

# Pastor's Bible Class

February 1, 2025

## The Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

#932 "Jesus Sat with His Disciples" (*Sing to the tune of "Lord of Glory, You Have Bought Us"*)

Jesus sat with His disciples  
On a mountainside one day;  
As the crowds of people gathered,  
He began to teach and say:  
"Blessèd are the poor in spirit,  
Heaven's kingdom they will share.  
Blessèd are the sad and mourning,  
Joy and comfort will be theirs.

"Blessèd are the meek and humble,  
All the earth to them is willed.  
Those who hunger to be holy,  
They are bless'd and will be filled.  
Yes, the merciful are blessèd,  
Mercy will to them be shown.  
And the pure in heart are blessèd,  
They have eyes for God alone.

"Blessèd are God's sons and daughters,  
Making peace where there is strife.  
Blessèd are the persecuted,  
Who for righteousness lose life;  
Their reward is great in heaven,  
In the kingdom up above—  
So be glad to share My suff'ring  
And rejoice to know My love."

### Read Micah 6:1-8

1. What kind of picture is presented by the language used in verses 1 and 2?
2. Who is on trial?
3. From what you read in verses 3-5, what are the charges?
4. To what does God refer as He makes His point?
5. Examine the historical facts of which God reminds His people. What do these tell us about God's action in the life of His people?

6. In verse 6, the people respond, “With what shall I come before the Lord?” What meaning does this question and the suggestions that follow convey?

7. What is God’s response to these feeble suggestions?

8. How is Christ proclaimed in this Old Testament reading?

**Read Matthew 5:1-12**

9. Why are the crowds following Jesus? See Matthew 4:23-25.

10. What other important events from Scripture took place on mountains?

11. Why does Jesus sit?

12. Examine the words that Jesus uses to describe the “blessed.” In your own words, what do each of these descriptive phrases mean?

- The poor in spirit...
- Those who mourn...
- The meek...
- Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness...
- The merciful...
- The pure in heart...
- The peacemakers...
- Those who are persecuted for righteousness sake...

13. The Beatitudes or “blessings” are all described as a future condition except for two. What are they, and what does this tell us about the blessings of God in Jesus?

**Devotional Thought from “The Lutheran Study Bible”**

Jesus introduces His Sermon on the Mount with nine beatitudes that detail the “blessedness” of His disciples. These promised blessings are God’s gracious gifts to those who repent of their sins and trust Christ’s righteousness. Only after Jesus has assured His disciples of God’s goodness to them does He call on them (in the rest of His sermon) to be good and do good. When we recognize our own spiritual poverty, when the Lord leads us to hunger and thirst for righteousness, when He makes us pure in heart so that we seek to worship only the true God, then we are blessed, now and forever (*TLSB*, 1586).

**Closing Prayer**

Gracious Savior, keep my eyes ever focused on You and Your blessings, which are mine by grace alone. Amen.

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The tension between the "already now" and the "not yet" of the reign of God in Jesus is vital and central to the message of the Beatitudes. This "already/not yet" tension is reflected most obviously in the verbs in the ὅτι clauses, the tenses of which should be taken seriously. The ὅτι clause verb ἐστίν in Beatitudes 1 and 8 ("... is theirs," 5:3b; 5:10b) is present indicative. The verbs in the ὅτι clauses in Beatitudes 2–7 (5:4–9) are future indicatives. The reign of heaven in Jesus *already now* belongs to the poor in spirit (5:3b), even to those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake (5:10b). Yet the promise of final comfort (5:4b), final inheritance (5:5b), final satiation with God's saving righteousness (5:6b), final mercy (5:7b), the perfect vision of God (5:8b), and the blessed reception of full identity as the sons of God (5:9b) will come *only on the Last Day*. In the meantime, the disciples of Jesus must expect that their present existence, ever blessed because of Jesus' presence with them (18:20; 28:20), will nonetheless be characterized by "mourning," "hungering," and "thirsting" (5:4a, 6a). The equivalent statement in St. Paul's terms would be "We were saved in hope. ... But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait eagerly for it through endurance" (Rom 8:24–25). The tension between present blessing and joy on the one hand and present mourning until the final time of comfort on the other is central to life as Jesus' disciples. So certain and strong, however, is the promised final comfort that it impinges on and alters the present flawed existence. Jesus' disciples live now in light of what is to come. (CC)

To summarize this lengthy treatment of the Beatitudes, they do not make ethical demands, nor do they primarily exhort. They do not refer directly to Jesus himself. Rather, the subject of the main clause in every verse describes those whom Jesus has called to be his disciples. The first group of four blessings addresses Jesus' disciples in terms of their own innate emptiness (5:3–6). Left to themselves, apart from Christ, disciples (and all people) are "poor in spirit" and "lowly," given only to "mourning" and to "hungering." If one were to ask, "Where is Jesus?" with regard to the first four blessings, the answer would be, "In the ὅτι ('because ...')

clauses!" Those who have no resources to offer God are nevertheless eschatologically blessed, "*because*" Jesus has come to reign over such persons in grace and mercy, "*because*" the promised end-time blessings will come to those who have nothing besides God-given faith in Jesus. He is the Servant of Yahweh, proclaiming Good News to the poor! (CC)