

## Blessed and Called

### *A Sermon on the Beatitudes, Discipleship, and Belonging*

Micah 6:1-8, Psalm 15, 1 Corinthians 1:18-31, Matthew 5:1-12

Most of us carry around an unspoken definition of blessing. We may not say it out loud, but we often assume blessing looks like things going well. Health. Stability. Success. A sense that we're doing life *right*.

And when those things fall apart, when grief arrives, or plans unravel, or faith feels thin, we quietly wonder what we did wrong. We wonder whether blessing has somehow slipped out of reach.

So, when Jesus climbs that mountain and begins to speak about blessing, we expect him to confirm what we already believe.

But instead, he turns everything upside down.

The Beatitudes is Jesus naming reality, not handing out rewards or spiritual trophies. He is not saying, "*Congratulations to the people who finally got it right.*" He is not laying out a checklist for how to earn God's approval. Jesus is **naming reality from God's point of view**.

Blessing, in Jesus' teaching, is not a reward for good behavior. Blessing is a **declaration of belonging**.

"These are not instructions for how to become God's people. They are a description of **who God's people already are**, and what our lives begin to look like when we trust that truth."

That's a crucial distinction. Jesus looks at a crowd filled with people who are tired, poor, grieving, overlooked, and spiritually hungry, and he says, "*You are blessed.*"

Not someday.

Not once you fix yourself.

Not once you believe harder or behave better.

**Now.**

"The poor in spirit know they depend on God."

These are not the spiritually impressive. These are the people who have stopped pretending they are self-sufficient.

They know they don't have enough wisdom, strength, or control to save themselves, and that honesty, Jesus says, is not a failure. It is the doorway into the kingdom.

"Those who mourn refuse to numb themselves to suffering."

They don't rush past grief. They don't slap spiritual slogans over real pain. They let loss break their hearts open, and Jesus says *that* is blessed.

**Who are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness?**

Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness...are people that keep pushing toward justice, even when it's hard.

They are not satisfied with things as they are. They ache for God's world to be made right, even when that longing costs them something.

Like the scenes from Minnesota, playing out in real time...the resistance to hardened hearts, the love for neighbor...Jesus says: *This is not weakness.* **This is courage.**

In our culture, strength often looks like hardness.

But anyone who has stayed soft in a hard world knows how

much courage that requires. It takes courage to feel deeply.  
It takes courage to care when cynicism would be easier.  
It takes courage to keep hoping when disappointment feels safer.  
Jesus looks at people doing exactly that and calls them blessed.

This is where our reading from Micah comes back into focus:

*Do justice.*

*Love kindness.*

*Walk humbly with your God.*

Not to earn blessing **but because we are already blessed.**

God's people are never blessed just for their own sake.

“We are blessed **not to be set apart from the world**, but to be sent into it.”

That distinction matters, because sometimes faith can become a hiding place. A way to stay comfortable.

A way to avoid the messiness of real lives and real pain.

But Jesus never blesses people so they can retreat.

He blesses them so they can **go**.

“Blessed to tell the truth when silence would be easier.”

“Blessed to stay tender in a hard world.”

“Blessed to choose mercy over resentment.”

“Blessed to keep showing up when hope feels thin.”

Most of the holiest people you will ever meet are not flashy.

They are the ones who keep showing up: to care of a spouse whose health is failing, to advocate for a child who keeps slipping through the cracks, to serve in quiet, unseen ways year after year.

They don't always feel inspired.  
They don't always feel strong.  
But they stay. And Jesus says: *That life, right there, messy and imperfect is blessed.*

“Psalm 15 reminds us that holiness looks like integrity.”  
Not perfection.  
Not performance.  
Integrity.

A life that holds together.  
A life that tells the truth.

And Paul reminds us that God's wisdom looks like **the cross**.  
Which means that God's blessing is often most visible **where the world sees weakness**.  
The cross tells us that God is not impressed by power for its own sake. God is drawn to love that is willing to suffer for the sake of others.

The world tells us success looks like winning.  
Jesus shows us success looks like faithfulness.  
The world tells us blessing looks like control.  
Jesus shows us blessing looks like trust.  
The world tells us strength looks like never needing help.  
Jesus shows us strength looks like love that stays, even when it costs something.

And this is where blessing becomes **discipleship**.  
Because Jesus does not simply say, *“You are blessed.”*  
He also says, *“Follow me.”*  
To follow Jesus is to let these blessings shape our lives:  
our choices  
our relationships

our public lives, not just our private faith  
Discipleship is not about admiration.

It is about **imitation**.

It means asking, again and again:

Where is God calling me to tell the truth?

Whose pain am I being asked not to look away from?

What does mercy look like here?

Where might peacemaking cost me something?

Discipleship can feel overwhelming if we imagine it means doing *everything*. But most of the time, it doesn't.

“Discipleship is not about doing everything.

It is about doing the **next faithful thing.**”

The next honest conversation.

The next act of courage.

The next step toward reconciliation.

The next moment of choosing love over fear.

And then another.

And then another.

So who are we?

“We are not perfect.”

“We are not finished.”

“We are not above suffering.”

But we are blessed.

Blessed to practice justice.

Blessed to love kindness.

Blessed to walk humbly.

Blessed to hunger for what is right.

Blessed to make peace.

Blessed to follow Jesus—**together**.

The invitation today is simple, as it is demanding: Live like people who know they belong to God. Walk as disciples who trust that love is stronger than fear.

Go from this place willing to be shaped by the blessing you have received.

And when we forget, when the world tells us blessing looks like power or certainty or success, God meets us again. Just as Jesus met those crowds on the mountain. Looks at us with clear and steady love.

And says:

*You belong.*

*You are called.*

*You are blessed.*

*Now follow me.*

Amen.