

Read: Luke 6:17-26

Blessed?

Luke 6:20b-23a

Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Tommy was looking forward to three months of summer ahead of him. He just finished second grade and was thinking of all the summer activities he would enjoy. As the summer days came and went, Tommy found it difficult to make a lot of friends in his neighborhood. He knew God wanted him to respect his parents and people of authority by listening to them and obeying them.

A few boys in the neighborhood were talking about Mrs. Beekermann. Mrs. Beekermann was a kind grandma, who asked the boys to stay out of her flowers during the summer. The flowers brought much joy to her and to those with whom she shared them. But often, the neighborhood boys rode their bikes through the flower beds, killing the flowers. "Mrs. Beekermann—or should I say Mrs. *Beeker-meanie-man*—is such a *mean* lady," Joey joked. "Let's plan to ride through her flowers this summer. We can always get a good laugh watching her try to save the flowers," said Joey.

That bothered Tommy. "Mrs. Beekerman is a wonderful person who should be respected. She shares her flowers with others, and they bring lots of smiles," Tommy told the boys.

The neighborhood boys made fun of Tommy for speaking up for Mrs. Beekermann. Every day when Joey and a few others saw Tommy outside, they would make fun of him for following Jesus' commands. But then one day, an older neighborhood boy named Peter had enough. Peter also believed in Jesus and knew the words Tommy used when talking to the other boys were from Jesus. You see, Peter read the Bible too. Tommy and Peter started playing together and enjoyed talking about other lessons Jesus taught them. The other boys in the neighborhood may not have invited Tommy and Peter to all of their summer activities; however, Tommy and Peter had a great summer together.

Someone would not hear Tommy and Peter's story and call them "blessed." According to this world, blessed people have lots of friends, lots of toys, or lots of talents. Then again, God turns this world's definition upside down. He tells us that we are blessed when we are poor, hungry, crying, hated, excluded, insulted, and rejected because of him. From the world's point of view

and even from our own experiences, that seems like a contradiction. As a follower of Christ, we live with a heavenward focus. Knowing the work of getting right with God is accomplished through Jesus, we work hard—not to get a reward but to follow Christ in willing obedience with words and actions that reflect him.

While we might or might not be enjoying an earthly abundance of stuff, the kingdom of heaven is ours—what more do we need? While we might suffer hurt feelings, name-calling, and being left out here on earth (like Tommy and Peter did), we will be part of the greatest party ever that never ends. Blessed to be poor, sad, and hurt? Yes, indeed—because of what God has in store for us eternally, great *is* your reward in heaven!

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- Why didn't Tommy want to ride his bike in Mrs. Beekermann's flowers?
- Why were the other neighborhood boys so mean?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- Describe three blessings of having a grandparent in your life.
- Why is it more of a blessing to have Jesus as our Savior than to own lots of earthly possessions?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Describe a time when you had to say "no" to something friends wanted you to do with them that you knew was wrong.
- How does today's Bible passage remind you how blessed you are even if you face trouble for following Jesus?

Closing Prayer:

Dear Lord, when our feelings are hurt because we're living as your disciples, keep our eyes focused on the real reward—life eternally in heaven with you! Amen.