



GPS GUIDE: SEPTEMBER 18, 2022 G r o w . P r a y . S t u d y .

Series: Inside Out

Sermon: Blessings and Beatitudes

Matthew 5:1-10

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on the mountainside, and after he sat down and the disciples had gathered around, Jesus began to teach them: “Blessed are those who are poor in spirit: the kingdom of heaven is theirs. Blessed are those who are mourning: they will be consoled. Blessed are those who are gentle: they will inherit the land. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice: they will have their fill. Blessed are those who show mercy to others: they will be shown mercy. Blessed are those whose hearts are clean: they will see God. Blessed are those who work for peace: they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of their struggle for justice: the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

Daily Prayer – At the conclusion of each day’s meditation offer this as your prayer:

I breathe in God’s grace.

May it transform my insecurities

So that I breathe out God’s love

I breathe in God’s love

May it transform my fears

So that I breathe out God’s hope

I breathe in God’s hope

May it transform my doubts

So that I breathe out God’s faithfulness

I breathe in God’s faithfulness

May it transform my heart

So that I breathe out the Good News of Christ Jesus I breathe in the Good News of Christ Jesus

May it transform me

So that I breathe out God’s grace...

Monday: Read Matthew 5:3-10

Read the beatitudes again today. What do you notice? One key to understanding this passage is an understanding of what a beatitude is. A beatitude is a blessing or announcement of God's favor. The Greek word used here in Matthew is *makarioi* which might be translated "Happy are those who" or "How fortunate are those who." But those words lack something of the divine favor implied in the passage. So, what does it mean to be blessed in these ways? It might be that the most important implication of this passage is the divine, "*I am with you*" contained within these pronouncements. The implied whatever is going on in your life, wherever you find yourself, however you are struggling, "*you are not alone.*" Take heart, Be encouraged, God is here. Blessed are you, right now, today. In what ways have you experienced the blessing of divine presence? How has your "blessing" been unexpected or maybe even unwanted?

Tuesday: Read Job 42:10-17

Job was the richest man around, but in a single day, he was wiped out. The Sabaeans ran off with his oxen and asses and slaughtered the hired hands. Lightning struck his sheep barn and burned up the whole flock, not to mention the shepherds. The Chaldeans rustled his camels and took care of his camel drivers. A hurricane hit his house so devastatingly that there wasn't enough left to identify his 7 sons and 3 daughters. And then, Job came down with leprosy. Job was having the absolute worst day in history. He cursed the day he was born, he prayed to die, prayed for the sun to stop shining, but life went on. Why had God let such things happen? Where is blessing in suffering? Then "God blessed Job's later days even more than his former life..." (v.7) Job never got an explanation for the children, and house, and employees, and property that he lost because he never asked for one. And maybe the reason he never asked for one was because Job discovered an important truth: there is no making sense of suffering except to remember that God is with us always. In what ways does Job's story resonate with you? How have you experienced suffering, loss, sickness in your own life? In what way(s) was God present?

Wednesday: Read Genesis 28:10-16

The book of Genesis makes no attempt to conceal the fact that Jacob was, among other things, a crook. Twice he cheated his lame-brained brother, Esau, out of what was coming to him. At least once he took advantage of the blindness of his father, Isaac, and played him for a sucker. He outdid his double-crossing father-in-law, Laban, by conning him out of most of his livestock and by sneaking off with not only both the man's daughters but just about everything else that wasn't nailed down including his household gods. But Jacob was never satisfied. So, in this passage, Jacob dreamed that there was a ladder reaching up to heaven and that there were angels moving up and down it with golden sandals and rainbow-colored wings and that standing somewhere above it was God himself. And the words God spoke in the dream were not the chewing-out you might have expected, but something altogether different. God told Jacob that the land he was

lying on was to belong to him and his descendants and they would become a great nation and a great blessing to all the other nations on earth. And as if that wasn't enough, God then added a personal P.S. by saying, "Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go." A reminder to Jacob that there are a few things in this world you can't get but can only be given, and one of these things is love in general, and another is the love of God in particular. Lucky for Jacob, and us, God doesn't love people because of who they are, but because of who God is. When have you received an undeserved blessing from God? How has that blessing changed you?

Thursday: Read Luke 2:25-38

Jesus was still in diapers when his parents brought him to the Temple in Jerusalem "to present him to the Lord" (v.22), as the custom was, and offer a sacrifice, and that's when Simeon and Anna spotted him. These two had been waiting on pins and needles for what seemed like forever just for a glimpse of this baby who would change everything. The ultimate kind of "*God-parents*" these two devoted their lives to God, waiting just for the chance to bless this child who would become a blessing for the world. It's here Anna and Simeon teach us something important about giving and receiving blessings. You can't have one without the other. You must give in order to receive, but you must also be willing to receive in order to give. How have you offered blessing to someone else today? Can you name a blessing you have received willingly recently?

Friday: Read John 20:24-29

Imagination was not Thomas's strong suit. He called a spade a spade. He was a realist. If he didn't understand or believe he asked. There was the last time he and the others had supper with Jesus, for instance. Jesus was talking about dying, and he said he would be leaving them soon, but it wouldn't be forever. He said he'd get things ready for them as soon as he got where he was going, and when their time finally came too, they'd all be together again. Thomas couldn't hold back. He said, he personally had no idea where Jesus was going, and he didn't know the way to get there either. "I am the way," was what Jesus said to him (John 14:6), and although Thomas let it go at that, you can't help feeling that he found the answer less than satisfactory. For sure, Thomas gets a bad rap in this post-resurrection passage for his disbelief, for his need for carnal proof. But maybe the blessing here for Thomas is found in Jesus' meeting Thomas exactly where Thomas needs it most. Maybe there's a blessing here for us too? How has God met you in the midst of your questions or doubts? How did you respond?

Saturday: Read Acts 8:26-39

The name of the Ethiopian eunuch isn't given, but he was Secretary of the Treasury under Queen Candace of Ethiopia, and he had been to Jerusalem on a religious pilgrimage. It's important to note that, as a eunuch and as a foreigner, the Ethiopian would have been excluded from the rhythms of Jewish worship life, the scriptures and the practices remained a mystery despite the pilgrimage. It was on

his way home that the high point of the trip occurred. He was cruising along in his chariot reading out loud to himself from the book of Isaiah when the apostle Philip happened to overhear him and asked if he understood what the words were all about. The eunuch replied, "How can I unless someone explains it?" So Phillip tells him of who the prophet is speaking sharing with the Ethiopian the Good News of Jesus. The way things happened, a pond turned up by the side of the road as they traveled along, and the eunuch asked why he shouldn't give the thing a try right then and there and let Philip baptize him in it. So, it happened, and both went on their way changed. What was the blessing the Ethiopian Eunuch received that day? What about Phillip? Can you recall a time when you've been like the eunuch receiving an unexpected holy blessing? When you've been like Phillip and offered someone else, by word or action, the gift of God's welcome?