

## Written Copy: Matthew 5:3-5 Feeling Blessed as You Mourn

All Saints Day

Sunday, November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020

### Text: Matthew 5:3-5

<sup>3</sup> "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. <sup>4</sup> "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. <sup>5</sup> "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

### Exegetical Statement

After seeing the large crowd that is following Him, Jesus chooses to put some distance and separation between them and His disciples. They are following Him for sinful selfish reasons: for what they can do for them now. And when He stops fulfilling their temporal desires, they will turn away from Him. His disciples on the other hand are following Him because they believe He is God's chosen Messiah. He goes up on the mountain so He can speak directly to these disciples, while at the same time the crowd can still hear what He has to say, and some may come to faith. He begins by pronouncing the blessings of God upon those who are poor in spirit, who confess they can offer nothing of worth to their God. Jesus tells these repentant souls that the kingdom of heaven, and all that comes with it: forgiveness, salvation, and the inheritance of eternal life is theirs right now. He has come to give them this gift and it is being given in His words of blessing. Likewise those who are grieved by their sin and the effects of sin upon the world will receive comfort when the kingdom rule encompasses all on the Last Day. Those who have the character of humble gentle strength of faith (meekness) will inherit the new heaven and earth. Those who hunger and thirst for a life that is in right standing with God will be totally satisfied on that day. Those whose hearts and lives have been changed with hearts purified by the Gospel cleansing show mercy and compassion now and will receive the ultimate gift of mercy in eternal life when they see their Savior face to face. They are chosen to be peacemakers who deliver the Gospel that brings peace with God and one another, that's who they are as sons of the God of peace. But this message of peace will cause persecution, verbal insult, and defamation of character from those who actively oppose the rule of Christ, preferring to rule themselves, not wanting to answer to a higher power. We know by faith that we are still blessed by God because their actions mean His kingdom is ours now, and His reign and rule will fill all of reality on the Last Day.

### Focus Statement:

Jesus pronounces blessing upon all who mourn, no matter what they've lost. They are blessed because they are members of His kingdom. They've been shown they are spiritually destitute without Him. But by the gift of faith given in the Gospel proclamation of "Blessed are you" we are given the gift of His presence now and all that comes with it now: salvation, forgiveness of sins, and His loving purifying presence. And we hold fast to the promise of these blessings in full in eternal life.

### Function Statement:

#### Why it's important to know:

We say we are "blessed" when good and miraculous things happen in our life. But can we still honestly say that "we" are blessed when tragedy strikes? Do we feel blessed when mourning and grief become our constant companion?

#### What the hearer should do as a result:

When times of mourning and persecution come, look not to the reality we see with our eyes, but the reality that is Jesus kingdom reigning in us now and in totality on the Last Day

### Subject Sentence: Jesus kingdom blessing now in times of mourning

## **Introduction: What We Mean by “Being Blessed”**

Meet Nancy. Nancy put herself through college by working full time and taking classes when she could fit them in. It took longer than 4 years, almost double that. But she would say that she is blessed to have only a fraction of the student loan debt that some of her classmates carry. Unlike many of them, she found a position in her chosen field as a physical therapist within 6 months of graduation. And she loves what she does, it hardly seems like work. It was there at her practice that she met the man that would be her husband. He was a former NFL star quarterback that received a career ending injury. After his operation, his doctor sent him to Nancy for post op rehabilitation. And they really hit it off. They married a year after they started dating. His good looks, knowledgeable insight, and gregarious manner made him perfect as a color commentator for network football games. Nancy’s salary was adequate. But with his income they moved into a new tax bracket. They were able to afford a great house out in the suburbs, and a vacation place off a big lake out in the country. She drives a Cadillac Escalade; he drives a brand-new Camaro in the summer and a 4-wheel drive Jeep Wrangler unlimited edition in the winter. Their kids go to the best private Christian school. Nancy would tell you that she and her family have been blessed.

But then, one evening while coming home from a visit to her house, Nancy’s parents were involved in a head on collision with a drunk driver going the wrong way on the freeway. Her father was killed almost instantly. Her mother survived the crash but was in a coma and on life support with extensive brain damage. She was not expected to recover. Her advance directive made it clear she did not want to be kept on life support if there was little chance of recovery. So, Nancy, still in shock over what had happened, agreed to let them pull the plug. Her mother passed away in her arms. Both mom and dad had barely turned 70 and were in good health. She thought they had many more years to enjoy being grandma and grandpa to her children. But in an instant, it seemed everything changed.

When the visitation and the funeral were over, and she was left with the task of sorting through her parents’ personal effects, a dark black cloud of grief settled over her and took up residence in her life. She alternated between times of emptiness and numbness to gut wrenching sadness. She didn’t want to talk to anybody, after all who would want to share this depression with her? And her friends from Church didn’t call her because they didn’t want to bother her, or upset her, or make her cry. The last thing she would call herself now is blessed. That feeling of blessedness and happiness was gone. She was deeply hurt. And when anyone tried to point out how blessed she still was, with her marriage, family, and house, she either tuned them out, or shut them up with strong harsh words.

Imagine how Nancy would feel if she was sitting here among us with as we sang the Sermon Hymn "Blessed are They" with the line "Blest are they, full of sorrow, they shall be consoled" How would she feel singing those words? How would she feel hearing the reading of our Gospel Lesson of **Matthew 5:4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted"**? Would it ring hollow in her ears? Would it make her grief seem wrong and out of place for a Christian? Would she be wondering where this comfort is supposed to come from? Perhaps some of you have felt like Nancy.

## **What Jesus Means by Being Blessed**

Who is Jesus speaking to and what does He mean by this verse? He is speaking it to Nancy, and to you, and to me. He is speaking to the Church. And in His Sermon on the Mount He is speaking to the lost world as well, describing a new and different reality to them and to us.

His original audience were His disciples. These would include the four fishermen that He had called just prior to this: Simon (aka Peter) and his brother Andrew, and brothers James and John. But He is preaching not just to them, but also to other men and women who had answered His call to repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. They had given up their lives to follow Him. These were the Church. Jesus had seen the crowd that was following Him. He knew many of them were only looking for the next miracle, or for Him to heal some malady in their life. But they were not invested and believing Him to be the Messiah He was claiming to be. So He separated Himself from this crowd by climbing up on the mountain. And it was these disciples who came and sat down. It was to these that He began to preach.

He begins by saying (Matthew 5:3) "**Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**" Who are these who are poor in spirit, and how could anyone who is considered poor be blessed? The poor in spirit are these disciples gathered before Him on the mountain, but also you and I gathered here today. We who have heard Jesus' call to repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. We've looked inside ourselves and see that spiritually speaking we are destitute. We've stood before the Lord with nothing worthy in our hearts and souls. Nothing worthy of gaining us entrance into His kingdom. The only thing we have to present to Him are hearts and minds that are filled with sin. We deserve eternal banishment from the Lord's presence instead of entrance into His kingdom.

But Jesus declares to you and to me that we indeed are blessed! Blessed because of what He has come to do. He came to make us worthy of entrance into the kingdom of heaven by removing all that unworthiness from your heart and soul forever by His death and resurrection. He earned that for all men, and in your baptism reached down and gave it to you. He reached down into your heart and life at your baptism and pulled you out of the kingdom of eternal death and placed you into His kingdom, where He reigns and rules in your heart. He has sealed you into His kingdom and no one can pull you out of it. What Jesus is preaching to you and to me today in this verse is Good News, Great News, it's the

Gospel. And when Jesus preaches to you it not only informs you but changes you. His words have the power to do that.

Nancy is blessed. You and I are blessed. Even when we don't feel like it. That's because the reality of Jesus' kingdom reigning in our hearts is not about how we feel, it's about the truth that has been declared in Your life by the Son of God. You are blessed, now and eternally!

But Jesus isn't done preaching to us yet. **Matthew 5:4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."** Who are those who mourn? All of us from time to time. Death touches our lives because the wages of sin is death. All of us have a date with death. Most of us have suffered through the death of someone close: a grandparent, a parent, a sibling, a spouse, a child, or another close family member. Death hurts. It is not natural. It was never part of God's creation plan. He created the soul and the body to be one unit for eternity. But when sin came into the world death came into the world. Now our bodies and the bodies of those we love grow old, diseases come, cancer invades, and our bodies die. When that happens, the soul is unnaturally ripped out of the body. And for us who watch it happen it hurts. The sense of how wrong this is presses down upon us. Their death leaves a hole in our heart, a hole that was once filled with our love for them. And filling that hole is not easy for us.

Grief and mourning are a gift from the Lord to help us fill that hole. We remember the good times we had with our loved one. We look through pictures, we remember special moments, favorite songs and sayings. And remembering them is not a bad thing. They still exist, just not here with us anymore. The funeral is not saying goodbye forever, just goodbye for now. This is a time where we explore just how big and deep that hole is. And what the Lord wants us to find is that the only thing that can fill this hole is Him.

What fills that hole is the loving comfort that Jesus has to give us. He revealed that comfort to you when He rose again on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day. Easter Sunday proclaims loudly to all who believe who holds your future, and what it will be. Just as Jesus rose bodily from death to life everlasting, all who have been welcomed into His kingdom will too. Our Epistle Lesson describes that innumerable multitude who stand before the throne of Jesus. They stand there clothed in white robes, symbolic of the complete perfection they have body and soul, as they stand before the Judge of the universe with nothing held against them. The blessing that Jesus planted in their hearts by faith is now the total reality. The white robes represent body and soul cleansed completely by the blood of the Lamb, by the sacrifice of Jesus our Savior. And who is this multitude? You and I, along with all of our loved ones who in life were welcomed into Jesus kingdom. They stand there with us. We are smiling at each other with a joy that is beyond description, as our eternal life on the new heaven and earth is unfolding before us. This is the life we will enjoy body and soul when times of mourning are over forever and not even remembered. Jesus fills that hole in your heart with this most sure and certain promise

## Living as those Blessed by Christ

But He doesn't just leave us here with only our hope for a future joy. He is with you now in the midst of your grief. His love, compassion, and mercy are what He brings to you to fill that hole in your heart today. Jesus says in **Matthew 5:4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."** You are blessed. You are blessed right here and now.

Blessed because Jesus will never leave you or forsake you. He speaks to you words of love, comfort, hope and strength in His word. He is there to lift you up when you are down and carry you when you are too weak to stand. He comes to you, truly present in the bread and the wine of the Lord's Supper to fill that hole in your heart now with His presence. He sends His other kingdom members, your brothers and sisters in Christ to bring His love and compassion to you. Not to tell you how bad they had it when their loved one passed, not to share one upmanship stories, but to sit and listen. To be a shoulder to cry on. Just to be present with you to let you know you're not alone.

That's what we are to do as the Church. To come alongside our brothers and sisters in their grief. Reach out to them on the phone, via Facebook, and even more importantly, if they will let you, in person. You carry the comfort of Christ with you. You carry His comforting Spirit. You do this for them, so that sometime in the future they can return the favor. You remind them of the comforting love that Jesus has for them now, and the promise of the Last Day when all tears will be wiped away from all our eyes.

## Conclusion

Sometimes we only see ourselves as "blessed" when things are going our way in life. But as those who have been called into Jesus' kingdom we are blessed even when we don't feel so. We've been blessed with the gift of faith, we've been blessed with the gifts of forgiveness of sins, salvation from eternal death, and the sure and certain promise of everlasting life. We are blessed with Jesus' presence now in His Word and Sacrament and with His promise of His real bodily presence for eternity. Blessed in this way we are equipped as the Church to come alongside the "Nancy's" who are around us. Not to tell them we know how they feel, but to assure them Jesus knows, and Jesus cares, and because He does, so do we. We are called to be present with them and walk with them through their time of mourning until our Savior brings them out the other side. Yes, blessed are they, and blessed are we to have a Savior who is also Lord over all things. A Savior who holds our lives tightly in His hands, pours His blessings into them, and will never let us go. Amen.