

The Jesus we never knew x 14 (PP1 Jesus laughing) VPBC 02 April 2017

Matthew 5: 1 – 16 (READ) Blessed and satisfied.

V6 and 10. God will satisfy those whose greatest desire is to do what God requires. – They are blessed. (PP2) Happy are those who are persecuted because they do what God requires; the kingdom of heaven belongs to them.

The teachings of JESUS – from the mountain – for his Disciples. (This is not for the crowds but those who are following him (following a rabbi) and need to understand the implications of this). Jesus sits down to teach the Disciples about being the Community of God and seeing the Kingdom of Heaven coming on the Earth.

Understanding the teachings and practices of Jesus are two key ways of understanding the person of Jesus. This week we looked at the further unpacking of the Messiah's description of his Kingdom: those Jesus declares are "blessed".

DO YOU THINK THAT YOU ARE "BLESSED"? – Makarios. Are we a blessed congregation of God's people? "Blessed" – happy and to be envied – opposite of cursed. (Not a subjective shallow feeling. Blessed – what God says about happiness & not just what we feel)..

(PP2) 8 qualities or attitudes of the believing disciples and community of the Kingdom: 4 "couplets".

Meek and merciful

Poor in spirit and pure in heart

Mourning and hungry for righteousness

Peacemakers and persecuted because of righteousness and following Jesus.

Any discussion group about "happiness" should take into account what Jesus said on the subject ... **Jesus teaching on human satisfaction** Jesus is talking about the inner self and being satisfied fully as the Good News Bible puts it. Other translations talk about being "filled". **(PP3 Full as an egg)** And **what is the human need that has to be satisfied? It is not named as such but it seems to be the need to know God and please God.**

"The greatest disease in the West today is not TB or leprosy; it is being unwanted, unloved, and uncared for. We can cure physical diseases with medicine, but the only cure for loneliness, despair, and hopelessness is love. There are many in the world who are dying for a piece of bread but there are many more dying for a little love. The poverty in the West is a different kind of poverty -- it is not only a poverty of loneliness but also of spirituality. There's a hunger for love, as there is a hunger for God."

— [Mother Teresa, A Simple Path: Mother Teresa](#)

Unable to recognise that our hunger or desire for satisfaction will only ever be fully met by God we seek to fill the inner loneliness with many things: relationships with other people, with animals, or even with the use and abuse of food, sex, alcohol, drugs – legal and illegal highs, experiences or power.

Jesus said that those who know him will only be satisfied if we desire righteousness to do what God requires (he didn't teach that everyone who is born again will automatically and continually be satisfied). THE SENSE OF SATISFACTION IS EXPERIENCED ONLY IF AND AS WE PERPETUALLY DESIRE TO DO WHAT GOD REQUIRES. I would suggest therefore that it is possible to be a Christian and not to experience inner satisfaction. Even though Jesus said he came that believers in him might experience FULLNESS of LIFE (John 10:10). Now we have been saved we need to live righteously (*Romans 14: 7. The Kingdom of God is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. It is not just to do with religious rituals like fasting – eating and drinking*). Satisfaction comes from an inner hunger for righteousness and a longing to see others in the human community liberated from the things that oppress them e.g. foot binding, slavery, sex trafficking, addiction etc.

Jesus in his prophetic statements) uses this word (makarios) in a totally different way to the world of his day and indeed our own. It is not the elite who are blessed. It is not the rich and powerful who are blessed. It is not the high and mighty who are blessed. It is not the people living in huge mansions or expensive penthouses who are blessed. Rather, Jesus pronounces God's blessings on the lowly meek: the poor in spirit, the hungry and the thirsty for pleasing God, the pure in heart, the mourning. Throughout the history of this word, it had always been the other people who were considered blessed: the rich, the filled up, the powerful. Jesus turns it all upside-down. The elite (blessed) in God's kingdom, the blessed ones in God's kingdom, are those who are the poor in spirit, those who live in dependence on God. In P. Yancey's words, it is the "unlucky who are lucky". THOSE WHO ARE HUNGRY FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS WILL BE SATISFIED. But V10 BE AWARE that the righteous, those who truly follow Jesus risk persecution. JESUS sought to please God, he lived righteously and he was not universally loved! He was despised, rejected, and experienced grief, torture and death. (The Message v10. You are blessed when your commitment to God provokes persecution. The persecution drives you even deeper into God's Kingdom").

This leads us into: Continuing our theme for this year and **we return to the way Jesus' declared what sort of Kingdom he is bringing in** by his presence – and his teaching. Nowhere is this spelt out more than in these chapters in Matthew's Gospel. (**chapters 5: 1 through to 7: 29**) **Jesus is about God's Kingdom on EARTH (as in heaven – Matthew calls it the Kingdom of Heaven) – Now as well as Future. Jesus introduces the idea of an alternative (and blessed – makarios) community** that exists as a witness to him as the Messiah who has come and fulfilled The Law and the Prophets. (It is to be salt and light in the midst of darkness). These people are to live counter

culturally – different value system. **“Do NOT BE LIKE THEM” – the Pagans**, says Jesus in *Matthew 6: 8*. Be different by prioritising the Kingdom of God and living righteously (6:33). Live more righteously than the scribes and Pharisees **of our present day and culture**. Demonstrate a foretaste of the Kingdom that will come in fully on my return.

What does righteous living mean in everyday life? Social holiness – legal, moral and social aspects.

Live to please God NOT please yourself. Do this so often and so much that in the long run what pleases me is pleasing to God?! To be concerned for justice as Jesus was. To be concerned with the things God is concerned about as JESUS was. To speak out against oppression as Jesus did.

Vv10-12 there is a double blessing for those who are persecuted for seeking to live righteous lives and follow JESUS. The kingdom of heaven belongs to these and also there is a great future reward.

There is an expectation of hostility if we follow JESUS closely and live righteously seeking justice as he did. Don't retaliate – no rather **“rejoice and be glad”!** It's a “result” of authentic prophetic living as history shows (see the prophets before us!). If we witness to God's truth, we may well suffer as JESUS did. (This is what we see as we approach another Easter). **“Those who hunger for righteousness will suffer for the righteousness they crave”, John Stott, Sermon on the Mount, p53).**

The “extraordinariness” of the Christian life. (Dietrich Bonhoeffer *).

The world's values and seeking for POWER must and will be turned upside down according to Jesus. Those who hunger to do what is right in God's eyes will be satisfied: *He satisfies those who are thirsty and fills the hungry with good things. (Psalm 107:9 quoted in the Magnificat by Mary).*

The **blessed community does NOT withdraw from the world** but is active within it. As Christ identified with the world in his desire to please God so do we. There is an inner fulfilment in this teaches Jesus as we seek to bring in the values of the Kingdom of God.

(*) DB as a Christian Pastor in his opposition to the evils of the Nazi regime faced imprisonment, torture, brought his family into danger and was finally executed by order of *Heinrich Himmler* in April 1945 in *Flossenburg Concentration Camp* a few days before it was liberated.

He said that “Discipleship means allegiance to the suffering Christ, and therefore it is not at all surprising that Christians should be called upon to suffer. In fact, it is a joy and token of his grace”. (The Augsburg Confession defines the Church as the community of those “who are persecuted and martyred for the gospel's sake”.)

Jesus spoke of human thirst and hunger: he encouraged people to see not so much material possessions and satisfaction as inner satisfaction – BUT to seek God's values, God's rule, God's Kingdom. There is a human hunger for the satisfaction of being in right relationship with God, other humans and the whole of creation. He promised the Samaritan woman he met at the Well at Sychar life giving water to satisfy. She had a deep need for love that was unsatisfied. (*John 4:13,14 and 7:37 fol*). He also stood up on the last and greatest day of the feast and called out to anyone who was thirsty to come to him and receive live-giving water. On another occasion, he declared himself to be the Bread of Life.

Jesus taught his community of disciples (to which we belong) how to become a truly blessed and satisfied community: perpetually seek righteousness in this world which usually seeks to please itself! This will be the case until: *we wait for what God has promised, a new heaven and earth, where righteousness will be at home. 2 Peter 3: 13.*

He warns us that we can expect not to be popular if we have the agenda of social justice and holiness and pleasing God. Hopefully we will not be on our own but encouraging one another in this and in rejoicing and being glad.