

THE LORD'S PRESCRIPTION FOR A HAPPY LIFE

Matthew 5:1-12

Intro: In Matthew, chapters 5, 6, and 7 we have Matthew's account of what has been known as our Lord's Sermon on the Mount. It is the first of three major messages given by our Lord which are recorded for us in the Gospels. The second is also recorded for us in the Gospel of Matthew, in chapters 24 and 25, which is generally known as The Olivet Discourse. The third is given to us in the Gospel of John, chapters 13, 14, 15, and 16, and is called The Upper Room Discourse. Parts of The Sermon on the Mount and The Olivet Discourse are also found in Mark and Luke, but they will not concern us primarily in our study of Matthew.

We normally would not think of beginning a sermon like the Lord began this sermon, but since this is the Lord's message, and presumably was spoken in the order in which it appear here, *we would have to say that this is the perfect way to begin a message.*

Some expositors say that this sermon applies to the kingdom age because of the references to "the kingdom of heaven" which are found here in Matthew 5:3 and 10. And so they say that it has significance for the time when the Lord will reign on the earth. Matthew does mention "the kingdom of heaven" thirty-two times throughout his Gospel, and it is generally agreed by evangelical Bible teachers that the Gospel of Matthew was written for the Jews. But there are times, like in Matthew 19:23 and 24 where the Lord Himself used the terms "kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of God" synonymously, that is, as meaning the same thing. And so I am inclined to think that when the Lord spoke of "the kingdom of heaven" here in the Sermon on the Mount, while they may have their application to the future kingdom of our Lord here on earth, yet we need to apply these beatitudes to our own lives today as giving us the main characteristics of salvation, and therefore proofs in a person's life that that person is truly saved. So I am going to treat them, and the rest of this Sermon as applying to us today. And I hope that you will see this is what the Lord intended for us to do as we go through this wonderful passage of Scripture.

Not all of the beatitudes are found in the Sermon on the Mount. Each morning when I read my Bible, I read a Psalm. And my Psalm for today was Psalm 32, and it begins this way:

1 Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is

covered.

2 Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.

Most of you are familiar with the first Psalm. This is how it begins:

1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

2 But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

Beatitudes are sometimes negative, and sometimes positive. Everybody is interested in happiness, but we need to be told where we are not going to find happiness as well as where we will find it. People in the world are not in agreement with either verse 1 or 2.

We all want to be happy, but because we are sinners by nature, we are more inclined to look for happiness in the wrong places than we are to find it in the right. This is one reason that God has given us His Word.

We can certainly say that these Beatitudes apply only to believers. The chapter begins by telling us on this occasion when He gave this message, it was given to His disciples. And we can really say this about all of the Bible. It was written for those of us who have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ for our salvation from sin, its penalty and its power. We use the Bible in witnessing to people who do not know the Lord, but basically the Bible was written for us, and for all who are saved – past, present, and

future.

Now I am quite sure that no one here tonight needs me to tell you that the word “blessed” means “happy.” Many have tried to distinguish between “blessed” and happy, but we are on good ground when we say that as the word “blessed” is used to translated the original word, we would be just as accurate in translating, happy. Pastor Will had a beatitude in his message this morning from 1 Peter 3. A beatitude is a statement about happiness, either what it is, or what it is not. If you look in your dictionary for a definition of a beatitude, it will direct you to the statements with which the Lord began His Sermon on the Mount. So basically it is a Bible word. ***The Bible is the world’s greatest authority on happiness!***

Now this is a subject that everybody is interested in – happiness, or how can I be happy. The tragedy is that most people are looking for happiness in the wrong places. Probably most people look for happiness in pleasure. When I look at the tremendous crowds that spend big money to attend sporting events, and they do it week after week during the football season, or the baseball season, or whatever sport may be in the limelight at any particular time, we all can recognizes that men think that pleasure is found in sports, or pleasure of other kinds. And we do have to admit that it does provide a certain amount of pleasure at least for a time. But it is not true, lasting pleasure. In fact, if your team loses, there goes the main part of the pleasure you were looking for.

Many people believe that pleasure lies in what we all know to be sin. Can we really say that people who engage in any kind of sin, such as adultery are sure that they have found true happiness? I heard on the television just yesterday that time is showing that women who have aborted their babies are major candidates for mental problems in years to come. The Bible says that it is a shame to speak of the things which people do in private to escape detection, but we know that sin breaks up marriages and ruins lives in different ways all of the time. But still people go on sinning. If we need proof that people are spiritually and morally blind, just look at the way people continue to pursue various pleasures in the hope that some day they are going to find true satisfaction. But they are always disappointed.

We all need money to live on, but to live for money is another thing. The book of Proverbs tells us over and over that to seek wisdom, the wisdom of God, is far better than seeking silver and gold. My Dad told me that he

had the best boss in the world until he started making big money, and then he became afraid that he might lose a nickel. We know just by reading our newspapers that money has brought ruin into the lives of many who have lived to make money, but have found that the passion for making money has controlled and ruined them.

On one occasion during the ministry of our Lord here on earth, two brothers were arguing over their inheritance, and one of them came to the Lord to get the Lord to help him. Do you remember what the Lord said to him? You will find His response in Luke 12::15. This is what the Lord told that man: "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

The Beatitudes teach us:

- 1) That happiness is not found in pleasure.
- 2) Happiness is not found in what you have, your possessions.
- 3) Happiness is not found in what you can do, your gifts or abilities.
- 4) Happiness is not found in goals you achieve.
- 5) Happiness is not found in what is called today, name recognition.
- 6) Happiness is not found where you live.
- 7) Happiness is not found in the people you know.

We could go on speaking of things where people have sought happiness. A temporary kind of happiness is found in all of this. But the Lord Jesus Himself said, and His words are recorded in Mark 8:36-37:

36 For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

37 Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

The Beatitudes teach us is that happiness depends on two things:

- 1) Who you are, is #1.
- 2) What you are.

And when I get through tonight I hope that we will all see that true happiness can only be found in the Lord, and in our relationship with Him. I am not saying, and the Bible does not say, that happiness is one of many ways to find true and lasting happiness. It declares that it is the only way to find real happiness. We as Christians have our troubles like anyone else. We have our failures. We have our trials, and many of them. But the person who knows the Lord as Savior, and who walks in fellowship with the Lord, is the person who has discovered true happiness.

But let me issue this warning: I think, in fact I know, that the Devil has a

counterfeit for everything that God has for us, but when you go the Devil's way, you find out that all that the Devil tempts us with to find happiness is exactly that: counterfeits. There is a lot of so-called pleasure in what the Devil and the world and the flesh have to offer us, but if we go that route we will find that they are pleasures that just don't last, nor do they produce true happiness.

When Lucille and I had just been married for a few years, and our children were coming along, we had a missionary in our home and he was talking to us about raising children. And he talked to us about disciplining children. And he said this, "Bad children can be cute, but they are cute for such a short time *that it is not worth it.*

I say that about the pleasures of sin and the world. There is no question that the world give us temporary happiness, but it makes us happy for such a short time, and then leaves us such a lot of regrets, that it is not worth it.

Where do we find true happiness? I repeat from our text tonight, it is:

1) In who we are.

And it is in:

2) What we are.

Now you may want to stop me and say that I just said that true happiness can only be found in the Lord. Why, then, are you saying that we can find true happiness by answering questions about ourselves? Stay with me and I think you will find that I am headed in the direction that I have laid out for you already.

Let me ask you tonight, "Who are you?"

I am not asking for your name because I know most of you, but I am asking who you really are. Down in the depth of your heart, who are you? If the Lord were suddenly to appear to us tonight, would you come to Him as one of His disciples? It was to His disciples that He spoke these words meaning, first of all, that what He had to say was only for His disciples. The multitude would not understand what He was saying, nor would they agree with Him. But the Lord called His disciples apart from the multitude because He had some very important words for them. He obviously wanted them to know that they were the only people who could understand the meaning of "blessed," and who would agree with Him.

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Let me say tonight that if you are not a disciple of the Lord Jesus, one who knows Him, and loves Him, and believes that He has the answers to your questions, then don't try to follow His teaching. It is not for you. It is beyond what you can do *unless and until you come to Him and believe on Him and become His disciple*. You see, only those who know the Lord and have been given life in Him have the desire or the ability to do as He says.

So, who are you? If you can say, "Yes, I know Him as my Savior, and I want to learn from Him and about Him," then you are ready to hear what the Lord Jesus told His disciples about true happiness, eternal happiness, the happiness which will never disappoint you. The happiness He gives is the only happiness which will not disappoint you, nor leave you feeling empty and betrayed like the world's happiness leaves you. King David gave expression to the joy that he had found in the Lord in Psalm 16:11 where we read,

11 Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

In the days when many of us were involved in the Bible Memory Association we used to sing a song which gave us these words:

O Christ, in Thee my soul hath found, and found in Thee alone,
The peace, the joy I sought so long, the bliss till now unknown
I sighed for rest and happiness, I yearned for them, not Thee;
But while I passed my Savior by His love laid hold on me.
I tried the broken cisterns, Lord, but ah! the waters failed!
E'en as I stooped to drink they'd fled, and mocked me as I wailed.
The pleasures lost I sadly mourned, but never wept for Thee
Till grace the sightless eyes received, Thy loveliness to see.
Now none but Christ can satisfy, none other Name for me;
There's love, and life, and lasting joy, Lord Jesus, found in Thee.

Who are you? Do you know the Lord? Has He forgiven your sins? Then let's go together like we were sitting at His feet like His disciples.

But before I go to my second question, let me say that if any of you have never trusted in the Lord Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins, bow your heart before Him now, and tell Him that you believe He died to save you, and that you want to trust Him now. He has promised that if you come to Him, He will not only receive you, but He will never cast you out. I hope there may be those with us tonight who will trust in Christ and be saved.

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But now my second question. And I only have time tonight to point the answer, and we'll look into to the answer more next Sunday night.

What are you? Do the words of our text describe you? I am asking myself if they describe me. And if they do, how much do they describe us?

Are we "poor in spirit"? Is there anything in our lives that we really mourn over? Are we "meek" so that people can see this evidence that we are becoming like Christ? What is our chief desire for ourselves? Is it to be righteous? Do I hunger and thirst for it? Are we merciful in our dealings with others like the Lord Jesus was? Do we long for purity, not just outwardly, but inwardly, in our hearts? Are we peacemakers, not only with each other, but do we love to help others find peace with God? The last three verses deal with one subject: persecution. This is a major point with the Lord. Are we afraid to talk to people about the Lord because we are afraid that if we do they won't like us, or might even give us trouble? What keeps us from telling others about the Lord if we means so much to us.

Concl: Now I have just barely touched on the meaning of the way the Lord describes us here. This is not a list where we can pick and choose. It is a list where we need to score points on each one. In other words, it is not this, but not that, but it is this and this and this until we have covered all that the Lord has said. To what extent does this describe you and me. This is where we are going to find happiness, true happiness, lasting and victorious happiness.

Now I can tell you that none of us has a perfect score – at least, I don't. But this is what we need to be, not just to do. This is one of several passages where the Lord describes what a true Christian is! God wants us to be truly happy. It is not a life without trials, but it is a life in which by God's amazing grace we can smile through our tears. Why not memorize these verses, and tell the Lord that you want His blessing, His happiness in your life, but have it His way. So happiness has to do with who we are and what we are, and the whole story is right here in these verses. May we this week all experience the happiness that He has for us. Let us think first about who we are, and then concentrate on what we are, and then we can rejoice that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit will be glorified in us.