

(Note: Resource for message: Skip Moen, *The Lucky Life*.)

Introduction:

- I want to start into a new series of message as we continue to explore the Kingdom of God this year. I want to spend a few weeks talking about the culture of the Kingdom. We pray the prayer "*on earth as it is in heaven*." most times in reference to prosperity, health, faith, and blessings. Not often does the phrase "*On earth as it is in heaven*" get applied to character.
- Cultures are built by thoughts, thoughts become our beliefs or our practices and beliefs sustained over time become our culture.
 - I did a series of messages several years ago titled: The Kingdom Code of Conduct. In that series we looked at the expectation that the King of Kingdom has of His subjects.
 - The Kingdom revolves around the King of the kingdom. The King comes first and then we have a Kingdom. His word stands! His decrees cannot be changed. The king holds all authority of the kingdom. The king owns everything in the kingdom therefore his wealth determines the strength of his kingdom. The people have no rights, no property and no say. They are considered subjects of the King. This is a great system of government if you have a great King.
 - Every king has thoughts. And every king has beliefs. And the king's belief becomes the culture of the kingdom. Our King is good! Our King is kind! Our king is generous! Our King is life giving! Our King does no harm to His subjects! For they are the apple of His eye!
- CS Lewis said, "*A car is made to run on petrol gas, and it would not run properly on anything else. Now God designed the human machine to run on himself. He himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn, or the food our spirits were designed to feed on. There is no other.*" APPLICATION Lewis concluded, "*That is why it is just no good asking God to make us happy in our own way without bothering about religion (relationship with GOD). God cannot give us a happiness and peace apart from himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing.*" So when speak of the culture of the Kingdom, know that it requires a relationship with God to produce accordingly.
- Think about this statement: "Luck is for losers." Only those who are losing or stand in the face of losing wish for luck. "Winners don't believe in luck. But they do believe in the lucky life. ... Stop waiting for good luck and start living the lucky life - the life God designed." Skip Moen
- Jesus in Matthew 5-7 gives us the handbook to living the 'happy' life. Mt 5:1-11

I. Sit Them Down and Freak Them Out

- A. Jesus seeing the crowds invites them to sit down so that He can begin pouring the culture of the Kingdom into His followers. Jesus longs to pour Kingdom culture into all of us. In our passage we find two groups of people.
1. The crowds - οχλος - crowd, throng, multitude, large public group.
 - a) When Jesus saw the crowds He always moved in such a way to call them into follower-ship. He was moving them from separation from God to nearness to God. He love the crowds just as fisherman loves a stream filled with fish!
 - b) His disciples naturally came and gathered around Him.
 2. The disciples - μαθητας - means: to learn, to know, to understand.
 - a) A disciple, therefore was a follower with the purpose to learn and to understand. There was a crowd that was following Jesus but within that crowd were those who were serious about being followers of Jesus for the purpose of learning His ways and learning about the Kingdom.
 - b) This word has strong emphasis on following. In Mt 5 Jesus is seeking to establish commitment to following Him. He is seeking to remove the casualness of the crowd from them and call them to a place of whole hearted commitment.
 - c) "True *manthánein* is not just by the law but by the gospel, i.e., by Christ himself." TDNT
- B. He begins teaching them.
1. He 'opened his mouth' resonates with OT scripture that carry a prophetic utterance. In other words, God began to speak to them. There is a difference between the sound of man talking and the sound of God talking. Luke 24:32 Road to Emmaus. "*Did our hearts no burn within us...?*"
 2. He began teaching them. He is explaining the culture of the Kingdom, both purpose and operation/function. What it is. Why it is. How it operates.
 3. What He starts teaching was said in such a way as to arrest the attention of the hearer. It was shocking. He presents teaching through 'shock and awe.'
- C. He starts 'freaking them out' by what He is saying. In other words He starts by 'freaking them out' with the beatitudes. These are paradoxes that carry a message but which no one wants to look for. I.e. *Blessed are you when you are persecuted...* who is going to seek after that! We have reduced the beatitudes to religious teachings that exhort us to do in order to get. Like what the Pharisees and teachers of the law would do.
1. But that is not Kingdom understanding. When we read these we have to get into the mind of the audience like we are hearing this for the first time. The beatitudes are not a manual or handbook that teach us how to receive blessings rather they are about how to respond to life as it is

2. The beatitudes are to be penetrating, demanding and incredibly revealing looks into a Kingdom that is nearly invisible to the commonsense eye. Are they penetrating for you when you read them? These words should not comfort us but shock us. They don't do this anymore because we are familiar with them and have been taught wrong.

II. Happy Happy Happy Ie. Video

- A. What is Jesus after? Here is what Jesus is after. It is the pivotal scripture/purpose of the sermon on the mount. *“But I warn you—unless your righteousness is better than the righteousness of the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven!”* (Matthew 5:20, NLT) He is after righteousness. Righteousness is what spared Noah and family. Righteous is what was given to Abraham when he was going to sacrifice his son in obedience to God. Righteousness is what the prophets called Israel and Judah back to. Righteousness is why Jesus came... so that those who would believe in Him would be made righteous. Because: without righteousness no one will ever see God or enter into relationship with God.
 1. We have to keep what Jesus was after in mind as we begin the sermon on the mount.
 2. The beatitudes become the introduction to the establishing of Kingdom culture in His audience.
- B. The defining difference is in how we understand the word 'Blessed' in this passage.
 1. Most people understand the word 'blessed' as in something the greater does for the lesser. Therefore I do something in order to receive something/to be blessed by God. I am going to show that we have been misunderstanding this.
 2. The word μακαριοι is used 9 times in this section. Note for your Bibles: the word makarioi is an adjective...not a verb. It is used to describe something not to show an action. Most often it is taught as a verb: "If you will be poor God will bless you. If you will be humble God will bless you." BUT: makarioi is used to describe the state of something who already has... Nine times Jesus uses the word to describe someone who already has something, not who is in the process of getting.
 - a) The use of this word announces something important beyond its literal meaning. It's historical use was used of short sayings that proclaimed a happy release from the sorrows of life.
 - b) The word barak in Hebrew means to bless as in verb action. The word makarioi is the word used to translate the Hebrew word *ashrei* which is a noun describing the state of a persons being. Never used of God but used to describe the inner state of a man or nation that enjoys relationships with God.
 - c) The Hebrew word *ashrei* announces good fortune or congratulations to the man whose inner state is blissful/happy/blessed. It is not the result of blessing. It is the result of actions already taken on ones own. My decisions and my

- behavior determine whether I enjoy inner bliss/happiness/blessing. This is what Jesus is saying in the 'beatitudes.' This inner happiness is based on those who actions express the character of God. They describe the 'kind of person' who experiences something about God's character as they realize something about themselves.
3. The problem with this understanding is that the people Jesus uses to describe as candidates for this inner bliss, happiness, luck life seem to be the least likely candidates! everything about them in common sense terms says they shouldn't be happy.
 4. A macarism announces, the favor, tells who has it, and then gives the reason why. Jesus is telling us what it means to be happy not how to get happy. All the beatitudes focus on something that the world rejects or attempts to avoid. But Jesus is saying we have to see 'backwards' if we are to see God's reign!

III. Beggars Living In Bliss

""Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:3, NKJV)

- A. The question in this beatitude is not what I have or do not have but, who do I worship. Remember Jesus is calling the disciples to commitment. Listen closely, He is saying. If you hear what I have to say you will think you have just won the lottery. You will be so happy, so filled with joy you will not know what to do with yourselves.
 1. The statement is passive. God is the active agent not the people who are already happy. They are the passive recipients of this joy/bliss/lucky life. They win and they don't even have a ticket to win! The implication behind, "blessed are"...is that people have to earn something. This is totally contrary to the Gospel. Jesus is setting the record straight. There is no earning here only recognition. Macarioi does nothing more than tell us the subjects are lucky/happy/blissful. It does not tell how they got it. When you understand this you see that this bliss/happiness is a gift not something that is earned.
- B. There are two words for poor in the Greek that can be used.
 1. penes - which speaks of a person who lives from day to day. No savings, nothing to draw from just life from day to day. The day laborer. Like those hired to work and they all get the same pay at the end of the day. They are the surviving. These are not the poor that Jesus speaks of.
 2. ptochos - these are the homeless, the totally bankrupt. The word carries the connotation of cowering in fear. These people are not even surviving. They are dying, right here, right now. They are people who have nothing...they are without. In our society they are worthless vagabonds. These are those Jesus speaks of. They can only beg. You cannot have pride and beg! To beg you have to lose your pride.

- a) Jesus blessing was not for the ptochoi but for the ptochoi in spirit! No ptochoi could survive a day if they allowed themselves to be governed by pride. They were saturated with humility!!! Pride could only produce starvation.
 - b) Jesus is proclaiming that the poor in spirit were the luckiest people alive. The happiest people alive.
3. Our false pride means that we would rather die than admit what we really are - bankrupt with out God. This false pride causes us to live with self sufficient hearts.
- C. The Truth
1. Only those totally destitute of their own righteousness will the Kingdom of Heaven come to.
 2. The Kingdom is a direct result of those who seek Him in total spiritual poverty. The Kingdom arrives to the spiritual beggar who has lost all pride and calls for mercy. The Kingdom of Heaven spoken of is the same as the Kingdom of God's reign. It is His reign not a place.
 3. Why are the ptochoi so happy? Because they recognize their spiritual destitution/ spiritual poverty is the very reason why the Kingdom of Heaven has come.
 4. The gift is given to those who see they are bankrupt spiritually. They are the lucky ones. They are the happy ones. Who spiritually bankrupt in humility find mercy and live a happy, blissful life.

Conclusion:

- Those who think they have spiritual credit are the losers.
- Happy, blissful, blessed are those who have not pride and realize their spiritual poverty. These are those that the Kingdom of Heaven comes for.