

Epiphany 4 / February 1, 2026

Matthew 5:11

*"Blessed are you."*

Blessed are You

How blessed are you? What do you consider blessing to be? We naturally associate blessing with material benefits. The person with good health, no problems in their family, a big house, a summer cottage, several fine cars, a boat and lots of surplus cash is blessed. The book of Job begins, *"There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, and that man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil. There were born to him seven sons and three daughters. He possessed 7,000 sheep, 3000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, and 500 female donkeys, and very many servants, so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the east."* People said, this man was truly blessed! But then came a sudden reversal of his fortunes. His children died together in a tragic event. His oxen, donkeys and camels were carried off by raiders and his servants put to death. His sheep and servants were struck by lightning and died. Last of all Job was afflicted with a disease that covered his body with sores. People said, his blessing had turned to a curse.

The point of the book of Job is that while Job was afflicted, afflicted grievously, he was not cursed, but was blessed. Job was not blessed because of his afflictions. Job was blessed because in his afflictions as in his previous wealth, comfort and happiness, he knew the Lord and the Lord knew him. The Lord was Job's blessing! Jesus speaks to us out of the context of affliction in the beatitudes. The blessing in affliction. Not affliction as a blessing. He doesn't say *"Blessed are you because you are poor, hungry, persecuted and grieving."* He says we are blessed when we are poor, hungry, persecuted and grieving. We are blessed, because like Job, we know the Lord and the Lord knows us. Blessing is to know the Lord as Father and to be known by the Lord as His children. Blessedness is to know that regardless of the circumstances of our lives, whether we have much or little, whether we are happy or sad, whether we have the fullness or health or lie at death's doorstep that God is with us and that we are with God. God is with us in Christ Jesus. Blessed are those who are with God through faith in Christ Jesus, more than inheriting the earth, they are heirs of life everlasting. Blessed are you!

The first state of blessedness Jesus enumerates is poverty of spirit. He says, *"Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."* The greatest poverty is of the spirit in relationship with God. Jesus told a parable about a man who was rich in the things of the earth, but poor in his spirit, because he had nothing in relationship with God. When he died, he had absolutely nothing. His possessions passed out of his hands and into the hands of others. He had nothing in relationship with God. His soul passed into nothingness. Jesus said, *"Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be? So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich with God."* We are all naturally spiritually impoverished in relationship with God. Paul says in Ephesians that by nature we are 'dead in trespasses and sins.' The first blessing is the gift of recognizing our poverty; seeing our sinfulness, confessing our sins. The second blessing is receiving from God the riches of His grace in forgiveness for the sake of Christ Jesus. The poor in spirit are blessed, because through the acknowledgement of their poverty, God begins His righteousness reign in their hearts through faith in Christ Jesus and enriches them in relationship with Him.

When we become aware of our spiritual poverty in relationship with God, we also see our need to be fed and nourished with His righteousness. Jesus said, *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, they shall be satisfied."* God gives us His righteousness in Christ Jesus. He is our righteousness in relationship with God, because He carried our sins on His cross and through His shed blood, He made atonement for us in the presence of the Father. The blessing of hungering and thirsting for righteousness is that in our hunger we see our need and receive the provision God richly provides in Christ Jesus, by whom He satisfies our deepest and most important needs of body and spirit. Jesus fed five thousand with fives loaves and two fish. The following day a remnant of that crowd followed Him and found Him teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum. Jesus told them not to labour for the bread that perishes with use and must be renewed daily, but rather to seek from Him, the spiritual bread that nourishes our souls and gives life everlasting. Jesus is that bread of life. He satisfies our spiritual hunger with His righteousness in forgiveness. We are blessed when we hunger for His righteousness because He satisfies the hunger of our souls. We are blessed when we come to Him in the poverty of our spirits, because He enriches our souls with His grace that sustains us in life and will bring us to the fulness of life in His resurrection to life everlasting.

We are blessed because we are nourished with Jesus' righteousness and enriched with His grace in forgiveness and relationship with God. When we are nourished with Jesus' righteousness and enriched with His grace in forgiveness and relationship with God, we are blessed no matter what the circumstance of our lives and our physical, mental and emotional condition. We are blessed when are standing in the shadow of death. Jesus is the resurrection and the life and those who believe in Him will not perish, but have eternal life. We are blessed when we are standing in the shadow of death, grieving the deaths of loved ones. Jesus stands with us so that we may bear the burden of grief. We are blessed in our tears. Jesus shares in our tears and carries us in our sorrows. In the gospel of John, Jesus stands at the grave of His friend Lazarus in company with Lazarus' sisters and friends, who have gathered to mourn him. Jesus does a most remarkable and significant thing. He raises Lazarus of course. But before that He joins the sisters and their friends in tears. We are blessed in our grief, because Jesus stands with us in our tears.

We are blessed because Jesus is in our hearts through faith and in our lives through the Spirit. We are blessed because Jesus nourishes our faith, supports us with His grace and empowers us to faith and faithfulness through the words of scripture, the promise of our baptism and the nourishment of His body and blood under the forms of bread and wine in holy communion. We are blessed when we suffer reproach and experience exclusion and persecution because of Jesus. In the book of Acts the apostles are beaten by the religious authorities in Jerusalem because of their continued confession of Jesus as the Christ. Luke says, *"they rejoiced because they had been counted worthy of suffering for the sake of Christ."* Certainly, they didn't enjoy the beating. They rejoiced because Christ was with them in their suffering. They rejoiced because their suffering for the sake of Christ was a sign Christ was with them. There is blessing in every experience of life for believers because in every experience of life, Christ is with us. Blessed are you!

Because we are blessed in Christ Jesus, we can be a blessing to others. We can bring the blessing of Christ Jesus to others by being merciful to them as God is merciful to us. We can bring the blessing of Christ Jesus to others by bringing the peace of Christ into their lives, through forgiveness, kindness and by sharing the gospel of Jesus with them. Jesus made peace between God and all people by the sacrifice of His body and the shedding of His blood on the cross. We are peacemakers when we share the peace of Christ with others. Because we are blessed in Christ Jesus, we are empowered and enabled to bring the blessing of Christ Jesus to the lives of others. Because we are blessed with Christ, we can

rejoice and be glad even when our mercy and peace are scorned and rejected. We are sharing in the work of the prophets and that is blessing in and of itself. We can rejoice and be glad when our sharing of God's peace and mercy in Christ are rejected. God's word has power and even though people reject it once, twice and seventy times, there remains the possibility that His word will finally overcome their resistance and bring them to faith. Even as it did in the life of Paul and many other former persecutors of the gospel who came to faith in Christ Jesus.

Christ is the blessing. As he reflected on his life as a pharisee, St. Paul confessed that everything he gained materially or thought he possessed spiritually, was worthless in comparison with the righteousness he received through Christ Jesus. As he considered his sin and rebelliousness as a hater of Christ and persecutor of the gospel, he realized that no one is so far from God that she or he cannot receive the blessing of Christ. If Paul, the blasphemer of God and His Christ, could receive mercy, anyone can receive mercy. If Paul, the persecutor of Christ and His Church could receive the grace of forgiveness and the blessing of Christ as Saviour, anyone can receive forgiveness. Jesus offers the blessing of forgiveness for all to receive. We receive Him now. Jesus gives the blessing of knowing God through faith in Him now through the word and by the bread and wine of holy communion. We receive Him now. All who receive Him through faith and believe in His Name are truly blessed, in time and for eternity. Blessed are you! In Jesus' Name. Amen.