



The Good Life

Sunday, June 2, 2024 - Pastor Jason Carter

Matthew 5:6-10

6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

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

There are **two parts** to following Jesus: (1) what He says and (2) what we hear. His call is to repent; a change of mind that leads to a change of life.

Example of renovations:

Imagine renovating part of your house or apartment. It will be messy, inconvenient, and often other people will be involved. It will cost money, time, and energy, and the cost may go up to finish the project. You may regret starting it in the middle of it. You may want to quit, but almost always you appreciate when it is done because it was what was needed and made your life better.

In the same way, **God wants to renovate our heart.** To transform us, for His kingdom to come to us and through us to our world. We are kingdom-bringers and we are image bearers of Jesus.

Practical practice of developing the habit of transformation

1. What is God saying through the Bible (either a message or reading, Spirit prompted)?
2. What is going on in your heart and mind?
3. Engage God in prayer. Talk to Him about this.
4. What mature believer in Christian community can you talk to? (Disciple and Empower)
5. Identify what action steps to implement (change thinking and new actions).
6. Pray and be honest with the Lord.

- Why is the "renovation" of our heart so difficult? What practical practice do you need to implement?

6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled."

We get cravings in both the natural and spiritual life. Spiritually, there are times we feel unsettled or unsatisfied and we misidentify it. We blame it on something in our natural world when there is a greater desire underneath it.

Jesus is presenting the idea of lacking something our body needs to survive but is connecting it with the spiritual life. This hunger and thirst remind us there is an **unmet need**.

Two meanings to righteousness: with God and with others.

Righteousness: justice, justness, righteousness, of which God is the source or author of divine righteousness.

Refers to what is deemed right by the Lord (after His examination), i.e. what is approved in His eyes.

Summed up: a state of rightness with God and others

1. Toward God: Jesus is pointing back to the Old Testament - righteousness by faith. Abraham and Sarah - "You will be a father of nations". They are both old, and not able in themselves to have children. They trust the promise God has given and God says this is righteousness.

God says, "by trusting me, you have done right by me."

When we accept and receive the forgiveness of Jesus, we are in right standing before God. This is righteousness through faith and as we learn to trust in Jesus, we find that we begin to relate rightly to God and people.

2. Righteousness (rightness) can also mean that relationships with groups of people are in right standing.

- To do right by someone else

This is defined as how we show up for each other. Not holy and uncaring, but holy and caring towards others.

Jeremiah 7:1-8 Hear the word of the Lord, all you people of Judah who come through these gates to worship the Lord. This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Reform your ways and your actions, and I will let you live in this place. Do not trust in deceptive words and say, "This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord!" If you really change your ways and your actions and deal with each other justly, if you do not oppress the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not follow other gods to your own harm, then I will let you live in this place, in the land I gave your ancestors for ever and ever. But look, you are trusting in deceptive words that are worthless."

Immigrants, orphans, and widows. In that culture, there were no safety nets, no welfare programs, nothing to fall back on. These were the most vulnerable in society. They were being shunned and that does not represent the heart nor character of God.

When we see poverty, lack or need, we must try to meet it:

This is one of our platforms with Kingdom Builders. The justice of God is to bring the gospel of God - both the gospel *message* and the gospel *action* - to do God's rightness to people.

Jesus explained that we will always have the poor among us. When we look at the systemic brokenness of humanity and that it will always be here, it might seem overwhelming and we may say, "What can I really do? What difference can I make?" And so we do nothing, but that is not God's plan.

We can't do everything, but we can do something. Do what is in front of you. When we are righteous, we are rightly representing God.

When we find ourselves hungering and thirsting for rightness with God and for others, we are desiring God's true justice.

This is the Good Life!

- What does "hunger and thirsting" for righteousness look like in your life?

Matthew 5:7 NIV

"Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy."

Merciful- *Hesed*: Covenant loyalty, lovingkindness, faithful love, graciousness, mercy.

Exodus 34:6 And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness"

Merciful action toward others is the concrete expression of your love for God. *Hesed* is not merely an emotion or feeling but involves action on behalf of someone who is in need. We tend to go above and beyond for our family and close friends.

We are merciful and loving. We are more likely to show grace, kindness to them, but what about others?

Parable of the Good Samaritan: Who is my neighbor?

Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?

The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him. The "one who showed mercy"- Go and do likewise!

The Good Life belongs to those who treat others as God has treated you!

- How can you show mercy to the neighbors in your life?

Matthew 5:8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God."

The pure of heart will be close to God.

PURITY - In the Old Testament, they would offer sacrifices to rid themselves of their sin and this was an external practice, but the goal was that they wanted purity in their own hearts so that they would be in right standing before God. **God is wanting us to grow in and walk in His character.**

Psalm 24:3-5 "Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place? The one who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not trust in an idol or swear by a false god. They will receive blessing from the Lord and vindication from God their Savior."

Matthew 15:19 "For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander."

It is normal to lament this idea, "Is it even possible?" God seems to think it is. Maybe not perfectly all the time, but to move and grow into a place through relationship with Him, that we can begin to more and more have purity of heart. How do we do this; live this out in our daily lives?

Psalm 51:10 "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me."

Hebrews 4:16 "Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

We can pray and ask the Lord to have the pure heart He speaks about.

The main idea or thought here: blessed are those who allow God access to their heart, to renovate and change their heart. Blessed are those who want God's heart to be their heart.

Those who have God's heart have the Good Life!

- Does God have full access to your heart? Have you asked Him to have His heart?

9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."

These are the systems in operation in the time of Jesus, the four major Jewish groups:

- **Sadducees:** keep the temple going, offer sacrifices pleasing to God, maintain the peace, get along with your political bosses as well as you can, do the best that you can, and hope that God will somehow validate it all (main Jewish leaders). Keep peace with Rome to keep power.
- **Pharisees:** If we can be obedient enough, get pure enough, keep Torah most accurately, then maybe the 'son of David' will come. (held no political position)
- **Essenes/Qumran:** separate yourself from the wicked world, say your prayers, and wait for God to do whatever God is going to do.
- **Zealots:** say your prayers, sharpen your swords, make yourselves holy to fight a holy war, and God will give you a military victory over the hordes of darkness.

How they thought about peace:

Sadducees: Peace will come as we broker peace with Rome for our benefit (stay in power).

Pharisees: Peace will come by following the rules and the more rules the better (control).

Essenes: Peace will come as we passively pull away (passive hope).

Zealots: Peace will come through war and the overthrow of Rome (overthrow by force).

Jesus' answer: The Good Life belongs to those who are peacemakers.

Sadducees: Blessed are those who won't compromise for personal power or to keep your power.

Pharisees: Blessed are those who live the law and not just mandate the law to control for peace.

Essenes: Blessed are those who do not withdraw. Can't make peace from what you have pulled away from.

Zealots: Blessed are non-violent, non-retaliatory response to Rome. An eye for an eye will not work.

- Remember, they are under the rule of Rome where soldiers and the tax system will determine existence and how loved ones will live.
- The different ideas of how to respond to Rome's rule has fractured the Jewish community's four groups: all desiring different things in their Jewish faith.
- Jesus is speaking truth to power and all four will be angry.

Jesus is inviting His peacemakers into conflict.

- Another way to think about this is: get into the arena of places of conflict to introduce the thoughts and principles of Jesus.
- The Greek word speaks to those who are actively engaged in creating or making peace. It is harmony being introduced to chaos.

Those who call themselves peacemakers will be called children of God. They will look, sound, and act like God's children.

The Good Life is for those who actively engage in making peace!

-How can you be a peacemaker in the conflict of the world we live in?

10 "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

This makes sense. If/when we introduce ourselves into conflict, we will experience persecution.

Refers to what is deemed right by the Lord (after His examination), i.e. what is approved in His eyes.

- We tend to think If that we do the right thing, life will go well and often it does.

- When you do the right thing, the biblical things, there will be those who oppose you and some of those will even be from those who call themselves Christians.
- ***Are we willing to be persecuted for what we believe and for how we live and love?***
- ***In a world of outrage all the time, how do we navigate righteousness and persecution?***

Jesus is speaking about good, God influenced motives to stand, to help, to serve and there will be others who hate it and will oppose it even if it is for the good of people.

“For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

- You may not fully see the reward for what you do here on earth.
- This is why we must do what its right, not just to receive a blessing from it.
- **We have to do the right thing because it is the right thing to do.**
- Jesus is wanting us to stand because this is who we are and what we believe.

So how do we live the sermon on the mount, the Christian ethic, day to day?

- Have character. Treat people like you have character and as one that is loved.
- Be trustworthy.
- Be the kind of person that your presence enriches others because you embody, you desire to live out the message of Jesus.
- Don't show up and do half work.
- Don't talk about people, you don't gossip.
- When you see a need, figure out your part in meeting it.
- Do your best to love with all you have, serve with all you have, give all you have.

Because you stand for and live in a different kingdom, it will resonate.

- You are a picture of the new creation and this new kingdom.
- Because of this, there will be people who may persecute you, mistreat you, talk about you.
- Yet Jesus says **we are blessed**.
- Jesus is saying in persecution, practice the celebration of faith and hope in the redemptive nature of God.

The Good Life belongs to the persecuted because of righteousness towards God and towards others.

- How will you handle when they mock you, speak evil of you, misunderstand you and your reputation is possibly trashed?

- Hunger and thirst to be made right with God and others.
- Be merciful. Remember what God has done for you. Don't hold grudges.
- Ask God to help make your heart pure.
- Be a peacemaker and bring the kingdom of God into conflict.
- Do right despite persecution.