



**"Blessings from Brokenness"*

Biblical Text: Luke 6:20-23

Dr. Michael F. Gardner, Senior Pastor
Old Mission Church, Fairway, Kansas

In our series, now in the **third week of Lent*, we have followed Jesus, to several firsts in his ministry. His first **sermon at Nazareth*. His first teaching and healing **mission in Capernaum*.

Today's text is Jesus' first teaching for the disciples **about the nature of the Kingdom of God*. But that's not how we read it.

Our text is a portion of *The Sermon on the Mount*, which we picture **as a sermon delivered to the crowds who followed Jesus wherever he went*. But that's not how it happened.

I see how we might get that idea, since just before our text, Matthew 4:25 says **"Great crowds followed him from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and from beyond the Jordan."*¹

And Luke 6: 17-18 says, **"A great multitude ... from all Judea, Jerusalem, and as far as Tyre and Sidon came to hear him..."*²

But *The Sermon on the Mount* wasn't delivered to the crowds.

How do we know that? **Well, follow the first rule of studying the Bible? What is that rule? Simply this – ***"Read the Bible!"***

And in Luke 6, verse 20 we find these introductory words: **"Then (Jesus) looked up at his disciples and he said..."*³

Matthew 5:1-2 says: **"When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying..."*⁴

¹ Matthew 4:25 from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible. Copyright © 1989. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

² Ibid. Luke 6:17-18.

³ Ibid. Luke 6:20.

⁴ Ibid. Luke 5:1-2.

How did we miss that? We were in such a hurry to get to Jesus' words about *being blessed* to notice the words of introduction.

We like the idea of being blessed. Who wouldn't? So...

We ask God to "bless" our basketball team, our endeavors, or our nation. When we say grace, we thank God for all our "blessings." And, when we want to rip someone apart and still sound spiritual, we just add at the end, "Bless their heart."

We need to look closer at our theology of blessings! And a good place to start would be with what Jesus says. Imagine!

So, the Beatitudes in Luke's Gospel, verse 20, says: **"Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God."*⁵

Verse 21: **"Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. *Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh."*⁶

Verse 22: **"Blessed are you when people hate you; when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of Me."*⁷

Verse 23: **"Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven..."*⁸

Being poor, hungry, or excluded doesn't fit our idea of being "blessed." If Jesus was recruiting followers, who would enlist? **But he wasn't recruiting followers. He was training disciples.** His words are more familiar to us in the version from Matthew.

**"Blessed are the poor in spirit... blessed are those who mourn... blessed are the meek... blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness..."* But still, those aren't our idea of blessings!

⁵ Op. Cit. Luke 6:20, New Revised Standard Bible.

⁶ Ibid. Luke 6:21.

⁷ Ibid. Luke 6:22.

⁸ Ibid. Luke 6:23.

We'd prefer living out the American dream, being **"healthy, wealthy, and wise"* (according to Poor Richard's Almanac.)

But in real life, sometimes our pathways lead to brokenness rather than blessing. ***In the times we usually associate with blessing, it doesn't take much faith to believe in God!**

Real faith is still believing that God is at work in times when our dreams are shattered and our lives are broken. ***It takes courage to watch for how God brings blessings from our brokenness.**

I love the Henry H. Barry poem, based on the 23rd Psalm.

**"In pastures green?" Not always; sometimes He,
Who knoweth best, in kindness leadeth me
In weary ways, where heavy shadows be.
And "by still waters?" No, not always so;
Oft times the heavy tempests round me blow,
And o'er my soul the waves and billows go.
But when the storm beats loudest, and I cry
Aloud for help, the Master standeth by,
And whispers to my soul, "Lo, it is I."⁹*

The simple truth is that our life is not always going feel like we are being blessed. Our pathways will not always be *"in pastures green"* but sometimes we will sail *"through troubled waters."*

What Jesus promised in the **Beatitudes* is that in God's keeping and Kingdom, if we trust in him, blessings will eventually come!

Remember Romans 8:28? **"In all things God works for good, for those who love him, and are called according to his purpose."*¹⁰

I learned that verse from my mother when I was still a child.

⁹ *In Pastures Green* Henry H. Barry, in *Leaves of Healing*, Katharine Paine Sutton, Ed., Copyright © 1897, Cambridge Univ. Press.

¹⁰ Romans 8:28, adapted from the New International Version®, Copyright © 1973-2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission.

But from my father, I learned how to put it into practice. One of his favorite hymns was **"Count Your Blessings."* He loved music but his taste was more to Hank Williams than GF Handel.

These days, I don't hold think those old Gospel songs hold a candle to a great Isaac Watts hymn, or a Bach Chorale.

But the words of his favorite hymn carry an essential message:

**When upon life's billows you are tempest-tossed,
When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,
Count your many blessings, name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord has done.*¹¹

From my father, and that old hymn, I learned count my blessings, and remember the promises of God, even in the times of brokenness when I was feeling decidedly **un-blessed**.

Tops on my list are my wife and our home, our family and our friends, children and grandchildren. Then there always are sunrise, sunset, morning and evening, mountain and valleys.

But above all of these is always that I am, *as you are*, a precious and beloved child of God, who belongs to his Kingdom!

*That sounds a lot like Jesus' promises of blessing – even when you are poor you are blessed – even when you mourn, you are blessed – even when you feel broken you are blessed.

Because, don't you see? *Following him is the blessing!

Let us pray.

¹¹ *Count Your Blessings*, Johnson Oatman, Copyright © 1897, from *Songs of the Sanctuary*, Nazarene Publishing House, KCMO.