

# “Blessed Are You!”

Micah 6:8 & 7:19-20 & Matthew 5:1-12

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Our scripture has a message for you whether you are striving to be more Christ like or in need of knowing you are loved. We have seasons where we actively partner with God in transforming our lives and we have seasons where God forgives, heals and perfects us. My spiritual director John Ackerman often said to me, “James you need enough brokenness to show up and enough grace to not beat yourself up.” Then he would listen and ask, “Where is God in that?” Next, he would ask if I thought I needed to be or do something or rest in God’s grace.

Sometimes, I needed to forgive myself, let go, and let come God’s grace. I am a harsh critic of myself, a perfectionist, a people pleaser. I am aware that every sermon, lesson, conversation, prayer is woefully short of perfection and falls way short of conveying the glory, love, joy, peace and grace of God. My default is to beat myself up over mistakes, to get stuck in the past, dwelling on what I did wrong. Even in my prayers, scripture reading and spiritual disciplines, I tend to lament that I am not doing enough or doing it wrong, so I shame myself. I tend to layer my economics onto myself asking in every facet of my life am I maximizing my productivity. I know my worth comes from being God’s beloved child, however that message is not heard by something within me that is always striving to earn worth and please people. John would tell me to stop beating yourself up, let go, and enjoy God’s grace. John encouraged me to live in the present. Sometimes he would ask me if I am ever as critical of someone else as I am of myself.

Sometimes I needed enough brokenness to show up. Sometimes I thought I am too busy to fit all my spiritual disciplines into my schedule. Sometimes I am driven thinking if I work hard enough then success will come. John would remind me that if I am not being nourished by God then I have nothing to share with others so do the spiritual disciplines and be centered with God.

Sometimes I felt like I was in control. I had my plan and was working my plan. I had my goals and was making progress on my goals. In this mode I am living in the future. Once I accomplish the objective then all will be well. In this season my sense of worth comes from myself. In these seasons John reminded me of my brokenness that I need to partner with God to actively change by doing and being.

In every season we are to be prophets for ourselves and others. A prophet is an encourager not a critic. Critics stand outside a system and judge it, mock it, condemn it. An encourager remains clear-eyed, conscientious, proclaiming how we should be as they are present inside the sinful system and loving it anyway. Critics are against themselves, their families, church, country and world. Critics fear and hate. A prophet, an encourager, is for themselves, their family, church, country and world. Encouragers hope and love. A prophet strives for all systems to be glorious and stays with the system encouraging them as they repeatedly falter.

Prophets are leaders not rulers. Rulers tell others what to do, then do whatever they want. Rulers are hypocrites. Rulers hoard and protect their stuff. Rulers want success for themselves and their circle of like-minded people. Rulers want to be on top of the hierarchy. Leaders strive to live a complete, loving, joyful life as they invite, encourage and help others. Leaders share and serve. Leaders want success for everyone.

Over the course of our lives we need to hear both messages, enough brokenness to show up and enough grace to not beat yourself up. Hopefully the Holy Spirit will highlight for you the message you need to hear today. We will begin with enough brokenness to show up, the exhortation, the doing, the being more.

**Micah 6:8 NRSV “God has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”** Notice the verbs, to do, to love, to walk. To do justice means to correct inequalities and oppression, to do right, doing the most loving way. To walk humbly with God is to acknowledge that all life is dependent on the grace of God. When our hearts are broken open by beauty, we hear anew the words, do justice, love kindness, walk humbly with your God. Listen to Micah’s words again from the Message translation. **Micah 6:8 MSG “Do what is fair and just to your neighbor, be compassionate and loyal in your love, And don’t take yourself too seriously—take God seriously.”**

We constantly fail so Micah’s final words reveal the grace to not beat yourself up. **Micah 7:19-20 NLT “Once again God will have compassion on us. God will trample our sins under God’s feet and throw them into the depths of the ocean! God will show us God’s faithfulness and unfailing love as you promised to our ancestors long ago.”**

A Sioux prayer reveals both messages. “Give me the strength to walk the soft earth. Give me the eyes to see, and the strength to understand, that I may be like you. With your power only can I face the winds that I may live a grace-filled life connected to people, the earth and God”.

Jesus started the sermon on the mount with the Beatitudes which are both commandments on how to live, be and what one should do and describes God’s grace that heals us and makes us complete no matter our current condition or effort. We will start listening to Jesus words as exhortation, a summons to live in the present as we will live in the future when God’s Kingdom is fully fulfilled on earth as in heaven. Jesus is giving us a to do list, be meek, hungry, merciful, pure, a peacemaker etc. actively working to change your life. This message was for those who felt they were living a good, holy, loving life, for those who felt they knew God’s will, for those who have an abundance of solid relationships, have paid off their loans, completed their to do list, feel no guilt, shame or regret, have no secrets and know exactly what they are doing.

**Matthew 5:1-12 NRSV “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: “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 receive 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 for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. “Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”**

Be poor in spirit, live in a way that shows your dependence on God, that is give God control of everything. Let go of your ego and pride.

Actively mourn over the wrongs and sufferings of the world and each person. Mourn to move yourself to active compassion for all. Mourn to drive yourself to serve those who are hurting.

Meek is being a learner. A meek person realizes that they do not have the answers for most of life’s questions, so they are curious, a listener, eager to learn.

Be hungry and thirsty for righteousness. As much as a starving person longs for food, as much as a parched person dreams of water so are you to actively serve to provide food, clothing, housing, health care, freedom, education and meaningful employment for all people. It is a quest to love, rejoice and value all people equally.

Being merciful is compassionately forgiving everyone. Being gracious to all. Welcoming everyone with generous hospitality.

Striving to be pure in heart is being honest, having integrity and loving God, loving all people and loving self. It is genuinely wanting goodness for all.

We are to be peacemakers who reconcile relationships and build relationships with all people, excluding no one, welcoming everyone. A peacemaker actively serves to heal every damaged relationship.

God’s kingdom is coming so it is worth risking everything to partner with God in bringing even a snippet more of heaven to earth. Keep loving, rejoicing, serving through suffering, persecution, loss of money and falling status. Keep loving no matter what.

We all have seasons when we need to hear the beatitudes as a to do list. We also have seasons when we need to hear the beatitudes as grace, healings and gifts freely given. Scripture tells us that in the crowd there were those afflicted with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics and paralytics. There were outcasts and sinners. People who were in a season where they were not able to strive to earn a blessing rather needed blessings in their current state. Jesus was telling these people, and us in certain seasons, we do not need to try and becoming anything for we are blessed and are receiving blessings because God loves us. We are created in the image of God. All of us have all the qualities listed in the beatitudes within us. God will perfect these qualities. In these seasons it is not what we do that precipitates the blessing rather it is God who freely gives the blessings. Listen again to the beatitudes from the Message translation and imagine God freely giving you all these blessings.

**Matthew 5:3-12 MSG ““You’re blessed when you’re at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and God’s rule. “You’re blessed when you feel you’ve lost what is most dear to you. Only then can you be embraced by the One most dear to you. “You’re blessed when you’re content with just who you are—no more, no less. That’s the moment you find yourselves proud owners of everything that can’t be bought. “You’re blessed when you’ve worked up a good appetite for God. God’s food and drink is the best meal you’ll ever eat. “You’re blessed when you care. At the moment of being ‘care-full,’ you find yourselves cared for. “You’re blessed when you get your inside world—your mind and heart—put right. Then you can see**

**God in the outside world. “You’re blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That’s when you discover who you really are, and your place in God’s family. “You’re blessed when your commitment to God provokes persecution. The persecution drives you even deeper into God’s kingdom. “Not only that—count yourselves blessed every time people put you down or throw you out or speak lies about you to discredit me. What it means is that the truth is too close for comfort and they are uncomfortable. You can be glad when that happens—give a cheer, even!—for though they don’t like it, I do! And all heaven applauds. And know that you are in good company. My prophets and witnesses have always gotten into this kind of trouble.”**

The beatitudes explain ways that God is making us complete. The blessings are like a warm cozy blanket after a long difficult cold day. The blessings warm us, comfort us, soothe us, rejuvenate us and embrace us in God’s eternal love. A blessing is a healing.

There is a message specific for you today, and every day of your life, in the beatitudes. Maybe God is calling you to do or be more. Or maybe God is calling you to let God heal you. Amen