeatedly said and seen that these Beatitudes are blessings. They are gifts to us. They are presents to us from the gracious hand of King Jesus. But as we conclude our study of the Beatitudes this evening, I want us to see that for most of them, these blessings, these gifts, they're like Christmas presents, nicely wrapped. Because we have received all these gifts from King Jesus, but the full blessing and benefit of these gifts has not yet been revealed. And the blessing and benefit of these gifts, it won't be fully and finally revealed until the last day, the great day, not Christmas Day, not the first Advent, but the second Advent, the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. So my friend, these Beatitudes, these blessings, they are, and as

we'll see as we go through them, they are now and they're not yet. These blessings or Beatitudes, they are now and they're not yet. And there are two headings this evening as we conclude our study of the Beatitudes. I want us to see the blessings now and the blessings not yet.

The blessings now and the blessings not yet. So first of all, we'll consider the blessings now. The blessings now, look at verse 3. Jesus says, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. And then read in verse 10, Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Now, as we've learned from our study in the Beatitudes, these nine statements of blessing or nine benedictions of blessedness, as we've called them, they appear as the introduction to the Sermon on the Mount because Jesus seeks to teach us what it means to be a Christian and what it means to be a citizen of the kingdom of heaven and a child of our heavenly Father and a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because as sinners, Jesus says, as sinners who have submitted and surrendered their life under the Lordship of Christ and the authority of King Jesus, as sinners who have come to the Savior, Jesus says to us, we have received what we do not deserve. We have received what we do not deserve.

[6 : 34] We have been blessed. We've been blessed. And as we've said throughout our study, the word blessed, it literally means to kneel. We're kneeling in submission and surrender to King Jesus. So to be blessed is to come on your knees before Jesus with your head bowed and your hand outstretched, and you're receiving from his hand the gracious gifts of blessedness. You're receiving gracious gifts of blessedness. And as Paul reminds us, we have not just received the first blessing or the second blessing or the third blessing. We have received every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ. But as you know, being blessed, it doesn't just add something to what we have already.

No, when we submit and surrender our lives to King Jesus, it empties us of all that we are in order to fill us and bless us with all that Jesus is. And as we've considered these beatitudes, we've discovered that as those who are in Christ, as those who are in the kingdom, as those who are in union with Jesus, we have received gracious gifts of blessed poverty, blessed mourning, blessed meekness, blessed righteousness, blessed mercy, blessed purity, blessed peace, and as we saw last Wednesday, blessed persecution. We have received all these blessings from the gracious, loving, and merciful hand of King Jesus. But what I want us to see this evening is that we have received all of these blessings blessings now. We have received them all in the present as those who are in Christ. We have received all of these blessings now. But Jesus says that there is, there's an element to some of these blessings which we will only receive in the future. As we said, these blessings, the illustration of, they're like gifts, they're like Christmas presents, all nicely wrapped. We have received all of these gifts now from King Jesus. But for some of them, the full blessing, the full benefit of these gifts has not yet been revealed. It's not been unwrapped. And the blessing and benefit of these gifts won't be fully and finally unwrapped or revealed until Christ comes in the glory of his kingdom.

And I say this because it's important to actually notice the tense with which Jesus speaks here in some of these Beatitudes. Because he speaks with a present tense, then a future tense.

Jesus speaks in the now and then the not yet. He speaks in the now and the not yet. Jesus says that you have received all these blessings now. You're blessed now. But there are some blessings which you have not received in all their fullness, because that's a future event. Therefore, you're blessed now and not yet. You're blessed now and not yet. If you look at verse 4, Jesus says, blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. You're blessed now and not yet.

In verse 5, Jesus says, blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. You're blessed now and not yet. In verse 6, Jesus says, blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled or satisfied. You're blessed now and not yet. My friend, as those who are in Christ, we have received all these blessings now, in the present. But there are some blessings, blessings, or part of some of these blessings, which we have not yet received, and have not yet been revealed to us in all their fullness. And we'll look at the not yet blessings in a moment.

[10 : 45] But I want us to see, first of all, that there are blessings which we have received now, that we will not receive in the future. There are blessings which we have received now, that we will not receive in the future. In fact, the Beatitudes, they are bookended by these blessings which we have received now, and will not receive in the future. We have them now in all their entirety. These

Beatitudes which are bookended, these blessings that bookend the Beatitudes, which we receive now in all their fullness. Jesus says in verse 3, blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. You have it now. Then he says in verse 10, blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. And you know, what we have to see is that Jesus bookends the Beatitudes. He bookends the Beatitudes with the blessings we have received now, but blessings which we will not receive in the future. We have received them now in all their fullness. And we will not receive them in the future because they are all ours right now.

They're all ours right now. I don't know if you ever did it as a parent or even as a child, but when I was young, we sometimes did it in our house, where we were allowed to open one Christmas present on Christmas Eve. I don't know if this is allowed. Some are saying no. But anyway, we were allowed to do it.

We were allowed to receive an early gift, just a small one, receive an early gift before all the other gifts were unwrapped and revealed. And in a sense, that's what these bookended Beatitudes in verse 3 and 10 and 11. That's what these bookended Beatitudes are. They're early gifts. They're blessings and benefits which we receive from King Jesus now. And we receive them in all their fullness. Because what Jesus says is that as those who are blessed, you have received entry and you have received entitlement to the kingdom of heaven. And we have received the kingdom of heaven now. Which means that the kingdom of heaven, it's not a future event. It's not a future event. It'll come to its fullness when we are all taken to glory, yes. But the kingdom of heaven, says Jesus, is now. And as those in Christ, the kingdom of heaven is ours now. As those who are in union with Christ, the kingdom of heaven is ours now. And you know, the kingdom of heaven, it's something which Matthew, as a gospel writer, he often explains and emphasizes throughout his gospel. Because Matthew's first recorded statement of Jesus in his gospel is, repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. The kingdom of heaven has come.

So you must repent. Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. And in many ways, that's what it means to be, as Jesus says there in verse 3, poor in spirit. To be poor in spirit is to repent. And that's why Jesus has this as his first beatitude. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

This is the first beatitude because blessed poverty is not physical poverty or financial poverty. It's spiritual poverty. It's coming to the realization that without Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, we are completely and utterly deprived and destitute of all these blessings and benefits from the kingdom of heaven. We're poor in spirit. We're poverty-stricken. We're spiritually bankrupt and broke. We have nothing and no one to cling to or claim except Jesus Christ alone.

[15 : 04] Therefore, what we realize from the very first beatitude is that we must submit and surrender our life to King Jesus. We must repent so that we will receive the blessing of entering and being entitled to the kingdom of heaven. But more than that, we see that throughout Matthew's gospel, Jesus teaches us even what it means to live in the kingdom of heaven. He teaches us, as you go through the Sermon on the Mount, it's all about living in the kingdom of heaven, which is now. And when Jesus speaks in parables, he reveals what the kingdom of heaven is like now. Because the kingdom of heaven is ours now. It's ours now. That's what Jesus says, blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

But as we saw last week, we've not only received blessed poverty, Jesus has also gifted to us blessed persecution. Because as those who have entered and are entitled to the kingdom of heaven, we have received the gift and the guarantee of persecution. Jesus says, blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you, and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Jesus says that persecution is a gift and a guarantee. And it's a gift and a guarantee because of righteousness' sake, and on account of knowing and loving him. And so as those who have entered and are entitled to the kingdom of heaven, Jesus is telling us that the call to discipleship, the call and the cost of living in the kingdom of heaven is to deny self, take up your cross, and follow him. And as Jesus promised us, if they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If the world hates you, know that it hated me before it ever hated you.

If you were off the world, the world would love you as its own. But because you're not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. But of course, Jesus taught us, as we saw last week, he taught us saying, and as it is later in the Sermon on the Mount, he said,

love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and spitefully use you and persecute you. He says, pray for them. And as you know, Jesus practiced what he prayed when he prayed on the cross. Father, forgive them for they know not what they do. Jesus practiced what he preached in all that he did. Father, forgive them for they know not what they do. And so as those who have received blessed poverty and blessed persecution, we have entered and are entitled to the kingdom of heaven now. But as we said, even though we have received all of these blessings, all of these beatitudes now, we have received them, or some of them, in only a measure. Some of these blessings we have received now, but we have not received them in all their fullness and in their finality. We have received them, but they have not yet been revealed in all their fullness. They're blessings which are now and not yet. And that brings us to consider, secondly, the blessings which are not yet. So the blessings now and the blessings not yet. The blessings not yet. Now look at verse 4.

Jesus says, blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons or children of God. And with these six beatitudes, Jesus, he teaches us that we have received all of these blessings now. We have received them in the present as those who are in Christ. We have received all of these blessings, these gifts now, but the full benefit of these gifts has not yet been revealed. As we said, they're like nicely wrapped Christmas presents. We have received them as gifts from King Jesus, but the blessing and benefit of these gifts, it will not be fully and finally revealed until Christ comes in the glory of his kingdom. As we said before, it's important to note the tense that Jesus is speaking in here. He speaks in these six beatitudes, verses four to nine, he speaks with a present and then a future tense. He speaks in the now and the not yet. And Jesus says that you're blessed now and you're blessed not yet. So in verse four, Jesus says, blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. You have received blessed mourning now and not yet. You've received blessed mourning now because when God began working in your life, the first thing he did was convince you of your sin and misery. You were brought to see your sin, your sin that separates you from a holy God. And because of that, you mourned, you mourned over the mistakes in your life and even the mess of your soul. But more than that, you not only mourned over the sin that affects your own soul, you mourned over the sin that has brought sickness and suffering and sorrow into your life. But as you've discovered, my friend, the blessing of comfort and consolation, it comes from the precious promises of God's Word, promises that we can claim and cling to for ourselves. But what Jesus says here is that we have the blessing of comfort now in the present. But there's also the blessing of comfort in the not yet. There's also the blessing of comfort in the not yet. And we read that, don't we, in Revelation chapter 21. We read that when Christ comes in his kingdom, he will give to us the blessing of comfort. He will wipe away every tear from our eyes and death will be no more. Neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore. For the former things, the things that are now, will have passed away. Jesus says, blessed are those who mourn now, for they shall also be comforted. But then Jesus says in verse 5, blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Jesus teaches us in this beatitude that as those who have received blessed meekness, we are to possess and practice a Christ-like character, conduct, and conversation.

[22 : 55] We're to be meek and mild, just like gentle Jesus, meek and mild. We're not to be like the world, because the world will tell us that you need to be ambitious, and you need to be arrogant, and you need to be assertive, and you need to be aggressive in order to inherit the earth. But in the kingdom of heaven, Jesus says, the standards have switched. The roles have reversed. Christianity is actually counter-cultural. That's what Jesus says. Therefore, as those who have received blessed meekness, we're to be looking and waiting for a new earth, and inheriting a new heavens and a new earth, wherein, as Peter says, righteousness dwells. We are to be looking and waiting for our inheritance, an inheritance that is incorruptible, that is undefiled, that fadeth not away, but is reserved in heaven for us. We're to be looking and waiting for a new heavens and a new earth, wherein righteousness dwells. That's what Jesus is saying here. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Then he says in verse 6, blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. So we have received blessed righteousness. Our declaration and our desire for righteousness is now, because as those who are surrounded by sin, we are declared righteous by faith in Jesus Christ. We are as righteous now as we will be in the not yet. We are as righteous now as we will be when we stand before Jesus in heaven. We're declared

righteous in God's sight, and now we have a desire for righteousness in our lives. But the fullness and finality of our righteousness, or our desire for righteousness, is not yet. Because, and it will be not yet until we are free from sin. My friend, as Jesus says here, we shall be satisfied. And the thing is, in the now, we will not be satisfied until we're sinless. We will not be satisfied until we are sinless.

I don't know about you, but I never feel satisfied that I'm a good Christian, or getting anywhere in my Christian life. I never feel I'm progressing. Never feel I'm getting anywhere. And you look, you come to this verse, and you realize, well, this is what it's all about now. It's all about now hungering and thirsting after righteousness. And we need to keep hungering and thirsting after righteousness, because we will not be satisfied until we're sinless. We will not be satisfied until we're sinless. So it's a good thing to hunger and thirst for righteousness. Then Jesus says in verse 7, blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. We have received blessed mercy. We have been shown mercy, therefore we must show mercy to others. We have been forgiven, therefore we must forgive others. Because if we don't forgive others, it will influence and impact upon our future.

If we don't show mercy and forgiveness now, Jesus says then we will not be shown mercy and forgiveness in the not yet. And you might think, well, how is that possible? But this is what Jesus warns us.

When you look at the conclusion to the Lord's Prayer in chapter 6, the following chapter, when Jesus talks about forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors, he goes on to teach us to practice what we pray. Because as those who have been shown mercy and forgiveness, we must therefore show mercy and forgiveness to others. And Jesus, he solemnly warns us at the conclusion of the Lord's Prayer. He warns us there in verse 14, if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. It's a solemn warning and a great challenge to us that blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Then Jesus says, and I'm going to bring these last two Beatitudes together in conclusion, he says in verse 8, blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God. Jesus says that we have received blessed purity and blessed peace now. We are to be pure in head, heart, and hand because we have peace with God and the peace of God. We have received blessed purity and blessed peace now and not yet. The blessing not yet, says Jesus, is that we shall see God and we shall be called the children of God. The blessing not yet is that we shall see God is that we shall see God and that we shall be called the children of God.

And you know, I think the Apostle John, he understood these Beatitudes in all their fullness because he actually brings these last two Beatitudes together. And he brings them together in 1 John chapter 3, where John says, behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God. Beloved, he says, now we are the children of God. But it has not yet been revealed what we shall be. But we know, says John, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. That's wonderful words. John is showing us that we shall, and the blessing not yet, is that we shall see God and that we shall be called the children of God. You know, my friend, as Christians, as citizens of the kingdom of heaven, as children of our heavenly Father, as disciples of Jesus Christ, we have received what we do not deserve. And you know, if we lived our lives with that perspective every day, we would see and we would realize how gracious our God really is. We have received all these blessings, and we deserve none of them. We have received blessed poverty, blessed mourning, blessed meekness, blessed righteousness, blessed mercy, blessed purity, blessed peace, blessed persecution.

[30 : 23] We have received all these blessings. We've received them all now. And for some of them, they are still not yet. Therefore, as Jesus said in his conclusion to the Beatitudes, in verse 12, rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven. Did you love those words?

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven. Well, may the Lord bless our study and these words to us. Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, I don't think we realize how gracious thou art.

And Lord, we thank thee and we praise thee that thou art one who is so good to us, who bestows upon us what we do not deserve, who blesses us with grace upon grace, who shows us mercy and forgiveness and love and compassion and care and concern day by day, that we receive not only temporal blessings, but we have also received in Christ every spiritual blessing in heavenly places. And Lord, we pray that as people who have received grace, that we would show grace, that we would show grace, as people who have received mercy, that we would show mercy, as those who

have experienced forgiveness, that we would show forgiveness, that we would be more and more like Jesus every day, that we would die to self and live unto righteousness, that we would be more like Christ, walking in his footsteps, looking to him, loving him, listening to him, and leaning upon him, day by day.

O forgive us, Lord, because we know we are not what we ought to be, but we thank thee and we praise thee, that the word one who has begun that good work in us and who promises to bring it on to completion.

Lord, work in our hearts, we pray. Conform us, convict us, and draw us more and more to our Saviour. Keep us, we pray. Go before us. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[32 : 54] We're going to sing again, this time in Psalm 89. It is 89. I seem to have given you both of my psalms. I was guessing here.

Psalm 89. It's in the Scottish Psalter, page 345. We're singing from verse 15 down to the verse marked 18. Before the live stream comes to an end, just to highlight points for prayer, this week we're encouraged to pray for Prince Edward Island.

I don't know if you've ever been there. I've met the minister who's there, Kent Compton. I'd love to go and see it. So we're encouraged to pray for the congregation in Prince Edward Island.

And I think there's a few congregations there, so please pray for them. And they're small and I'm sure struggling, like many places. So pray for those, our brothers and sisters in Canada.

And also pray for our brothers and sisters along the road in Cullinish. Remember them? Remember the minister there, Callum MacDonald? And as you know, I mean, there was an outbreak of COVID there, and they're recovering from that.

[34 : 16] So pray for that community as well. Also pray for the sick, the sorrowing. They are always with us. And pray for this man that was mentioned earlier, Sawan Masi.

I'm probably pronouncing his name wrong, but Sawan Masi. And remember those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. We're going to sing in Psalm 89 and verse 15.

A psalm that reflects us so clearly. O greatly blessed the people are, The joyful sound that know, In brightness of thy face, O Lord, They ever on shall go.

They in thy name shall all the day rejoice exceedingly, And in thy righteousness shall they, Exalted, be on high. We'll sing down to the verse marked 18 of Psalm 89, To God's praise.

O greatly blessed the people are, The joyful sound that know, In brightness of thy face, O Lord, O Lord, They ever on shall go.

[35 : 46] O Lord, Be on high. In thy name shall all the day rejoice exceedingly, And in thy righteousness shall they, Exalted be on high.

Because the glory of Israel, Doth only stand in thee, And in thy name shall they be, And in thy name shall be, And by its holy soul to thee, For God is our defense, and He to us does safety bring.

The Holy One of Israel is our Almighty name.