



WEIRDLY NORMAL - Weirdly Human - Matthew 5:3-12 - Jan 30-Feb5

Main Idea: God's definition of blessed is weird

Look Back (Remind yourselves of the challenge from last week)

This week we are beginning a new sermon series called "Weirdly Normal." The idea behind this is that Jesus' call for his people is to be different - different behaviors, different motivations, different spirit. In other words, he calls us to be weird. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus unpacks how this weirdness is the new normal for his people, and so we are living in the weirdly normal life of the Kingdom.

Look Up (Wrestle with the passage itself)

The beatitudes are some of the most famous scriptures in all of the Bible. Yet the familiarity that many of us hold with the words can diminish the meaning of what Jesus is trying to say here.

Let's start with the word "beatitudes" itself. It's probably not a word we hear outside of church. It means, literally, "supreme blessedness." In other words, "this is what it means to be blessed to the greatest blessedness possible."

The word "blessed" in the Greek means "happy, prosperous, and those who are to be envied." It carries the concept of something enlarged or lengthened, combining to the idea that "blessed" are those who have received the grace of God to a larger amount or to a longer reach than

normal. They are the ones who receive the blessing of God's grace in such a way that others should be jealous.

The word was used to offer congratulations, or to mark the occasion of great joy. It carried the idea that someone lucked out, their "ship had come in," or they had received the prize long waited for. To be among the "blessed" was not just a good thing, it was a great thing.

Discussion Question: What would our culture consider someone who is "blessed?" What qualities or experiences go along with this idea? If you have a phone with social media available, look up #blessed and see what comes up.

Read Matthew 5:1-12 together.

And this is where Jesus turns the whole thing on its head. In the opening section of the greatest sermon ever preached, Jesus gets weird. Notice first what does not say is "blessed." It isn't physical health, it isn't financial gain. It isn't the big house, the dream job, the perfect kids, or the leisurely retirement. It isn't the right party in place, the social issues being solved, or religious freedom.

Blessed, in Jesus' mind, is something else entirely. To be "one of the lucky ones," is to experience grief, to be on the receiving end of persecution, to be depressed, to hunger and thirst for God's presence. To be blessed is to struggle and to have a hard time.

To be blessed is to search for peace, to show mercy, to have purity in your heart. Those who should be envied by others are those who see beyond the hardship of today to the rewards of tomorrow.

Discussion Question: What is going on here? What is Jesus trying to say to us?

Look Forward (Challenge to do something with it)

Matthew 5:1-12 (the beatitudes) is likely connected to Matthew 13:1-23 (the parable of the sower). God spreads his seed of truth to all, but only some receive it. And among those who receive it, only a few have the soil to let it grow.

The question that should dominate the heart of all Christians is this: what makes for good soil? What are the qualities and characteristics of the type of person who receives the Word of God, understands it, and allows it to yield a multiplying harvest (Matt 13:23)? That person, Jesus would say, is blessed. And the ways that we are blessed are weird.

Discussion Question: What does this mean to you? How do you make sense of this? What perspective does this bring to your own times of mourning, thirsting, and hardship? What does this say about the things we are striving to achieve in our life?

Challenge: This week, make an attempt to memorize Matthew 5:1-12. Throughout this week and beyond, allow for those words to filter your experiences. Where are you being molded and shaped into one who is really and truly blessed?

Prayer challenge: Pray together that God would bring a deeper focus on blessing, and what it means to be one of his blessed children.