

THE MEANING OF THE TEN BLESSINGS

Rev. Geoffrey S. Childs III

Reading: Matthew 5:3-12

At the time of the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord had become well known for His miracles. For this reason there were many people following Him. When the Lord saw that the multitudes around Him did not go away, He went to the top of a small hill.

The Lord stood at the top with His disciples in a circle below Him and below them were all the people. Then the Lord began to speak the famous Sermon on the Mount. He started with what is usually referred to as the Ten Blessings. Today, I am going to talk about the inner meaning of each blessing.

1. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3). This blessing might make us think that the Lord wants us to be poor. But this is not what is meant. To have wealth, if it was gained honestly, is quite all right in the eyes of the Lord. Notice that the Lord said, "the poor *in spirit*." To be poor in spirit means that to know that we are ignorant about spiritual things and to be willing to learn. This is the only way to heaven, for if someone thinks they know all there is to learn, they cannot be taught.
2. "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4). At first this may sound confusing. Usually when we think of being blessed we think of being happy. Yet to mourn means to be sad. For this reason some people believe in cutting themselves off from all pleasure in life, to live in pain and sorrow. But the Lord did not put people on earth just to live in misery. Mourning here doesn't mean being in pain; it means repenting of our sins, being sorry for the wrong things we think and do.
3. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5). By those who are meek, the Lord means people who are willing to be led by Him, who choose to follow Him and go to heaven, rather than insisting on doing things in their own way.
4. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6). This does not mean that the Lord wants us to starve ourselves and eat as little as possible. By hunger and thirst the Lord means that we should want to find out the truth and apply it to our lives. We should crave goodness and truth, as if we were hungry and thirsty for them. Those who do not want to learn, who think they know everything will have a very hard time getting to heaven.
5. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Matthew 5:7). You have probably heard this rule stated elsewhere as the Golden Rule: "Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them" (Matthew 7:12). All the angels in heaven live by this rule. They return good for good. But in hell the devils think only of revenge. This is called the "law of retaliation." So, if we want to get to heaven we must try to do good and be merciful.

6. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8). It is fairly easy for us to act like a good person externally. It is much harder for us to do good internally. For example, just because someone goes to church every Sunday does not mean that they are trying to understand what the minister is saying. To appear to love the Lord, to give to charity, and help the poor and sick is not enough. External deeds do not bring us to heaven; it is what is in our hearts that counts. The only way to get to heaven is to have a pure heart internally. So, we must drive out the evil spirits from our hearts and make room for the good.

7. “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God” (Matthew 5:9). The peacemakers are like the meek. They know what is right, and if need be they will fight for what they believe in. For instance, if our country was overrun with criminals and nobody did anything about it, what would happen? The country would be a mess because nobody would fight for what they believed in. In the same way, we must conquer our wrong ideas by trying to fight away the evil spirits. This is what will bring true peace to our lives.

8. “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:10). To persecute is to pursue something to try to destroy it or stamp it out. In the years after the Lord’s life on earth, the Romans tried to do this to the Christian religion. The Lord knew that in the process of spreading the Word throughout the world many people would be put to death. This is because evil spirits hate people who are trying to be good. Their hate is so strong that they cannot stand to be around such people. Because of this, when we sincerely try to do what is right, evil spirits will at first fight against us (persecute us). But if we remain steadfast in resisting them, we can force them out of our lives.

9. “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake” (Matthew 5:11). The Lord is completely merciful and He never lets us suffer more temptations than we can stand, but we must do our part. We must try to resist the hells. If we try to do our best for the Lord, and to spread His Word, then even though we may be attacked and reviled, we will be serving the Lord and so we will be blessed.

10. “Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matthew 5:12). This does not sound like the other blessings because it does not start with the word “Blessed”. But it is still a blessing because it is about rejoicing and being glad, and to be blessed means to be happy. This last blessing, then, tells us of the final reward of a good life. If we can resist temptation for the short time we are on earth, then we can have the greatest reward of all—heaven to eternity.

When the Lord gave the Sermon on the Mount, He was teaching people the steps that lead to a heavenly life. The words He spoke then can still teach us how to follow Him into eternal happiness. Let us remember the Ten Blessings and try to live by them, so that we may receive the Lord’s blessings.

Amen.