

SERMON NOTES

Sunday, September 8, 2024

Upside Down Blessings

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” Matthew 5:3-12 (NIV)

From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near..[g]” Matthew 4:17 (NLT)

Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Matthew 6:10 (NIV)

Jesus replied, “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.” Matthew 22:37-39 (NLT)

“You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.” Matthew 5:13, 14-16 (NLT)

The Big Story of the Bible

1. Creation – the kingdoms of heaven and earth were one realm
2. Fall – the kingdoms of heaven and earth are torn apart
3. Redemption – the kingdoms of heaven and earth are overlapping



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4. New Creation – the kingdoms heaven and earth are one again

Questions for thought and discussion:

1. Describe how someone might answer this question from the perspective of the kingdom of this earth: What does it mean to live a blessed life? What evidence would you look for to determine whether their life was blessed or not?
2. How is Jesus' description of a blessed life upside down?
3. What is the kingdom of heaven? What does Jesus mean by "the kingdom of heaven has come near"?
4. Can you explain the big story of the Bible in terms of kingdoms - the kingdom of the earth and the kingdom of heaven?
5. What does it look like to live in the kingdom of heaven here and now?
6. When you think of heaven, do you think of it primarily as a place Christians will go when they die, or something that is coming to earth here and now?
7. What responsibility do we have to help bring the kingdom of God to earth?
8. How would you define sin? What does it mean to repent?
9. In his message, Pastor Jay said that repentance is a radical reorientation of one's life and priorities to align with the values of the kingdom of God. Are there areas in your life that you have not fully surrendered to Jesus or where your life is not aligned with God's kingdom values?
10. In his book *The End of Me*, Kyle Idleman says that Jesus becomes most real and present when we come to the end of ourselves. Do you agree or disagree? Can you think of a time when Jesus was most real and present to you? What was going on at the time that allowed you to experience Jesus this way?

