

Read: Matthew 5:1-12

It's All Backward

Matthew 5:1-12

Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them.

He said:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

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

Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) has these things called "hashtags." It's basically a way for people to stamp their messages with a theme or an overall idea. *#blessed* is one of the more popular options out there. The common thread for using that tag *#blessed* is usually connected to some kind of *success* story.

We have strict standards of when that word "blessed" applies. Misusing it and applying it to situations where it doesn't fit just waters-down its meaning and value. And if you do see someone using it in tough situations, it will probably throw you for a loop.

In today's devotions, Jesus says "blessed" 9 times in 12 verses. As you look through that list of what being *#blessed* looks like, a few things are probably going to jump out at you. It's all backward!

But Jesus isn't making an announcement here: "You have to be these things to be blessed." No, he is saying that his faithful followers are blessed even when they are experiencing something awful. Even in the lowest low or the darkest dark this life can throw at you, Jesus says you are blessed in spite of the present terribleness all around you!

Is Christ worth it? We give up nothing. We gain everything. It might mean someone laughing. You'll ask yourself, "Is it worth it?" Who better to tell us that than Jesus? He looked at us in our sad state and wanted to do something about it. He wanted to give us all the spiritual blessings we crave but could never get on our own. And so to give you those blessings, and so many more, he took all of your sins and the curse that comes with them to the cross... and he forgave every last one of them, so you could truly be called "blessed." So "rejoice and be glad, because 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

- Where was Jesus when he taught this lesson?
- Jesus said, "Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in _____."

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- Ask your mom or dad (or an older brother or sister) what "blessed" means.
- How do you think people reacted when they heard what Jesus was saying for the very first time?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Which one of these "blessed" things Jesus mentions do you struggle with the most?
- How can you rejoice and be glad even when tough things are happening to you?

Closing Prayer:

Lord Jesus, you call us blessed, even when we are facing tough times. Thank you for giving us the blessings of being part of your kingdom now and forever. Amen.