

PP The King and His Kingdom

Part 2-Matthew 5:3a

2/4-5/2017

This past Thursday I was pedaling my bike up over Miller Road in Plainfield Township, and cresting the hill, slowly, I saw an odd sight, one I've never seen before...a mole, I think, running **PP** (Video) in circles, over and over and over. I posted this on FB and Instagram, and learned two things: it likely has a brain disease, or secondly, it had just listened to one of my sermons. Some of you perhaps will suffer this condition by the end of this message, for we are looking at the first word of Christ's Sermon on the Mount...but one so full of significance that we must learn how it impacted the listeners of this sermon as well as us today

PP 1-A Brief Review

“Seeing the crowds, He went up on the mountain, and when He sat down, His disciples came to Him.” Matthew 5:1

Jesus had just selected 12 men who would be His core disciples

The Jewish system of making and training disciples was well-developed by the rabbis

All children 6-10 years old attended the first phase: Beth Sefer

For very good male students, they could continue into Beth Talmud, until 14 years of age

For the very best of the rest, they could enter the third school, Beth Midrash, often taking them to age 30

In Beth Midrash, a student would approach a Rabbi asking to be trained by him, and if accepted, the Rabbi would say ‘Come follow me’

The student became his disciple, a Talmid, and he would live with the Rabbi, learning his yoke, his interpretation of the Torah, and the Old Testament Scriptures

The goal of discipleship was to be like his rabbi in every way, completely yielded to his authority

This is the cultural backdrop of the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus is teaching His yoke to the disciples He has chosen

The very first thing He does, is help them celebrate the blessings that all His true disciples possess, as they have come into His kingdom

Here is where some of you will start doing the mole circle...today we are going to look at this incredible word, ***‘Blessed’***

PP 2-The History of God's Blessing

“And He opened His mouth and taught them, saying: ‘Blessed...’

What we have before us have traditionally been called beatitudes, from the Latin word *beatus*

And they each begin with this word ***‘Blessed’***

In order to truly understand the incredible statements that Jesus makes in what are called the Beatitudes, I believe we have to start in the first chapter of the bible

PP “So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. And God blessed them.” Genesis 1:27-28a

When we underline those last four words, and keep them connected with the verse they follow, the understanding clearly emerges that God created Adam and Eve, and then He blessed them

PP God's blessings contain at least two main ideas:

PP First, it was a public declaration of those who have a favored status with God

PP Second, God's blessings enable His people to live in a way that pleases Him

PP ***"The blessing of the LORD makes rich, and He adds no sorrow with it."*** Proverbs 10:22

Of course, prosperity preachers interpret this as money, but it is really any increase like honor, material goods, status or learning that God gives and His promise that any blessing He gives will not burden His people and make it difficult to live the way He wants

Adam and Eve were created in a state of God's blessing, having been given everything they needed to live right, and to have supreme joy and happiness

Yet they didn't trust in nor were they content with the blessings of God, and tempted by the serpent, they wanted to be the Blessor, in control of their own happiness

With that act of rebellious defiance they shattered the blessings of God, ushering into creation sin, and bringing with it the curse, the spiritual opposite of blessings

Cain, filled with jealousy and hatred, murdered his righteous brother Abel

From Cain's line came Lamech, the first to take more than one wife, singing that, with the technology of weapons, his vengeful, war-like spirit was infinitely greater than Cain's

Humanity only got worse from this point out, so sinful that there was no good thing in them, so

God brought a flood that covered the earth, wiping out all but one man's family...Noah

Notice what Genesis 9 says for you have heard it before, just a few moments ago:

PP ***"And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.'"*** Genesis 9:1

Not long however, Noah plants a vineyard, another garden image, and makes wine, drinks so much of it that he is lying naked in his tent in a drunken stupor

One of his three sons sees him, does nothing to cover him

To uncover someone's nakedness, or not cover it, was a terrible, disgraceful act in Scripture

Like Adam after sin, Noah is naked and ashamed, and the cycle of sin breaking the state of blessing repeats itself again, bringing with it the curse

Noah curses that son, and from him came those who built the tower of Babel, another effort to become like God and control blessings, much like Adam and Eve eating from the tree that was forbidden

But then we come to Genesis 12, meet a man named Abram, one day Abraham, and for no reason other than God's divine prerogative, He chooses this man to bless

But more than that, He chooses that Abraham will father a people who will be His people, Israel, and through Israel, He will extend His blessings to peoples all over the world

And from Abraham's descendants will come One Who will redeem humanity from sin

All the way back to Genesis, right after Adam and Eve sinned, there is a sneak peak of this

PP ***"The LORD God said to the serpent... 'I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.'"*** Genesis 3:14-15

God tells the serpent Satan that despite what seems his victory, he is destined for defeat

One day, a descendant will come from the woman who will deliver a lethal strike to the snake's head, but the victory will come at a cost as the snake too will deliver a lethal strike

This mystery is made clear as the bible slowly reveals that the one to crush Satan is the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ, Who will be crucified on the cross, yet He will be raised to life

Adam and Eve had just rebelled and brought the curse of sin, yet God promises to deliver them. The grace of God is the fountainhead of His blessings, and in His sermon, Jesus announces that the Kingdom of God has come and these blessings are available to all who enter it.

PP 3-The Blessing is for those in Christ's Kingdom

“And He opened His mouth and taught them, saying: ‘Blessed are...’ Matthew 5:3a

Try and remember this little illustration that DL Moody once gave a poor shop girl who worked in a shop in Chicago. One day she could not have bought a dollar's worth of anything; the next day she could buy a thousand dollars' worth of anything she wanted. What made the difference? She married a rich husband. All he had become hers.

Christian, all that Christ has become yours when you respond to His invitation to follow Him.

PP ***“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places”*** Ephesians 1:3

This is blessing, and it comes only through Jesus, and it is the sharing in the very life of God.

It is only one Who has been saved through Jesus Christ who is a ***‘Blessed’*** person.

We use the term ***‘blessed’*** too loosely, like ‘God *bless* you’ when you sneeze, or ‘That athlete ball-player is *blessed* with athleticism’, or sing ‘God *bless* America’.

From the very beginning, God has been determined to bless His creation, to bless His people. God pours out the full expression of His blessings upon that which exists in a relationship with Him.

The Beatitudes, verses 3-12, are the declarations and promises of Jesus of the blessings that are for those who come into His kingdom.

They are guarantees that God has given His people a new capacity to live right.

If you come to Jesus for salvation, He saves you, giving you a new heart that empowers a new life, and this is what it means to be Blessed and to experience the joy and life of God.

The Jewish Elders had a very different view captured in this statement from a modern day Jew.

PP ***“We Children of Israel are righteous. For the Torah says so. Of course, we must uphold the Torah, or otherwise we might cease to be righteous. But as long as we keep the Torah, we are righteous.”*** <http://www.beingjewish.com/toshuv/salvation.html>

The Jewish Elders believed that Moses wrote down the Torah, but also taught the Oral Torah, the interpretations and applications of the Written Torah.

The Elders expanded on this, and eventually collected them into sayings and teachings.

For example, the Written Torah forbade work on the Sabbath, and Moses gave only a few explanations of how to keep it holy, separate from the rest of the week.

But there were too many loopholes and Israel kept breaking it so the Elders expanded on the rules and interpretations, building what was called a Fence around the Law.

What emerged were 39 categories of Sabbath prohibitions and each one having applications.

This fence, these traditions were considered so important that by keeping them, you maintain the inherent righteousness of being a Jew, and blessings came with it.

In short, a Jew believes they were righteous because they were in Israel, and they maintained righteousness by obeying all the Law, in effect producing their own righteousness.

The blessings of God were for those who kept and obeyed the Torah-written and oral.

The Sermon on the Mount dismantled this system, alarming and infuriating the Jewish leaders
Jesus taught that one must ***'Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand.'*** **Matthew 4:17**

A blessed person was a repentant person who was made right with God

And while the Pharisees taught how to live in order to be right with God, Jesus taught how to get
a righteous heart in order to live right before God

The blessed are those who have been given by God a new heart to live in His kingdom

PP To be ***'blessed'*** is to have a *divine joy and perfect happiness that is not dependent on outward circumstances*

It's to have a happiness that flows from participating in the very life of God, an inner contentment and satisfaction that comes when the heart is rightly aligned

The blessed have God's approval, acceptance and love and they experience the joy that comes from understanding and believing **Zephaniah 3:17**

PP ***"The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one Who will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness; He will quiet you by His love; He will exult over you with loud singing."***

But here is what separates the devout Jew from the Christian for they believe all I just said

The Christian understands that ***'The LORD God'*** Who ***'is in your midst'*** is Jesus

True blessing is rooted in Jesus Christ!

The ***'Blessed'*** belong to Christ's kingdom and brings them right back into the state of Adam and Eve's hearts when they were created as they were ***'naked and unashamed'***

The ***'Blessed'*** are those who have been made right by Jesus Christ, their sins atoned for, and brought into the family of God

They are wonderfully, beautifully declarations and promises of God's blessings for His people

They are words of celebration to the disciples who have been awakened by the power of God and brought into His kingdom

They are words of invitation to the crowd who have been mired in a false, wearying system of trying to obey the Law in order to be righteous

They are descriptions of the new heart that the Gospel creates

And they precede the training that Jesus will give His disciples as He trains them to be like Him in every way

To be the ***'blessed'*** of God, is to participate in the life of God experiencing unbroken joy and happiness because you understand that He rejoices over and exults over you

Christian, we are above all peoples of the world ***'Blessed'***

Next week we will look at the first of the beatitudes and see the promise and declaration of Jesus Christ for those whose hearts are spiritually poor

It is beautiful to God, yet repugnant to the world, and it is impossible for anyone without a heart that has been transformed by the power of the gospel

Amen

Pray