

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

Introduction:

- Mt 5:1-5 *"One day as he saw the crowds gathering, Jesus went up on the mountainside and sat down. His disciples gathered around him, and he began to teach them. "God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted. God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth."* (Matthew 5:1-5, NLT)
- Jesus begins to instruct the crowd and the disciples (followers for the purpose of learning) in the culture of the Kingdom. In culture, our thoughts become our beliefs. Our beliefs become our practices. And our beliefs and practices done over time become our culture.
- What we know as the beatitudes is Jesus' opening introduction to the sermon on the mount. The heart of the introduction is to establish what it is like to have a relationship with God. This relationship is mandatory in order to receive the rest of the sermon. The main focus of the entire sermon on the mount is *"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).

I. The Key to the "B"

- A. The key to the nine beatitudes.
 1. Each one of the 'beatitudes' begins with an adjective describing the state of a person already having received something. It is not a verb! Verbs inform us that we must do something.
 2. IE. After a big event reporters often ask, "How do you feel?" Question that is asked of all successful people at the apex of an event.
 - a) Orioles win: How do you feel? (Steve Wilkerson, center fielder who pitched close) of the Orioles, last Friday: *"I don't think I've wrapped my head around it yet," Wilkerson said after the game. "What a wild game. That was just crazy. I'm glad I could go out there and be part of getting us a win."* "He could have said, "I feel like the luckiest man on earth!"
 - b) How does it feel to be part of the Celtics team? Tacko Fall (7feet 7 inches tall) - *"Excited to be part of the Celtics' organization. It's the beginning of seeing my dream come true...Gonna stay humble but I'm hungry and determined."* He could have said, *"I feel like the luckiest man on earth!"*
 - c) When the building was paid off, I was asked: How do you feel? *"I feel like I am in a dream Aw* with a description of a man who has already received something from God.
- B. Second key is: The power of paradox is shocking. Each of the beatitude is stated in such a way that it is a paradoxical presentation. Jesus does this to shock His hearers into listen carefully for the purpose of thinking and of discovering truth.
 1. These paradoxes carry a message which no one wants to look for. Ie. *Blessed are you when you are persecuted...* who is going to seek after that! *Blessed are those who mourn.*

2. The beatitudes are not a manual or handbook that teach us how to receive blessings rather they are about the state of an individual that has come into relationship with God.
 3. The paradox leads the listener to the place where they experience Zoe (Life) in the midst of life no matter how it comes.
- C. Understanding the key word, or recognizing the key
1. The Word used is makarioi /μακαριοι. It is an adjective not an action word. Nine times Jesus uses the word to describe someone who already has something, not who is in the process of getting.
 2. Makarioi - means to live in the state of blessedness, to be free from all cares and worries. Fullness of life. To live in the place of divine fortune/favor...luck! It is unforeseen success!
 - a) Imagine how you would feel if you just won 500 million jackpot on a ticket you never bought.
 - b) With one phone call, you have no more debt, no mortgage, kids Harvard education paid for, and retirement all taken care of.
 3. 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. Makarioi became little says like proverbs that carry wisdom which results in this blessed state/favor or state of constant luck. This unforeseen success.
 4. The Hebrew word *ashrei* (makarioi's counter part) announces good fortune or congratulations to the man whose inner state is blissful/happy/blessed/ experiencing unforeseen success. It is not the result of being blessed. It is the result of actions already taken on ones own. 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.
- D. Last week: *“God blesses those who are poor (in spirit) and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.”* (Matthew 5:3, NLT)
1. 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.
 2. Two words for poor in the Greek. penes - surviving from day to day. Ptochos - homeless poor as in having nothing, totally destitute.
 3. The word carries the connotation of cowering in fear. These people are not even surviving. They are dying, right here, right now. 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. THAT IS SHOCKING, RABBI!

II. Lucky are those who mourn Is 61:2-3 It is a message of restoration;

- A. Let me say this first to make my self clear. This scripture is not saying those who mourn are happy. That is nonsense.
- B. No place like a funeral to get in touch with temporariness of this life. Grief, sorrow, despair, get us looking inward where we are most aware of our loss and helplessness. It is in those moments that we begin to realize just how frail we are. IE. When I was young, I never thought about death except to see how close I could come to it because I was young and foolish. Then I had a cousin who died in a car accident. A classmate who died in a car accident. Then I was reminded how weak and frail I am in this life. I haven no power to make me or anyone else live.
 - 1. Jesus looks at this sea of faces and knows how they are living in the whirl pool of death. He knows that weakness and frailty has touched them closely. He also knows: *"Because God's children are human beings—made of flesh and blood—the Son also became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death."* (Hebrews 2:14, NLT)
 - 2. He is to experience this to the greatest depth! He looks at the sea of grieving, despairing faces and He says, *"Lucky are those mourn for they shall be comforted."* "SHOCK!!!" this group knows mourning! They were the poor, the lame, the sorrowful. They were the sick. Their children knew hunger. (Is 61:1-2) They did not have far to fall to experience this. Jesus left heaven to come to them. Jesus was coming from a much higher altitude to earth in His descent to us. *"He was despised and rejected— a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief. We turned our backs on him and looked the other way. He was despised, and we did not care."* (Isaiah 53:3, NLT)
- C. Two words for mourn in the greek.
 - 1. threneo - which describes the ritual side of mourning. Like the professional mourners of Jesus days. Attending a funeral is threneo. It is expect of people.
 - 2. pentheo - it is a word of passion...ie. grief, sorrow, anger, envy. These emotions disturbed the Greek in his balance of life. Therefore they were to be avoided. No one could be happy and have these. This word is almost always associated with grief, whether for the individual or the community in disaster. There is nothing good about this word, mourn!
 - 3. Yet Jesus calls those who mourn as lucky! Why? The reason Jesus gives is this. Those who mourn will be comforted. But Jesus, this make no sense!
 - a) It is not to those 'who' mourn. "Who" is not in the sentence. Translators put that word in there to help us. It literally reads, "Happy/Blessed/Lucky are those mourning...right now...at this moment.

- b) The weight is right now on the heart! The gasp, the piercing blow of bitter news hitting full force. Jesus says, "Listen, right now in the center of your pain is a promise—you are the lucky one for you will be comforted.
 - c) The other reason Jesus calls the mourners lucky is this. ***Mourning means they have given up their delusions of control, power and protection that they thought they carried. They now know that life is fragile, they are weak and no longer in charge. Most of the time we operate from the frame of reference that life revolves around us. ***Mourning brings about the acute awareness that we are powerless...and this is essential in spiritual growth.
 - d) Jesus knew that those mourning were ready to receive God's gracious favor (lucky them! Happy them! I didn't see that coming!) God's heart is moved by those who are mourning. Jesus was anointed for this. Unless we are 'broken' like the ones who mourn, we will not notice that God is here! Right now!
 - e) It is not a beatitude offering hope after death! The crowd was ready because they could no longer cope by themselves. If you are too pre-occupied with your own agenda you will not notice how near God is. IE. Before Christ, I used to dream of graduating, getting a good job, get married, have kids and go back to church. I had my agenda. I was preoccupied with my plans. I didn't even know how close God was. Then my cousin died.
4. This brings us to the word comforted. Parakaleo - para, beside. And kaleo - which is the action of calling.
- a) ****Jesus says, (drum roll) Those of us now mourning are lucky/blessed/happy because we are ready to have God answer our call! The answer is not far away or coming from a far place. It is actually right beside me. Staking me up!
 - b) We have the guarantee that no matter what crisis comes upon us...GOD IS HERE! I can trust Him because He himself has overcome death.
 - c) In this beatitude Jesus announces that DEATH IS NOT THE END! When it looks like all is lost remember that death does not win!
- D. Why is the macarism so shocking? Because we all to the best of our ability try to avoid the condition necessary to experience happiness.
- 1. We are trying to prevent grief (why so many self medicate.) And escape death. But until we see that this world along with ourselves are broken, death is here, and we are not in control...we will not be ready to be comforted by God.
 - 2. The moment that I can see that my life is not my own, then and only then will I be ready to hear His message of Comfort!
 - 3. ***Blessed, at this moment, are those who are broken over life's finality and their weakness because now God's gracious love will stake them up and His promise declares that death is defeated.
 - 4. Until you realize you are broken and powerless you can not in any way receive God's comfort.

Conclusion:

- The kingdom has a culture. It is a system of beliefs that when practice over time will become our culture.
 - The spiritually homeless is not surviving, he is dying. He must push aside his pride in order to ask for what he does not deserve. But when he does push aside his pride....the kingdom of heaven is his.
 - The one who mourns right now, realizes his fragility, weakness and brokenness. To him who abandons his self sufficiency. He is the one who suddenly is comforted... knowing that God is right there beside him.
- Make Jesus your savior today.