

# "How Blessed Are You?"

Micah 6:1-8; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31 & Matthew 5:1-12

January 30, 2005

Blessed are ..... So opens the beatitudes. They are some of the most well know of the statements of Jesus. They are certainly not among the most understood statements of Jesus - but we do go back over and over to these opening words of the Sermon on the Mount and read them and try to make sense of them.

Blessed are ,,,,,, Are you among those who are the 'blessed'? I know that we in the church talk often of the blessing that we have received. It is good 'church talk' to suggest that we are aware of the fact that God has blessed us. But often times it seems to me that it is really just talk - talk that suggests that we are blessed in some small way but not like those who are really the 'blessed' among us.

How blessed are you? Are you among the daily blessed - the constantly blessed because of who you are and because of who God is? Or is your understanding of being blessed limited to things that you experience? Often, as I talk to people, the times that I hear talk of being blessed is when it is in comparison with someone who is experiencing worse things in their life. I do understand it - I go out in the chilly North Dakota morning and grumble - but then think of those who have experienced the devastation of the tsunami in SE Asia or those who live in countries at war - and suddenly I realized how 'blessed' I am. And I think of how often I talk to people who are struggling thru medical problems and hear them talk about how blessed they are because they are not as bad as some others they have met. How blessed are you?

It seems that most times that I ponder the question of blessings I find myself thinking about an article I read in which a man came to a well know pastor in the 18<sup>th</sup> century to ask the pastor to help him express his gratitude to God. He told the pastor that God had really blessed him and told of riding in his buggy down a certain winding road when his horse got 'spooked' and became uncontrollable. After some time the buggy in which he was riding crashed against some rocks and was totally destroyed. To his amazement, the man picked himself up from where he had been thrown and found that he was totally uninjured. Feeling an overwhelming sense of gratitude toward God for such a blessing he now was looking for a way to express his thanks to God. The article told how the pastor responded by saying that he knew the road on which the accident had happened. In fact he had traveled down that very road hundreds of times. He had gone around that very curve in the road where this man's buggy had been destroyed and never once had he had any trouble - yet in all of those trips he had never had a single accident - but never once had he given thanks for God's great blessings to him in watching over him in such a way.

How blessed are you? The OT folk to whom the prophet Micah spoke in our first scripture today did not remember their blessings received from God. Micah lists several - rescued from slavery - saved from destruction - led safely across the Jordan River into the promised land ..... shouldn't they have remembered such mighty deeds that God had done on their behalf? Shouldn't their lives reflected the blessings received?

How blessed are you? Do you remember that God has rescued you from slavery and brought you to a land flowing with milk and honey. Do you remember that God has given you life, shelter from the cold, bread for the day, family and friends with which to share this life, and so very much more? Do you remember that God has promised to be with you and has power and grace sufficient for you? How blessed are you?

Unfortunately we have a very different way of judging who is blessed and what true blessings are. We judge blessedness based on a set of standards set by the world around us. The 'blessed' are the rich and powerful around us. The blessed are the famous who work in the spotlight. The blessed are the good looking [tall, skinny, sexy], strong, smart, head of the class, star of the team, guy in the big office.

Some years ago a North Carolina newspaper published an article entitled: "How Do You Measure Up As A Man? The article stated that some extensive research had been conducted on the 20th century standards for measuring a man. What they listed as the 'measure of a man' tell us about what we see as blessedness. The list included: 1. His ability to make and conserve money, 2. The cost, style and age of his car, 3. How much hair he has, 4. His strength and size, 5. The job he holds and how successful he is at it, 6. What sports he likes, 7. How many clubs he belongs to, 8. His aggressiveness and reliability.

How blessed are you. We could make a much longer list of all of the things that we really understand as the things that make for being blessed. But our list would not be God's list. And unfortunately many people live miserable lives because they have not made it on to the world's 'blessed' list. How blessed are you?

Paul talks about the wisdom of the world that is quite different than the wisdom of God - in fact, so different that the world would call God's wisdom foolishness. Paul says that the blessing that he is speaking about is not based on being wise or powerful by human standards, it is not even based on who you are [as though there are some of 'noble birth' and some who are not]. What he says is that we are blessed because God has chosen us. How blessed are you?

What Jesus says is that we are the blessed if we are humble enough to put our lives in God's hands - humble enough to care about all of God's creation and not just ourselves. He says that we are blessed when we love enough to weep for another and caring enough to really listen to others without having to be the 'top

dog' or the one with all of the answers. Jesus says that we are truly blessed when we have a deep desire for righteousness and mercy. Jesus says that we are truly blessed when our hearts desire that which is pure and we long for peace enough that we are willing to forgive and be forgiven. We are blessed when we live as God's people! How blessed are you?

We are so good at making lists of the truly blessed - the smartest, the best dressed, the rich and famous, the best athletes, the best artists, and so on. But God makes a different kind of "Who's Who" list. They are the "Blessed". They are the ones of do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with their God. They are the peacemakers, the pure of heart, the meek. They are the ones who rejoice everyday that their lives are in God's hands.. There we are blessed. - - - How blessed are you?

AMEN