

#Blessed

Matthew 5:1-12 (NIV)

¹ Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, ² and he began to teach them. He said: ³ "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. ⁵ Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. ⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. ⁷ Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. ⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. ⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. ¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹ "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

What does it mean to be blessed? In looking for what the world would say what it means to be blessed, I did a little social experiment and went on Twitter to see what was trending under #blessed. Here's what I found:

"I would like to thank everyone for all the birthday wishes!!! It made my day♥ Love yall 🥰. #Blessed"

"maize doesn't have school today, Beyoncé is pregnant with twins, ku plays tonight, and it's \$0.50 corn dog day... #blessed"

"Blessed to announce I will furthering my education and my football career at ferris state go dawgz 🐾 #blessed 🙏" I found about 25+ of these because apparently a lot of kids were signing with colleges this past week.

"Hair, Smile, dimples, red coat #blessed"

"Pillowey pockets of Nutella heaven. #blessed" That one was for a recipe.

"I love my mom with my whole heart and i cant ever imagine life without her #blessed"

"As of today my little brother is 12 years cancer free. He continues to inspire me everyday. Love ya brotha! #Blessed"

"Thank God for all he has done #blessed 🙏🙏"

What I gather from what people tweet, to be blessed means to have good things happen to you. That's not far off the actual definition of the word "blessed." To be blessed means "bringing pleasure, contentment, or good fortune" or "enjoying happiness." When the word blessed is used in the Bible, it generally means to be the privileged recipient of divine favor. When Jesus teaches his followers what it means to be "blessed," though, you'll notice that it's quite a bit different from what I saw on Twitter.

I tried to imagine how Jesus might use #blessed on Twitter. Maybe it would sound like this:

"Just healed 10 lepers; 1 came back to say "thank you" #blessed"

"Preached today. Told my hometown crowd that I fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy; they tried to stone me #blessedrewardinheaven"

"Lazarus is sick. Going to talk with his sisters today #blessedtoshowmercy"

"Wept at Lazarus' tomb, but he will rise from the dead #blessedtobecomforted"

"Raised Lazarus from the dead; Pharisees meeting later to plan my execution #blessedtobepersecuted"

And Jesus would write these things without one ounce of sarcasm. Now, I'm not using the pulpit today as a soapbox to decry the use of #blessed. It's good to recognize that the happiness and good things we have in life are blessings from God. No good gift comes to us unless God gives it. But what about when you aren't happy in life? What if you look around at life and it feels like there is nothing that has happened to you that would elicit a #blessed? Because life gets that way.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit.” (verse 3) How? How is it happy for me to be poor, to have things taken from me in this life? “Blessed are those who mourn.” (verse 4) You walk into a funeral, people are crying, wearing black, and they should just be happy that they get to mourn today? You really want me to believe that it’s good to be sad, to lose someone you love? “Blessed are the meek.” (verse 5) So, realizing that I am insignificant in the world, that I’m not the top dog or head honcho, that people slap my face and I’m supposed to turn the other cheek – that should make me happy, to think it a joy to be trampled over in life instead of getting my way? “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.” (verse 6) So, being not completely full, knowing that I lack what I need to be complete before God, this is a good thing? And if I show mercy, but people take advantage of me; and if I try to make peace, but people ignore me and continue fighting, that’s what it means to be blessed? Can you really tell me that being persecuted, being insulted, being ridiculed for being a Christian, for believing in Jesus, that these are blessings? That sounds like the exact opposite. That seems like a miserable existence, not a #blessed existence.

What Jesus says is #blessed is so different from the world’s version. This begs the question: if this is what Jesus says should make me feel happy, to feel blessed, then is it worth it to follow Jesus? This is a question that his followers were going to have to ask themselves in the coming years. They would be persecuted. They would be hunted. They would be killed. It was going to be a miserable existence to follow Jesus. Yet, in all of it, Jesus says that his followers are blessed. How? Because they were privileged recipients of divine favor.

To be blessed is not fleeting moments of happiness; it’s a future and present state of being as they live for Christ. “Blessed are those who mourn, for they **will be** comforted.” (verse 4) We lived that truth yesterday when we mourned the loss of our brother in Christ, Andy Jackson. Think of it if all we had for the memorial service yesterday was some kind of sentiment like “Well, at least he doesn’t have to suffer in this world anymore.” With what God has done for us, by his life lived for us and his death died for us, we have a completely different and better comfort that lasts forever. Because of what God has done for Andy, we know that he is now happier than he has ever been in life. Why? Because God gave him the gift of heaven. People who die in the Lord go to the Lord; they go to an everlasting paradise. And because of Jesus’ life and sacrifice for us, we too will get to enjoy heaven with Andy. We mourn the loss of our brother in Christ, but we are comforted by what God has done for him and for us. So we are #blessed.

“Blessed are the meek, for they **will** inherit the earth.” (verse 5) We like to be on top, to get our way. Even if we don’t get our way, we at least think that we deserve to be treated well and that when we are treated badly that we should be able to retaliate without consequence or guilty feelings. The boisterous of the world bully and steamroll the meek, the ones who don’t retaliate, the ones who don’t raise their voices, the ones who don’t insist on getting their way. Might makes right, right? Even though the powerful trample the meek and seemingly are in control, they will find out that there is someone bigger and stronger than they are. One day, they will find out that there is a God who is meek, who turned the other cheek, who did not insist on getting his own way, but that at the same time he is the most powerful being of all. On that day, everything will be overturned. The strong who crushed people, the strong who used their power to persecute and kill those who follow Jesus, they will be subjected to God and put in hell for all eternity while the followers of Jesus who did not retaliate and did not insist on their own way will rise to take care of the new heavens and the new earth. In this way it is more blessed to be meek than to insist on your way.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they **will be** filled.” (verse 6) On this side of heaven, we are very mindful of the fact that we are not righteousness, that we are not perfect. Following Christ leads us to keep striving for that elusive perfection. But when this life is over we will fully realize what God has done for us, that he has clothed us in righteousness, in his perfection. This is what saves us. This is what changes us and enables us to live these beatitudes, to make us merciful, to make us pure in heart, to make us peacemakers, to have even more blessings from God while we live for him. “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.” (verses 7-9) We do these things because already now God has given us the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven. We are #blessed.

Jesus couldn’t sugarcoat it, and neither can I: pain, suffering, persecution, ridicule, rejection – these all come with being a follower of Christ. We don’t get a free pass on these things and just be happy as the world might make us think #blessed means. Yet, even with these present miseries, the Christian always has a reason to feel blessed, to be happy even in the saddest moments. The world and sin and persecution and misery are all destined to perish for us because Christ has given us the kingdom of heaven. He has taken away our sin and made us pure. So, we know our future, and it’s a future of happiness and joy everlasting. Your future is #blessed.

Will you write a post today on Facebook or Twitter about how you are #blessed? Will you let the world that you have a happiness from God that can’t compete with the happiness of the world? Even if you don’t use social media, keep using #blessed – just without the “#” - when you are having a good day and you are happy because those are gifts from God. Keep using #blessed when you are having a bad day because you know that the kingdom of heaven is yours, gifted to you by Jesus Christ. You will be comforted. You will inherit the earth. You will be filled with righteousness. You will be shown mercy. You will see God. You will be called a child of God. You are #blessed. Amen.

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