

# Bible Lessons



**“Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance.”**

**Psalm 89:15**

**Volume 49, No 2**

**April • May • June**

**2017**

*Quarterly Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People*

# Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People

Volume 49

April • May • June

No 2

## Table of Contents

DATE	LESSON TITLE	PAGE
Apr	2 Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit.....	1
	9 For Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.....	6
	16 Blessed Are They That Mourn.....	11
	23 For They Shall Be Comforted.....	16
	30 Blessed Are the Meek.....	20
May	7 Blessed Are They Which Do Hunger and Thirst.....	24
	14 Blessed Are the Merciful.....	28
	21 Blessed Are the Pure in Heart.....	32
	28 Blessed Are the Peacemakers.....	37
Jun	4 Blessed Are They Which Are Persecuted.....	43
	11 Blessed Is the Man.....	46
	18 Blessed Are the People.....	51
	25 The Keys of the Kingdom.....	55

Publishing the Bible truths in the interest of Jesus Christ and His Church

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## BIBLE LESSONS FOR SECOND QUARTER, 2017

### THEME FOR SECOND QUARTER

# BLESSED

The fifth, sixth and seventh chapters of Matthew record what is called “The Sermon on the Mount.” Seated, as was the manner of Jewish teachers in his day, upon a hill, or rise, understandably for the purpose of projecting His instructions to the group of disciples, Jesus began this sermon by describing the conditions of blessedness and the life of the heavenly kingdom. We call these beginning verses *The Beatitudes*.

In our lessons we will explore each beatitude more in-depth. I pray that you will find this study full of rich spiritual gems to contemplate, share, and incorporate into your lives.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

**APRIL 2, 2017**

### BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT

Matthew 5:2 And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

3 Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Luke 6:20 And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God.

Luke 4:17 And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,

18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

19 To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

20 And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.

21 And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. (Also Matthew 11:5.)

Psalm 69:29 But I am poor and sorrowful: let thy salvation, O God, set me up on high.

32 The humble shall see this, and be glad: and your heart shall live that seek God.

33 For the Lord heareth the poor, and despiseth not his prisoners.

Psalm 102:17 He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.

Proverbs 3:34 Surely he scorneth the scorners: but he giveth grace unto the lowly.

Isaiah 41:17 When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.

Isaiah 66:2b But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word. (Also Isaiah 57:15.)

**MEMORY VERSE:** I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord. —Zephaniah 3:12

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** The person who is poor, or humble and lowly in spirit, is blessed or happy because he is satisfied within by the fullness of God's presence and the eternal riches of the Kingdom of God.

## WORD DEFINITIONS

Matthew 5:3 "Blessed": I found two different commentaries on this word which are noteworthy. At the outset, it seems they contradict, but once you consider them together, they combine to fill the heart with wondrous awe at what our Lord means by this word. One is from Adam Clarke: Blessed means *happy*; from a word that

combines “happy” with “not” and “fate”; “From this definition we may learn, that the person whom Christ terms happy is one who is not under the influence of fate or chance, but is governed by an all-wise providence, having every step directed to the attainment of immortal glory, being transformed by the power into the likeness of the ever-blessed God. Though some of the persons, whose states are mentioned in these verses, cannot be said to be as yet blessed or happy, in being made partakers of the Divine nature; yet they are termed happy by our Lord, because they are on the straight way to this blessedness” (*Clarke’s Commentary*).

The other word study is from *StudyLight.org*, by Bill Klein: “Blessed; the state of one who has become a partaker of God; to experience the fullness of God...The idea embodied within this word is satisfaction from experiencing the fullness of something. In the New Testament, [this word] is translated by the English words ‘blessed,’ ‘fortunate,’ and ‘happy.’ However, the meaning ‘happy’ (as we understand it in English) is not actually found in the New Testament. This is because the word happy comes from ‘hap’ which means *luck* or *a favorable circumstance*. The actual concept of ‘happy’ would be expressed by Greek words...meaning ‘happy,’ ‘lucky,’ ‘fortunate,’ or ‘prosperity.’ Once we remove the English concept of ‘happy,’ its Greek meaning becomes clear showing us that [this word] refers to the believer in Christ who is satisfied and secure in the midst of life’s hardships because of the indwelling fullness of the Spirit.”

Matthew 5:3 “Poor”: the truly humble; or “those who are sensible of their spiritual poverty, of their ignorance and sinfulness, their guilt, depravity, and weakness, their frailty and mortality” (*Benson Commentary*). “These bring their minds to their condition, when it is a low condition. They are humble and lowly in their own eyes. They see their want, bewail their guilt, and thirst after a Redeemer” (*Matthew Henry Commentary*). “Those who in their deepest consciousness realize their entire need. This self-emptying conviction, that ‘before God we are void of everything,’ lies at the foundation of all spiritual excellence, according to the teaching of Scripture. Without it we are inaccessible to the riches of Christ; with it we are in the fitting state for receiving all spiritual supplies” (*Jamison-Faucett-Brown Commentary*).

Luke 4:17 “Esaias”: Isaiah. Jesus read from Isaiah chapter 61, verses 1 and 2.

19 “The acceptable year of the Lord”: The original prophecy—no doubt referring to the year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25:10), where debts were forgiven, slaves were set free, and land was returned; and the returning of the Jewish exiles from Babylonian captivity—Jesus now applies to Himself and to the deliverance of the captive soul from the bondage of sin.

Psalm 69:29 and 32 “Poor,” “Humble;” Proverbs 3:34 “Lowly;” Isaiah 41:17 and 66:2 “Poor;” and Zephaniah 3:12 “Afflicted”: These are all forms of the same Hebrew word whose meaning includes all of these terms. “...in a scriptural sense, humble; contrite; abased in one's own sight by a sense of guilt” (*Webster's 1828 Dictionary*).

Psalm 102:17 “Destitute”: stripped; naked; figuratively, poor.

The term *beatitudes* are so called from the opening word “*beati*” (blessed), in the Vulgate.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Many times in Israel's history, the nation was referred to as being afflicted by the other nations; oppressed, persecuted, needy. David's personal condition many times was described as “poor and needy” because of his ragged, hunted existence as a fugitive from King Saul. Other places in Scripture speak of those in depressed circumstances of life; the poor of this world, who seem to have a more ready reception to the gospel. But the “poor in spirit” in our lesson is clearly a frame of mind and attitude, rather than physical conditions or temporal circumstances. A person in these circumstances may very well come to this frame of mind and heart, as I believe David did—aware of his spiritual need, feeling his want, depravity, guilt, ignorance, frailty, and mortality.

In the Old Testament psalms and prophets, a glorious truth is foretold, which Jesus plainly stated was fulfilled in Him: the poor, lowly, humble, needy and thirsty person would be satisfied from within by the kingdom of God: righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

## **DISCUSSION:**

1. *Described:* Give the different terms in our lesson that all mean “poor in spirit.”
2. *Foretold:* What prophet was given the “gospel” message that Jesus fulfilled?
3. *Promised:* Throughout the scriptures, what special blessings are promised to the poor in spirit?

## **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

A deep sense of our own need is truly what we must “have” before more can be “given” (Luke 8:18). When we can look honestly at who we really are, and own up to it courageously, we then can have clear understanding of the necessity of repentance and why we are repenting. It is also good grounds for faith, for when we see the depth of our poverty, only then can we comprehend the tremendous price paid for our salvation and the wonder of His great compassion; we can believe that He loves us and will be our Deliverer.

This most assuredly produces the deepest joy in the heart of the seeker. “He loves me.” That is a more real, substantial joy than they have who walk “in a vain show,” or trust in their own self-righteousness. The light of “He knew me, yet He loved me” dazzles the hopeless, guilty, sin-sunken soul with its brightness. As a penitent child, He embraces us and says to us, “Fear not...it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” We are filled with joy and confidence that He Who knows all about our need will gladly fill it when we ask Him. He will draw near when we call upon Him. His strength is made perfect in our weakness.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

## **REFLECTIONS**

Trying to become humble in our own strength is an impossible task. To truly become poor in spirit, we need to empty ourselves of any perceived talents, abilities and gifts that we may have. The apostle Paul says that one should not “...think of himself more highly than he ought to think.” When there is a reliance on self, there is no

room for the power of Christ within our lives.

On the other hand, we must also empty ourselves of our failures, fears and feelings of inadequacy so that we may be filled with Jesus Christ. To entertain thoughts of self-consciousness or self-deprecation is not an act of humility but is, in fact, a discredit to the God who created us. "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's (I Corinthians 6:20)."

Paul had this testimony, "But by the grace of God I am what I am." Nothing more, nothing less. It is then that we can do all things through Christ. To be balanced and humble before the Lord we must be at the center of His will and truly empty of ourselves so that the power of Christ may rest upon us.

"I am only an earthen vessel, the graces within are not mine, for the love and the power and glory, belong to the Savior divine."

—Sis. LaDawna Adams

**APRIL 9, 2017**

### **FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN**

Matthew 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Daniel 2:44 And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

7:27 And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.

Matthew 3:1 In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea,

2 And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

4:17 From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.



6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

12:28 But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.

Luke 16:16 The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.

17:20 And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation:

17:21 Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

John 3:3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

3:5b Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

18:36 Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.

Romans 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. —Luke 12:32

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** The kingdom of God is a heavenly kingdom of peace, joy and righteousness, given freely by Jesus and put by the Holy Spirit within the hearts of those who are born again, have sought for the kingdom, and have pressed into it. It is especially promised to the humble and lowly heart.

### **WORD DEFINITIONS**

Daniel 2:44 "In the days of these kings": the days of the Roman Empire. Daniel's vision showed four kingdoms: the Babylonian Empire, the Medo/Persian Empire, the Greek Empire, and the

Roman. During the Roman rule Jesus was born, fulfilled his earthly ministry, died, resurrected and ascended, and sent His Spirit into the church, establishing His kingdom that would never be destroyed.

Matthew 3:2 “The kingdom of heaven”: The kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God, the kingdom of Christ—all refer to the same thing: the sovereignty, authority, and rule of Christ in the heart of believers. “The dispensation of infinite mercy, and manifestation of eternal truth, by Christ Jesus, producing the true knowledge of God, accompanied with that worship which is pure and holy, worthy of that God who is its institutor and its object” (Adam Clarke, *Clarke’s Commentary*). “Is at hand”: approaches; is near; is about to be fully opened.

Matthew 6:33 “All these things”: all the things that the nations of the world seek after—material comfort, wealth, financial security; food and clothing.

Luke 16:16 “Every man presseth into it”: to use power to forcibly seize; laying hold of something with positive aggressiveness (*Helps Word Studies*).

Luke 17:20 “With observation”: in such a manner that it can be watched with the eyes, i.e., in a visible manner (*Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*).

John 3:3 “Born again”: born from above; born afresh, anew. “He cannot see”: cannot discern or perceive [the kingdom] because it is a spiritual, not worldly, kingdom; within the heart, and not outwardly visible to the eyes.

Luke 12:32 “Little flock”: the little community—the inner circle—of disciples. “Few in number, when compared with the wicked of the world; and mean and despicable in the account of men; and little in their own eyes” (*Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible*).

## LESSON BACKGROUND

When John the Baptist, and then Jesus, came preaching the “gospel of the kingdom,” commanding the people to repent, they both used the same message: The kingdom of heaven is at hand. No doubt they were referring to the prophecy from Daniel about the everlasting kingdom that would be set up in the time of Roman rule

and would be given to the saints of the Most High. John introduced it; Jesus then began to explain it and describe the conditions for receiving it. He spoke of the kingdom entering into a person and of a person entering into it. He said that we must seek it FIRST. He said that we couldn't see, perceive, or experience it unless we had experienced the new, spiritual birth. He gave numerous comparisons or similitudes of the kingdom through parables—a grain of mustard seed, a pearl of great price, a field of treasure, yeast hidden in bread dough, wise and foolish virgins, etc.

He spoke of it when referring to the power that delivered from devils. He pointed forward to the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, pinpointing the time and manner in which He would “set up” His kingdom. He also spoke of the kingdom in terms of the eternal, everlasting realm. But always, certain things are clear: it is not of this world, nor does it come with outward demonstration. It is within you.

Paul further told the Romans, it is not about physical food or drink; rather, it is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. He also told the Corinthians that the kingdom was not in word, but in power. Later to the Hebrews he wrote about receiving this kingdom which cannot be moved.

The special promise to the humble and lowly in spirit is that theirs—belonging to them, given freely to them, indwelling them—is this heavenly kingdom. It had been prepared for them from the foundation of the world. The rich, pompous, full-of-themselves, scornful, haughty people who neither sought for nor felt the need of this pearl of great price; who disregarded the needs of their fellow man and applauded themselves for their outwardly righteous appearance would have no part of it.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

## **DISCUSSION:**

1. *When:* Jesus came and set up His kingdom during the reign of which earthly kingdom?
2. *Where:* Not of this world, not of flesh and blood, but the kingdom of God is \_\_\_\_\_ .
3. *How:* Explain the way you may enter the kingdom and the way

the kingdom enters you.

4. *What*: Share some of the verses that explain what the kingdom of God is and what it is not.
5. *Who*: Describe the kind of person to whom the kingdom is given.

### COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Jesus is teaching us what it means to be truly happy and blessed. But it seems that He pairs totally opposite ideas—we wouldn't think that having a lowly estimation of oneself or trembling with contrition and reverence at God's word would bring happiness. But the truly lowly person is given such a rich treasure. He is made partaker of all the greatness of the kingdom—grace to overcome weaknesses and sins, peace and joy right in the time of great distress and trouble, pure and holy fellowship with other saints of God, and a bright and glorious hope of eternal joy in the presence of God.

Though he may be destitute and needy in terms of this world's goods, afflicted and accused by satan, and ever aware of the weakness and neediness of his humanity; he can know and rejoice that, deep within, he possesses the true riches of faith, godliness, contentment, and wisdom.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

### REFLECTIONS

In reflecting upon Luke 17:20-21 in our lesson, the words of Phillips Brooks came to my mind, as he expressed this truth so beautifully in verse three of the old familiar song, "O Little Town of Bethlehem."

"How silently, how silently,  
The wondrous gift is giv'n!  
So God imparts to human hearts,  
The blessings of His heav'n.  
No ear may hear His coming,  
But in this world of sin,  
Where meek souls will receive Him still,  
The dear Christ enters in."

Without observation or outward show, Christ, the King of glory comes in spirit to the hearts of poor sinners who acknowledge their wretchedness and bow before Him in penitent contrition. As the

Prince of Peace speaks peace to the troubled soul, the treasures of the kingdom begin to be unveiled as the inner man foretastes the realities of the heavenly realm. This is “the mystery which hath been hid from ages and generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: ... which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:26-27).

This kingdom is now “at hand.” Who would not want to humbly bow, meet the King’s conditions, and receive it? Those who do enjoy a foretaste of heaven here in this life as well as the hope of eternal bliss hereafter; for this kingdom has no end!

—Bro. Harlan Sorrell

**APRIL 16, 2017**

**BLESSED ARE THEY THAT MOURN**

Matthew 5:4 Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Luke 6:21b Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh.

25b Woe unto you that laugh now! For ye shall mourn and weep.

Luke 7:37 And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster box of ointment,

38 And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.

39 Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner.

40 And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on.

41 There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty.

42 And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?

43 Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he

forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.

44 And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head.

45 Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet.

46 My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.

47 Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.

48 And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.

49 And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also?

50 And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.

II Corinthians 7:10 For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.

11 For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

—James 4:9-10

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** The person who is truly blessed of God is the one who realizes his poor and needy condition before God; is truly contrite and sorrowful for his committed sins, sinful nature, weakness and inability to meet God's demands; and mourns, weeping genuine tears of regret and longing for God's forgiveness and fellowship. He then experiences the Lord drawing him near to Him, lifting him up and extending grace and forgiveness.

## WORD DEFINITIONS

Matthew 5:4 “Mourn”: grieve; bewail; lament.

Luke 6:21b “Weep”: mourn; lament; weep aloud, expressing uncontainable, audible grief.

Luke 7:37 “Sinner”: devoted to sin; preeminently sinful; especially wicked.

Luke 7:42 “Frankly”: freely; gratuitously; as an act of bounty.

II Corinthians 7:10 “Godly sorrow”: distress; vexation; pain of body or mind; grief; “Heart sorrow that brings a person down” (*HELPS Word Studies*). “Sorrow which is after the will of God” (*Ellicot’s Commentary*).

11 “Carefulness”: speed; haste; diligence; earnestness; enthusiasm. “Clearing of yourselves”: a plea; verbal defense; “A reasoned argument (defense) that presented evidence (supplied compelling proof)” (*HELPS Word Studies*). “Vehement desire”: eager longing; strong desire; earnest, yearning affection. “Zeal”: fervent eagerness; enthusiasm; burning emotion.

James 4:9 “Heaviness”: “The word here rendered *heaviness* occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means *dejection*; *sorrow*. It is not gloom, melancholy, or moroseness, but it is sorrow on account of sin” (*Barnes*).

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Today we focus on the second Beatitude, “Blessed are they that mourn,” a close follow-up and response to the first Beatitude. “The one is the intellectual, the other the emotional aspect of the same thing. It is poverty of spirit that says, ‘I am undone’; and it is the mourning which this causes that makes it break forth in the form of a lamentation—‘Woe is me! for I am undone’” (*James-Fausset-Brown Commentary*).

The example that vividly describes this process is that of the sinful woman weeping at Jesus’ feet. Being deeply convicted of her sin, she sinks in deep contrition, pouring out confession and a plea for pardon through her flowing tears. Her faith in Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God is expressed by the depth of her sorrow: she knows it is against God that she has sinned, and from Him only can

she obtain forgiveness.

Such contrition can also be found in Old Testament examples: David, after he had sinned; Ezra, as he weeps for God's chastened exiles; Jeremiah and Daniel, also repenting for Israel, and Manasseh, a most wicked king who turned with genuine contrition away from his horrible sins and sought God for forgiveness. The prophet Joel called for national mourning and weeping because of Israel's sins.

In the case of the weeping woman, Jesus confirmed her sincere contrition and repentance by granting her comforting words of forgiveness. That is why, He explained to the Pharisee, she expressed so much love. She had, in faith, forsaken her wicked life and demonstrated assurance that He would forgive. "All true love to God is preceded in the heart by these two things—a sense of sin and an assurance of pardon" (*MacLaren's Expositions*).

Paul, writing to the Corinthians who had also sought forgiveness with true godly sorrow, commends the earnest, diligent manner they demonstrated, contrasting this with the kind of sorrow that the world often displays—remorse, despair, a broken heart, suicide—none of them resulting in true repentance, or turning away from sin, but all leading to eternal death.

James seems to point back to Jesus' teachings as he instructs seekers to mourn and be afflicted. I am reminded of Solomon's observation about mourning and laughter. Sadness makes the heart better, he said (Ecclesiastes 7:2-4). Applying that to Jesus' true meaning and the "godly sorrow" and "heaviness" preached by the apostles helps us understand Solomon's words.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

## **DISCUSSION:**

1. *Mourning or Laughter:* What is the significance of each of these in this context? Express the difference you sense between the two.
2. *She Loved Much:* What preceded this outpouring of love to the Savior?
3. *Godly Sorrow:* What proof does one give when he/she is truly contrite?



## COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

*Godly sorrow.* I believe it is an attitude we should *keep* in our hearts before the Lord. Not that we are always sinning and repenting; rather, we are always recognizing how we depend upon the Lord to give us grace NOT to sin. We mourn our lack of wisdom, our insufficiency to meet the needs of others, our nothingness. Not that we go about in life with a long face. This is a grief that we keep before the Lord in private prayer. We rise with the comfort and strength that He has promised.

We also mourn before Him for the sins of those around us; for the lost sheep, the backsliders, for the world that needs a Savior. We mourn the distress and pain in people's lives that is a result of sin; sins of our nation that have plunged it into chaos and ruin—abortion, addiction, abuse, violence, dishonesty, greed, immorality. We mourn the decay of pure religion; the apostasy, the religious confusion and division. We weep for those who are disillusioned, hurt and wounded.

Then there is the sorrow and pain of life. We all experience it and we all have times of mourning. Although in context Jesus' words are primarily about the spiritual mourning of repentance, they may be applied in a healing way for all of the grief we bear. Truly, He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows. That is why His Spirit is called the *Comforter*.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

## REFLECTIONS

Reflecting on the account of the penitent woman who demonstrated her great brokenness, I am reminded of the following heart-yearning cry, written by Fanny Crosby:

Pass me not, O gentle Savior, Hear my humble cry;  
While on others Thou art calling, Do not pass me by.

Let me at Thy throne of mercy, Find a sweet relief;  
Kneeling there in deep contrition, Help my unbelief.

She was inspired to write this song after hearing a penitent prisoner she had preached to say, "Good Lord, do not pass me by." This song captures the deep agony of spirit over sin, coupled with hope that every recipient of God's grace must have exhibited.

Christ's ministry is even yet a call to sorrow for our sins and to turn from them. He fills the penitent weeper with joy and laughter. Those who spurn his invitation, choosing to make merry outside of his offered grace, will be loaded down with the sorrows of sin in this life and the anguish and heart-wrenching wails throughout eternity's torments.

—Bro. Jeremy Booher

**APRIL 23, 2017**

**FOR THEY SHALL BE COMFORTED**

Matthew 5:4 Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Luke 6:21b Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh.

Psalms 30:2 O Lord my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me.

5 For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.

Isaiah 12:1 And in that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me.

Isaiah 40:1 Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God

2 Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

Isaiah 51:11 Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.

12a I, even I, am he that comforteth you.

Isaiah 66:13 As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem.

II Corinthians 1:3 Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord

Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;

4 Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

**MEMORY VERSE:** I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. —John 14:18

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Those who have mourned their sinful condition and wept in godly sorrow are promised the comfort of God's salvation, forgiveness, and abiding presence.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

Matthew 5:4 "Comforted": to call near; to call to one's side; to exhort, encourage; to refresh, cheer. In this case, the consolation (comfort) is given not in words but by the experience of a happier lot. (See also II Corinthians 1:3-4.)

Psalms 30:5 "Weeping may endure": may come to lodge, as a wayfarer or a guest for the night.

Isaiah 12:1 "Comfortedst": from a primitive root meaning to *sigh*, i.e. breathe strongly; by implication, to be sorry, i.e. (in a favorable sense) to pity or console; or (unfavorably) to avenge (oneself).

Isaiah 40:2 "Double for all her sins": Some commentators say this means a double punishment: the Jews were carried into Babylonian captivity and at the time of Jesus were in Roman captivity. But some interpret it to mean that God would give blessings double to the punishment. As this prophecy points directly to the message that John the Baptist brought to the Jews, preparing them for the Messiah, who would take away their sins AND baptize them with the Holy Spirit, many reformers apply this to the full gospel message of justification and sanctification. "Let the water and the blood from Thy wounded side which flowed, be of sin a *double cure*; save from wrath and make me pure" (*Rock of Ages*, by Augustus M. Toplady).

John 14:18 "Comfortless": bereaved; an orphan; fatherless; desolate.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Closely following and related to the first “Blessed,” the second pronounces the blessing of the consolation of the Comforter for those who have seen their needy condition and cried out to God about it. The Psalmist and Isaiah both describe the condition of mourning before God when cognizant of His wrath toward our sin, and the comfort of His release and pardon. Isaiah goes further and points to Christ bringing a double solution to sin. The deep spiritual truths about what salvation will do in a man’s life are later described in the other verses in Isaiah 40, 51, and 66. Going into the New Testament, the Greek word for *comfort* expands the meaning as it is applied to the Holy Spirit and His role of advocate, intercessor and helper.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

### DISCUSSION:

1. *How Long?* How did the Psalmist contrast the time of weeping with the joy that came later?
2. *Speak Ye Comfortably:* With what message was the “Voice” to comfort God’s people? Name the specifics.
3. *Double:* What does this mean when applied to salvation?
4. *A Word Picture:* According to Isaiah, what is the *manner* in which God comforts His people?
5. *How Much?* What words in II Corinthians describe the scope of God’s comfort?
6. *His Promise:* In what condition did He promise *not* to leave us?

### COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

I’ll never forget a message I heard at the graveside of a young husband suddenly taken from his family. The minister spoke of Mary and Martha who were grieving the death of their brother Lazarus. When Jesus came to the scene, Mary, silent and solitary, was grieving inside her home. After Jesus spoke with Martha, He asked for Mary. “The Master is come, and calleth for thee,” Martha told Mary. The minister told the young widow, “Some day, in your grief,

Jesus is going to call you. He's going to come and call you to come close to Him."

That indeed is the deep meaning to the word "comfort." To call near. He will call us near unto Himself, and that is the ultimate comfort. What is so precious is HOW He comforts: as one whom his mother comforts. When I comforted my children in their little scrapes and heartaches, I took them up on my lap, in my arms, and held them close, soothing and wiping tears away.

When we are in sin we are far from God. Our sins have separated us from Him. "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Ephesians 2:13). Truly we can now rejoice and sing praise; we have been pardoned, our sins have been avenged by the blood of Jesus and we are no longer under His wrath. Sorrow, the night visitor, has taken his flight as the Sun of Righteousness arises in our hearts, and we are held closely, consoled and healed by His enfolding rays.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

## REFLECTIONS

We've all seen the sad images of people rifling through debris after a natural disaster, trying to salvage and piece back together what's left of their homes and their lives. The things that were once of great value are gone. Photos and heirlooms, things that are irreplaceable, have been destroyed.

I can only imagine the sorrow that they experience. Their lives have been torn apart. What was once a place of comfort is now a place of despair. If we could translate this scene into the spiritual equivalent, we would see that sin has ravaged the lives of so many people. It's destroyed homes and torn families apart.

The regrets and disappointments of sin take their toll on our physical, spiritual and emotional life. "If only I had not done that." "If only I had listened." "If I knew then what I know now." Satan has the ability to blind our eyes to the consequences of our choices. We don't see the pain and heartache that our pursuit of sin brings to us and to those around us. But when the Lord, in his mercy, opens our eyes and we see the damage, we come to our senses and we are sorrowful.

As we sift through the destruction and try to piece back together what is left, we mourn. We mourn our loss of innocence and the wasted time and resources.

However, the good news is that there is help and there is hope. It is at these times that Christ who loves us comes to our rescue and provides comfort. Mourning is a healthy expression of loss and the scripture gives us a blessed promise—if we mourn, we SHALL be comforted.

—Bro. Darrell Johnson

**APRIL 30, 2017**

**BLESSED ARE THE MEEK**

Matthew 5:5 Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

Psalm 22:26 The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the Lord that seek him: your heart shall live forever.

Psalm 25:9 The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way.

Psalm 37:3 Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.

9 For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth. (Also verse 34.)

11 But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. (Also verses 18, 22, 29.)

Isaiah 29:19 The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.

Isaiah 57:13b But he that putteth his trust in me shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD'S anger.

—Zephaniah 2:3

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Those who recognize their lowly position and mourn their sinful condition now cease to struggle or fight

against God, but accept His dealings without resistance and receive His Word and His Will. They also forbear and accept injuries, provocations or insults from others patiently, forgiving and restoring their fellow man. These shall inherit the spiritual land of promise—conquest and victory in the Holy Spirit.

### **WORD DEFINITIONS**

Matthew 5:5 “Meek”: mild; gentle. “Earth”: land; the land of promise which was given to the children of Israel, and which pointed forward to the spiritual land of conquest—the promise of the Holy Spirit.

Psalm 22:6 “Meek”: poor; afflicted; humble.

Psalm 25:9 “Judgment”: justice; here the word refers to His eternal law of ordinances.

Psalm 37:9 “Inherit”: take possession of.

11 “Peace”: completeness; soundness; welfare; prosperity; peace.

### **LESSON BACKGROUND**

The promise given by Jesus to those who would gladly receive His Word (James 1:21), yield themselves to Him without resistance and show a mild, gentle and forgiving nature to those around them was a familiar concept given in the Psalms and prophets. Psalm 37 shares the thought several times, describing a person who trusts in the Lord to give him what he needs, waits patiently on the Lord to supply, and lives righteously, quietly, and with mercy and generosity. Can you see an allusion to Abraham’s mild manner with Lot when he gave Lot choice of “the land?” He trusted in God to provide what was best for him, did not strive for his “rights,” and meekly let Lot choose what looked like the best territory. Stepping away from that encounter, we see God coming to him with a big smile and a big surprise. “Abraham, you didn’t insist on the best and the biggest, and now just look what I have for you” (Genesis 13:8-18 and 22:16-18).

His promise to Abraham and to his posterity was way more than literal territory; the New Testament writers clearly point to the promise of life in the Holy Spirit—the kingdom of God—as being the

true inheritance given to those who by faith are the posterity of Abraham. (See Luke 1:72-75, Romans 4, Galatians 4 and Hebrews 11.) I see an allusion to the prophecy given to Daniel here as well. The saints—the holy people—would possess the kingdom; all the greatness and dominion of it would be given to them (Daniel 7:22-27).

What are the elements of this inheritance? Spiritual satisfaction and fullness, joy and praise, guidance and instruction, provision and peace.

See how closely this thought follows the first two “Blesseds”? The kingdom of heaven, the comfort of forgiveness and presence of the Holy Spirit, and the spiritual inheritance of the promise of the Father—all are the precious possessions of the humble, contrite and meek individual. This is why he or she is truly happy and blessed.

## **DISCUSSION:**

1. *The Meek*: What type of person does this word describe?
2. *Teachable*: What kind of person does God teach His way?
3. *Inheritance*: What does God promise to those who wait upon the Lord?
4. *Fulfillment*: To which promises and prophecies can we see allusions in this passage, and to whom were they each made?

## **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

Jesus’ teaching of the Beatitudes leads us into the simple but complete plan of salvation. The steps He describes are very important. A religion that leaves out any of these steps is not pure religion nor true salvation. Repentance, contrition, humbling oneself, loathing and forsaking one’s sin, meekness—all are unpopular themes in today’s “feel-good” preaching. Conviction. The mourner’s bench. These things were familiar in the past, but are not very welcome today. But God has not changed nor have His requirements.

The solution to many a spiritual problem can be found right here. I have yet to see someone rise up from praying at the altar for salvation and *keep saved* who was not properly convicted of their



sinfulness, contrite about it, ready to forsake it, and totally willing to meekly accept God's way in his or her life.

Meekness is the way to victory all along the Christian way. In marriage, in the neighborhood, in the workplace, and in the congregation, we gain spiritual ground when we quit defending ourselves (and thus keep ourselves from being offended), quit insisting on our own way and arguing for our own rights, and instead choose the gentleness and mildness of our Savior when dealing with confrontation.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

## REFLECTIONS

In Matthew Henry's commentary it reads, *"The meek are those who quietly submit themselves to God, to His Word and to His Rod; who follow His directions and comply with His designs and are gentle to all men; who can bear provocation without being inflamed by it; are either silent or return a soft answer; who can show their displeasure when there is occasion for it without any Indecencies; who can be cool when others are hot; and in their patience keep possession of their own souls. They are the meek, who are rarely and hardly provoked, but quickly and easily pacified; and who would rather forgive twenty injuries than revenge one, having the rule of their own spirits."*

Dear ones, when we have *salt* working in our lives, the attributes of meekness will be there also. Wanting our way all the time, being impatient, pushy, demanding it to go "this way or else—" these are signs of the carnal man still alive in our life. Too often the carnal man comes out in the heat of the moment and blurts out things we are ashamed of later.

Abraham's attitude as a "man of faith" came out as he and his nephew, Lot, a "man of sight," were discussing who could take this or who would take that. A man of faith can always depend on God to give the best.

Lord, help us to be more like You!

—Bro. James Bell

**MAY 7, 2017**

**BLESSED ARE THEY WHICH DO HUNGER AND THIRST  
AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS: FOR THEY SHALL BE FILLED**

Matthew 5:6 Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Luke 6:21a Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled.

Psalm 36:8 They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.

Psalm 107:9 For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.

Isaiah 44:3 For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring:

55:2 Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.

Luke 6:25a Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger.

Proverbs 27:7 The full soul loatheth an honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.

Revelation 3:17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.

**MEMORY VERSE:** And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

—Revelation 22:17

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Jesus pronounces a blessing on those who continually hunger and thirst for righteousness and a woe on those who are full—spiritually stuffed with the things of this world that do not satisfy, but lull the mind into a dangerous, false security. For those who recognize their need and earnestly seek Him, He promises true satisfaction.

## WORD DEFINITIONS

Matthew 5:6 “Hunger”: to be needy; famish; pine; to crave ardently, to seek with eager desire. “Thirst”: to desire earnestly; to painfully feel the want of, and eagerly long for, those things by which the soul is refreshed, supported, strengthened. (*Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*). “Righteousness”: justice; justness; divine approval. “What is deemed right by the Lord (after His examination), i.e. what is approved in His eyes” (*HELPS Word Studies*). “Filled”: satisfied; supplied with food in abundance.

Psalm 36:8 “Abundantly satisfied”: saturated; drenched; soaked. “Fatness”: abundance; luxuriance; figurative of spiritual blessing. “River”: torrent; rushing stream. “Thy Pleasures”: dainties; delights; the Hebrew word is *eden*.

Psalm 107:9 “Satisfieth”: sated; have one’s fill. “Goodness”: pleasant; beautiful, agreeable to the senses.

Luke 6:25 “Full”: satiated; satisfied; there is also a reference to being *inflamed* or *swollen*.

Proverbs 27:7 “Loatheth”: reject; trample; tread down. “Honeycomb”: dripping, flowing honey from the comb.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Throughout the scriptures the contrasts between these two opposites, *full* and *hungry*, are often given. Israel was warned by God in Moses’ last message (Deuteronomy 8:10) that after being prosperous in the Canaan land they would become so full that they would forget the Lord. Also (Deuteronomy 32:15), He described their rejection of Him because of worldly fullness, or fatness, as someone literally kicking Him away. In the Psalms we often read of the men of this world who were prosperous, had more than the heart could wish; men who had their portion in this life (chapters 10, 17, and 73). The writer in Proverbs 30 requests to be neither poor nor rich. When rich—full—he feared he would deny the Lord and question His existence. Ezekiel spoke of one of the sins of Sodom being *fullness of bread* (Ezekiel 16:49). The idea of being *full* always goes hand in hand with pride, scornfulness, unbelief, and merciless abuse of the “poor.”

To the contrary, as we have learned in previous lessons, the man

or woman to whom God would draw near is the one who is poor and needy in his or her own estimation; a person who follows that sense of loss or need with tears of repentance and mournful seeking. People who humble their hearts to meekly accept whatever comes from God's hand, sweet or bitter. And in this verse, they actively hunger, which expresses itself in ardent desire and earnest seeking.

To these souls the Lord promises full satisfaction. We have included different scriptures from the Old and New Testaments to give a word picture of the full extent of that satisfaction; words like *fatness, torrents, Eden, delights, beautiful, sated, abundantly satisfied*.

The verse from Isaiah offers a clue as to the source of this river of satisfaction: "I will pour my spirit." The promises in the previous "Blesseds" have been all about God's comfort and His kingdom—righteousness, peace and joy *in the Holy Ghost*; and the land of conquest—victory and rest through the life *of the Spirit*. It is no surprise then that the answer to our hunger and thirst for righteousness is to be found right here. *In the Holy Spirit. "In thy presence is fullness of joy"* (Psalm 16:11).

## **DISCUSSION:**

1. *Thirsty*: Tell what are we to hunger and thirst for and give its definition.
2. *Filled*: Share your favorite Scripture promise that guarantees this experience.
3. *Full*: What are the things that would make us so full we would reject the Lord's abundance?

## **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

"That which satisfieth not." Can it be that we would actually spend our time, labor and resources seeking for that which does not really satisfy our souls? And what would the "woe" be to those of us who are "full"? Who laugh now? Who are rich? Jesus said that our consolation would only be for now. Earthly, temporal, fleeting. He said we would hunger—later. When it's too late. When our chance is gone. He said we would weep. Oh, and with the weeping

accompanied by gnashing of teeth for eternity!

What if we did hunger and thirst for righteousness—for Divine approval—as people do who hunger for worldly fame and recognition, or to be beautiful, or stylish, or cool! What if we sought after it as earnestly as people do who have financial security as their goal in life? Or a certain exotic car, a home to “wow” their guests, a luxury vacation?

I’ve often wondered just how far into the heights and depths of God we would go if we went at it just like that. I do know this. The more I hunger and seek, the dearer and richer salvation, the presence of God, the Word of God becomes.

I don’t want to eke out an existence at the side of a stagnant, muddy pond when Jesus promises I can be filled by floods—TORRENTS—of the living water of righteousness.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

## REFLECTIONS

Scanning through the grocery store aisle, one can find many choices of power foods to eat: whey powders to increase strength, nutrient bars to sustain energy levels, protein shakes to curb appetites and the list goes on. One is reminded of the wonderful manna that the Lord provided to the children of Israel for forty years. This manna was the perfect food for the multitude. It contained the exact amount of calories, vitamins and minerals that the people of God needed. This was a power food that kept the body healthy and disease free.

Over time, however, the children of Israel became a discontented and complaining lot and desired meat. The Lord sent them their desires (quail three feet deep!) and it caused sickness in their bodies and ultimate death.

In John 6:31, Jesus explained to His disciples that He was that manna come down from heaven. What a blessing to be daily fed by the Word of God—the sustaining food for our soul! We need never be sick, as this manna has the perfect amount of nutrients to bring health to our soul. But sadly, there is a spirit of discontent, just as in the days of the Israelites. The gluttony of souls who lust after the things of the world bring on spiritual affliction and eventual death.

Let us be challenged to find delight in the daily spiritual manna given by the hand of God. It will sustain us, it will strengthen us and it will keep us from harm. May we too say, as the disciples did, "Lord, evermore give us this bread."

—Sis. LaDawna Adams

**MAY 14, 2017**

**BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL, FOR THEY SHALL OBTAIN MERCY**

Matthew 5:7 Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

Matthew 12:7 But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless. (Also Matthew 9:13.)

Luke 6:36 Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

Psalms 103:8 The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.

11 For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.

17a But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him.

Micah 7:18 Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.

Proverbs 3:3 Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart.

11:17 The merciful man doeth good to his own soul: but he that is cruel troubleth his own flesh.

James 2:13 For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually. —Hosea 12:6

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** The truly happy person, and the one God blesses, is one who is a lover of mercy, values the mercy God has

shown him, seeks to show mercy to every person, and keeps a merciful spirit and attitude at all times and to every creature.

## WORD DEFINITIONS

Matthew 5:7 “Merciful”: full of pity and actively compassionate. “The merciful are those who, through brotherly love, account another person’s misery their own; who weep over the calamities of others; who, out of their own property, feed the hungry and clothe the naked; who admonish those that are in error, inform the ignorant, pardon the offending; and who, in short, use their utmost endeavours to relieve and comfort others” (*Erasmus*).

Matthew 12:7 “I will have mercy and not sacrifice”: A quote from Hosea 6:6 meaning, “I am more pleased with acts of benevolence and kindness than with a mere external compliance with the duties of religion” (*Barnes Notes on the Bible*). Jesus didn’t oppose sacrifices or do away with God’s law, but when a rite became more important than doing good to someone, it was actually an abuse to God’s law, not an obedience.

Micah 7:18 “A God”: literally, a *mighty* God. “Passeth by the transgression”: pass over iniquities, or forgive. “A form of speech used amongst us when we promise not to pursue an offence, or not to exact the punishment of it, or as if we either saw it not, or voluntarily winked at it, being resolved that we would not make it a cause of quarrel or breach” (*Matthew Poole’s Commentary*).

Proverbs 3:3 “Mercy”: favor, kindness, love. “Bind them about thy neck: write them upon the table of thine heart”: outward exhibition and inward possession. Mercy and truth are ornaments of character. The “table” meant the heart as a *writing tablet*, where God inscribes His truth, to be copied into the character.

James 2:13: “Judgment without mercy”: a principle repeated in Proverbs 21:13 and II Samuel 22:26-27, that a person will be judged by pure justice without a mixture of mercy; the converse to Matthew 5:7. “Mercy rejoiceth against judgment”: mercy is superior to judgment; mercy triumphs over judgment.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Truly, the background of a lesson on mercy is the whole history of God's merciful dealings with the Jews, a stiff-necked, hard-hearted, backsliding, and unbelieving people. Throughout God's law are commands as to the merciful treatment of others. Notable acts of God's mercy are in every book of the Bible.

To get a proper idea of the standard to which we should attain in being merciful, we chose verses to remind us of the length, breadth, width, and height of God's mercy on the Israelites, the Gentiles, and on us today. His mercy is everlasting. It's higher than the measureless span between earth and sky. It forgives and pardons and forgets.

The verses in Proverbs remind us to not just display mercy on the outside, but embed it in our very heart, mind and nature. We should *breathe* it out of us. We are also reminded here and in James that cruelty, the opposite of mercy, will come right back and bite us if we allow it in our lives.

The memory verse tells us to turn to God (when *we* are in need), keep mercy (toward those who are needy of *our* forgiveness and acts of compassion), and wait on Him—lean on Him, attend unto Him, look to Him to supply. He truly is the source of all mercy.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

### DISCUSSION:

1. *Don't Forget*: What guarantee has God placed on being merciful?
2. *Greater Than*: What does God desire more than "religious" duties or rituals?
3. *Just Like Our Father*: List examples in Scripture that show us HOW God is merciful. What is the measure of His mercy?
4. *His Heart Revealed*: What does God delight in?
5. *Same As*: What is the true gauge of the mercy or judgment that will be given us, both now, from others in this life, and from God at the final judgment?



## COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

We spoke in an earlier lesson of the worldly fullness that makes us proud in our own selves and scornful of others. Therein is the root of all unmercifulness. We don't recognize the dire need we had of mercy so we don't know how to show it to others. We can live in our own little bubble of prosperity and be totally clueless to the hurt and pain around us. We don't do deeds of compassion because we *don't see the need*. We can speak words that inflict pain and anger and not even know it.

Just the introduction of this thought, "As your Father is merciful," should send us scurrying back to the first Beatitudes, and to repeat the steps again: *Be humble; recognize your own need. Mourn and weep over it. Meekly acquiesce to God's will and way and to the hurts from others. Ardently desire and earnestly seek for true righteousness.* The capability to show mercy can only come after we have thus prepared our hearts.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

## REFLECTIONS

"If the Lord is merciful, gracious, tender, kind, etc., toward us, it is that we may be merciful, gracious, tender and kind to others. We must be merciful and tender to our companions and children. We must be merciful to each other as brothers and sisters, and especially should the ministers of the gospel be men and women of 'tender mercy.' Oh, how we fail to hold up Christ to this world when we get our hearts set on the judgment side of the gospel to the exclusion of mercy, and pour out the Word only from a legal standpoint. The real judgments must be rendered without compromise; but in mercy. I feel sure that there are dear souls who are themselves groping in awful darkness, simply because they are not merciful to others. If a person shows judgment without mercy, he will surely receive judgment without mercy, and get to a place where he realizes that he is an object of great mercy before he can get clear.

"One night one of my little children accidentally got into trouble. It told its mother and me at once. It was only an accident and I

should have comforted the child and encouraged it to be more careful next time, but I did not. I rather chided or upbraided the child, which only added grief to the trouble, and the child went off to bed sobbing until it fell asleep with a very sad heart. I did not begin to feel any sting of conscience just then, or at least not much. The next day I started for a point about three hundred miles distant. I stopped over in a large city where an incident occurred which placed me in a position with God similar to that in which the child had been with me. Distress and sorrow began to get hold of my soul. Oh how Satan did harass my soul! The dear Lord seemed to say so gently to my soul, 'Have I not dealt with you as you did with your child? Did you not withhold comfort when it was within your power to give it? Why will you seek my smiles and not grant them to your child?' And at this James 2:13 flashed into my soul with new meaning to me, also 'Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.' I humbled my heart all I could before God, and I wrote to my child and all the family that knew I had not borne my child's troubles and asked their forgiveness."

"The dear Lord came to my rescue in the right time, and now I thank God for the chastening, realizing that we are all made of the same clay, and are objects of mercy. 'Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies ...' (read Colossians 3:12-14)."

—From *The Gospel Trumpet*, December 20, 1906,  
page 4, article *Mercy*, by J. L. Green  
—Edited and abridged by Bro. Harlan Sorrell

**MAY 21, 2017**

**BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART, FOR THEY SHALL SEE GOD**

Matthew 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

Psalm 24:3 Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place?

4 He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.

5 He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness

from the God of his salvation.

Matthew 6:22 The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

23 But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

James 4:8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.

Hebrews 10:22 Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. (Also Hebrews 9:14.)

Hebrews 12:14 Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

1 John 3:2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

6 Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.

**MEMORY VERSE:** And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.

—Deuteronomy 30:6

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** The blessed life of seeing the Lord—by the spiritual eye through faith here in this life and then “face to face” in the Resurrection—comes to those whose hearts have been made clean through Jesus’ blood and have a single, wholehearted love for God, untainted by sin, guile, or worship of any other god.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

Matthew 5:8 “Pure in heart”: clean; unstained; guiltless; upright; unmixed; without undesirable elements; moral

blamelessness of the inner life; clean because of being purged by God; free from contaminating influences. "See God": "Through purity, singleness of mind, they are qualified for seeing, knowing, truly conceiving God and all that relates to the moral universe. It is the pure in heart who are able to see and say that 'truly God is good' (Psalm 73:1) and rightly to interpret the whole phenomena of life in relation to Providence. 'They shall see,' says Jesus...He means the pure are the men who see; the double-minded, the two-souled (James 1:8) man is blind..." (*Expositor's New Testament*). "This is a Hebraism, which signifies, 'possess God, enjoy his felicity': as *seeing* a thing, was used among the Hebrews for *possessing it*" (Adam Clarke, *Clarke's Commentary*).

Psalm 24:3 "The hill of the Lord": literally, Mount Zion, where was the temple, the place where God dwelt; spiritually, the Church, which is the Zion where He dwells today. "His holy place": the holy of holies, where was His Shekinah presence. It typified the church, the hearts of believers where His Spirit now dwells. "The men who shall stand as courtiers in the palace of the living God are not distinguished by race, but by character; they are not Jews only, nor Gentiles only, nor any one branch of mankind peculiarly, but a people purified and made meet to dwell in the holy hill of the Lord" (*The Treasury of David*).

Psalm 24:4 "Who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity": one who has not devoted himself to the worship of an idol or set his affections on the vain things of this world. He sets his heart on that which is real and true.

Matthew 6:22 "Single": unfolded, single—"literally, 'without folds,' referring to a single (undivided) focus, i.e. without a (secret) 'double agenda' which prevents an over-complicated life (becoming needlessly distracted)" (*HELPS Word Studies*).

James 4:8 "Double-minded": of two souls, or two selves; wavering; vacillating (in opinion or purpose) like a spiritual schizophrenic.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

One who has recognized his low estate, cried to God about it, laid down his defenses and accepted God's way, sought earnestly for

righteousness, and endeavored to be gentle and full of compassion and mercy toward his fellow is also happy and blessed because God has accomplished and is maintaining an inner purification of his heart. He recognizes that outward righteousness is of no avail, and it is for true holiness and purity that he seeks. A special blessedness comes from the ability he is given to see, perceive and know, and possess God in his life.

Speaking in prophecy, in Psalm 24 and in a parallel passage, Psalm 15, David named this quality of purity of heart as the qualification for dwelling in God's presence.

Purity of heart is also closely connected with another concept—that of having a single heart, or a single eye, again referring to spiritual vision or perception. Jesus, when bringing this thought in the Sermon, also mentioned the negative implication. Not having a single eye, but having a divided focus, causes blindness, or darkness. James continues the thought as he charges, "Purify your hearts, ye double-minded." John also mentions *seeing God* when he writes about purity from all sin.

The Hebrews writer alludes to the sanctuary, or holiest place of which David prophesied, reiterating the concept of a true heart and holy life being the requirement for dwelling there. "Let us draw near." It's in the holy place, the secret place, that we see His face and experience His nearness. Sin separates, but a heart made pure is privileged to be drawn in close. He also emphasized, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

Our memory verse is a promise from the covenant God made with the children of Israel; a second covenant given after the one He made in Horeb. In it He repeated the stern warnings He had given them if they forsook Him and the blessings that were promised if they were obedient. This promise put a deeper spiritual meaning to an ordinance that to them was only physical. It dealt with their heart. Later in the New Testament, Paul gave the Roman Christians (Romans 2:28-29) a description of a "true" Israelite: one whose heart had been circumcised, or made pure. He promised spiritual life, and thank God, by the blood of His Son, He delivered on His promise.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

## DISCUSSION:

1. *Who*: What kind of person shall see God and stand in His holy place?
2. *Vision*: What kind of eye allows for good vision? Which causes blindness? How does this connects with “a pure heart?”
3. *A Pure Heart*: What brings that about? Give a Scripture.
4. *Seeing God*: Explain how we see God now and how it will be when He comes again.

## COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Our lesson so clearly points out that it takes a pure heart to really see the Lord; both now and after this life. But what does it mean to see Him? One scripture tells us, “Every eye shall see him.” Even those who pierced Him will see Him. However, our text lets us know that there is something special for the pure in heart. We sing a song that says:

“Dwelling in the secret place, where I see my Father’s face,  
I have found a heavenly refuge and my troubles cease.”

There is special vision for the pure in heart, of “seeing Him Who is invisible”; of seeing God everywhere, in all things, in all circumstances. We see Him in the storm. We see Him in His Word. He is revealed in the common things of everyday life. We see Him in His people and in the outstretched, yearning hands of the minister delivering his burden to the lost souls. There may be special times of need where we are given a vision, a revelation, a dream. This is only “in part.” We know it is “through a glass darkly.”

But then—oh, then, it will be “face to face.” What will it be, when we see Him AS HE IS? How many songs have been written to describe the glory of that day? One of my favorites is:

“Oh, I want to see Him, look upon His face.  
There to sing forever of His saving grace.  
On the streets of glory, let me lift my voice.  
Cares all past, Home at last, ever to rejoice.”

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

## REFLECTIONS

What a blessing it is to be ever receiving new insights of God's character as He continues to help us purify our hearts and natures by His shed blood. We are exhorted to "keep thy heart with all diligence."

So long as we keep our desires fully in check to the wooing of His Holy Spirit, and let Him weigh us by His word, our eye will remain single and our body full of light. But, if we consistently resist admonition from God's word or the Holy Spirit, our eye of light turns to darkness, which in turn blinds our entire spiritual body. It's amazing how quickly a simple intentional twist of a scriptural application plunges the once honest soul into darkness.

Physically, some of us have experienced a parallel occurrence of blurred double vision peppered with sparkles and floating spots brought on by a dizzy migraine or by inflamed optic nerves. This disruption of visual focus disables us from driving and performing most tasks to the point we find it even hard to focus mentally. In this disoriented condition, we lose the distinction between objects being viewed.

Those who resist the gentle Holy Spirit and the revealings of the spotlight of God's Word, will lose distinction between right and wrong. The bright sparkles will cause evil to appear as new light, and the floating spots will blur truth and right into insensible vagueness.

In summary, those who draw back become spiritually disoriented and fall headlong into Satan's delusions. Thankfully, the pure in heart will never be subjected to this self-wrought darkness.

—Bro. Jeremy Booher

**MAY 28, 2017**

**BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS,  
FOR THEY SHALL BE CALLED THE CHILDREN OF GOD**

Matthew 5:9 Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

Mark 9:50 Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace

one with another.

Luke 6:35 But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.

Romans 12:18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

Romans 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

18 For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.

19 Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

I Corinthians 14:33 For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.

Ephesians 5:1 Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;

2 And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.

Philippians 2:3 Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

II Timothy 2:24 And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,

Hebrews 12:14 Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

**MEMORY VERSE:** But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

—James 3:17-18

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** A peacemaker enjoys the truly happy and blessed life of being called and known as a true child of God. He imitates His Father in showing love, mercy, forgiveness, making and restoring peace, and in all matters treating everyone with



gentleness, impartiality, and genuine humility and wisdom.

## WORD DEFINITIONS

Matthew 5:9 “Peacemakers”: connecting into one—a more energetic term than just “peaceable.” “The founders and promoters of peace are meant; who not only keep the peace, but seek to bring men into harmony with each other. Tyndale renders, ‘the maintainers of peace’” (*Vincent Word Studies*). “A peace-maker is a man who, being endowed with a generous public spirit, labors for the public good, and feels his own interest promoted in promoting that of others: therefore, instead of fanning the fire of strife, he uses his influence and wisdom to reconcile the contending parties, adjust their differences, and restore them to a state of unity” (Adam Clarke, *Clarke’s Commentary*). “One who makes peace by reconciling parties that are at variance” (*Webster’s 1828 Dictionary*).

Mark 9:50 “Salt”: “[Salt] possesses a strongly preservative property, and hence it became an emblem of incorruption and purity, as well as of a perpetual covenant—a perfect reconciliation and lasting friendship” (*Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Dictionary*). “From its antiseptic and savoury qualities, salt became the symbol of hospitality, friendship, durability, fidelity” (*Elliot’s Commentary for English Readers*). “Peace”: to be at peace; to cultivate or keep peace; to bring to peace (same definition in Romans 12:18 and James 3:17).

Romans 14:19 “Peace”: from a word which means to join; tie together into a whole.

Ephesians 5:1 “Followers of God”: imitators of God.

Philippians 2:3 “Strife”: the seeking of followers; mercenary (for gain) self-seeking; rivalry; carnal ambition; feud; faction.

II Timothy 2:24 “Strive”: engage in battle; fight; contend; dispute.

James 3:17 “Without partiality”: does not make a difference (discrimination or distinction) where it is not necessary; is not a respecter of persons; does not harshly esteem one in preference to others.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Jesus was on a mission to rescue and redeem His lost sheep; those of the house of Israel and all of mankind. He was building His church—all who would believe and receive Him—a body of people whom He would indwell; to live, move, and love through them. He had now introduced them to the blessed life of the kingdom. He had shown them how to enter, and that by being humble, contrite, meek, merciful, hungry for righteousness, and pure and simple in heart they could be blessed by the comfort, fullness, victory, power and authority of His kingdom, shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Spirit. Now we come to this. As sheep among wolves He was sending them forth. By loving one another, they would be identified. By meekness they would prevail. Not just by being quiet and peaceable, but by actively seeking peace and reconciliation, they would actually conquer the world. Could they have known—could they have seen, that where these principles would rule in the hearts and lives of men, women, boys and girls, nothing could be more beautiful, more prosperous, or more productive.

Strife and bloodshed would continue in hearts who did not bow to Christ, and sadly, among those whose religion was in name only. The world would be full of it. But wherever there was a little flock where His Spirit ruled, there was peace. His people would be imitators of the Father Who gave His only Son to bring salvation. They would sacrifice themselves, lay down their lives, and give up their own ways to make peace.

This is how the early church operated. Two totally different cultures, the Jews and the Gentiles, were coming together and worshipping together. There were growing pains, there were differences, and there were struggles, but the testimony of even their enemies was that they loved one another.

The verses in our lesson are given by Jesus and the disciples as commandments to the early church. As we consider their admonitions and the meanings of the different words, let us be convicted in our own hearts to live the message out in our lives, so that in our time, in our day, we will be known as true children of God, the people who make peace.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

## DISCUSSION:

1. *Peacemaker*: Give the definition of this word; explain how it is different than just being peaceable.
2. *Salt*: Share what spiritual characteristic this might mean.
3. *Children of Your Father*: Express the quality of heart and action that confers this particular title upon believers.
4. *Pursuit*: What two things should we follow after, as members together of Christ's church?
5. *Dear Children*: Give the definition of "followers of God."
6. *Prohibited*: What did Paul command the Philippians and Timothy not to do?
7. *Harvest of Righteousness*: This fruit may only come from those who \_\_\_\_\_ and sow \_\_\_\_\_.

## COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

This seems to me to be the peak verse in the beatitudes. The previous verses lead upward, as steps, to this important call. If ever there was a time in our generation for being peacemakers, surely it is now. This is the hallmark of true Christianity; this is our identity; the litmus test, if you will, of our genuineness. "Either you *is*, or you *ain't*."

Actively pursuing peace in our relationships, seeking God for wisdom to negotiate and defuse volatile situations, doing what it takes—spending time, practicing self denial, establishing communication—to restore broken trusts: this is our call, and this is what it takes to imitate our Father.

Jesus made peace "through the blood of his cross." It's going to be the cross that unites us. Always. I've observed through the years that when professing Christians discard the cross from their lives and begin to unite with the world, they begin to sow the seeds of discord among the brethren, something God said that He "hates."

When professing saints leave their "first love" and lose that lowly estimation of themselves; cease to be contrite, tenderhearted, meek and merciful; no longer keep themselves pure from all fleshly agendas and ulterior motives, nor hunger for true righteousness, but

establish their own righteousness; they also cease from sowing seeds in peace and instead sow discord. They fail to actively make peace.

Seeds are little things. It's the little things—sometimes a single word or deed or an accumulation of them—that make or break the relationship. What are things we can do today to make peace? It's time for that conversation.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

## REFLECTIONS

The word peacemaker infers that there is a conflict and that the maker of peace has power to calm the situation and unite the opposing parties.

We live in a world of discord. Us against them. One party pitted against another. Though we may not often realize it, we all possess the power individually and collectively to make peace. We can create an atmosphere of unity in our homes and in our spheres of influence simply by the words we speak or the words we chose not to speak.

*A soft answer turns away wrath but grievous words stir up anger.* Our words are powerful. They can make peace or create war. They can calm a volatile situation or escalate it. How many lives have been taken based on words spoken?

If people could learn to rule their tongues, the surge of violence would swiftly abate. It's the words that we speak that give rise to hatred and strife. It is also the words that we speak that can calm and soothe.

But in order to rule the tongue, you must first conquer the heart and that takes the power of God. We have power over Satan because of the Word of God. And we have peace because of the power of the Word.

Jesus showed us that it takes power not to speak when we are being wronged. Silence can be a most effective ally in making peace. We must learn to use it to its full advantage. We must know when to speak and when to be silent. We must seek the Lord for wisdom to choose our words carefully. For therein lies the blessedness of a peacemaker.

—Bro. Darrell Johnson

**JUNE 4, 2017**

**BLESSED ARE THEY WHICH ARE PERSECUTED  
FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS SAKE**

Matthew 5:10 Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Luke 6:22 Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake.

Luke 12:4 And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.

5 But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.

John 15:18 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

John 16:2 They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.

I Peter 4:14 If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.

15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

—I Peter 4:16

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** The truly happy and blessed person who is lowly, meek, and merciful, because he has the power and glory of the kingdom of heaven within, will be able to rejoice even in the time of persecution and suffering for the kingdom's sake.

### **WORD DEFINITIONS**

Matthew 5:11 "Revile" and I Peter 4:14 "Reproached": defame; rail at; chide; taunt; mock; insult; cast blame. "Persecute": put to flight; pursue; aggressively chase; hunt down.

### **LESSON BACKGROUND**

"Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience" (James 5:10). "For so persecuted they the prophets..." (Matthew 5:12). The children of Israel were greatly afflicted by the Egyptians; David was hunted and nearly killed by Saul; Abel was killed by his own brother, Cain, because his works were righteous. As David wrote, "The wicked watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him" (Psalm 37:32).

We can read of Zechariah (2 Chronicles 24:21), Elijah and the other prophets in the time of Ahab (I Kings 18:4), Jeremiah (Jeremiah 11:21), Isaiah (said to have been killed by Manasseh), Daniel, and "others" (Hebrews 11:36-38), who were either censored, forbidden to prophesy, struck in the face, thrown to the lions, imprisoned, tortured or killed. The patient endurance, meekness, trust in God, courage and the solid integrity of these men of God speaks volumes both of the power and grace of God.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

### **DISCUSSION:**

1. *The Brotherhood of Sufferers:* Share stories of martyrs which challenge you and give you courage.
2. *Attitude:* How do the Beatitudes give the suffering Christian grace and fortitude?

## COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Jesus spoke of the world loving its own. The child of God who can rejoice in persecution does so because he or she is persuaded of this truth: *I am not of the world. My true citizenship is in heaven. I can't expect to be honored, loved, accepted, or "fit in" here.*

There are other great scriptural truths that true Christians embrace which give them the amazing fortitude to endure persecution. One is the vision that they have of Christ; as pure in heart, they see God. They see Him who is invisible (Hebrews 11:27). They also know and see that immortal, invisible heavenly reward. They can suffer loss of goods and property because they know they "have in heaven a better and an enduring substance" (Hebrews 10:34). They possess the kingdom!

Another truth which gives them courage is that there is more to *life* than *this* life. *This is not the end.* They love "not their lives unto the death" (Revelation 12:11). They don't count their lives "dear" (Acts 20:24). They believe that after their enemies kill them, there is "no more that they can do" (Luke 12:4), and not a hair of their head really perishes! (Luke 21:18).

Persecuted saints also strongly identify with Christ in His sufferings and rejoice to be counted worthy to suffer with Him; to lay down their lives for the One Who died for them. There is also an identity with the brotherhood—worldwide and reaching back through history—of saints who gave their backs and their lives for this gospel. "Knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world" (1 Peter 5:9).

Thinking back into the qualifications and promises in the Beatitudes—can we see how they fill the disciple of Christ with unconquerable courage and amazing endurance in the face of torture, imprisonment and death? Dear Heavenly Father, imprint these on our hearts!

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

## REFLECTIONS

We read in 1 Peter 2:19-20, "For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what

glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.”

Doing what is acceptable to God can bring persecutions in our life, especially when we have religious convictions. When I was about ten years old I came home from school one day and found that my mother had been crying. The pastor and his wife had just left so I kinda knew it was something to do with the church we had stopped going to because of so much confusion. This pastor strongly believed in pastoral authority and everyone had to toe the line. When someone would try to speak up about some things going on, he would say from the pulpit, “Shut your mouth!” Only the Lord and my dear mother knew about the many things going on. When several of the congregation left, my mom was one of them and she never went back. The sheep were scattered—some mortally wounded; some would wander from place to place for years.

You may have gone to a church with your family and friends for years, but you just can't keep going against your conscience any more. You have seen the light. My dear friend, you are in for some industrial-grade persecutions. Be strong and take courage. Just remember James 3:16. “For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.” God’s ways will bring us peace. Persecution from without is tolerable because we know our enemy. Persecution from within, like David went through in Psalms 55:12-13, will cause us to almost slip. Through it all, let us remember one thing about persecution, and I quote this from Matthew Henry: “It is not the suffering, but the cause that makes the martyr.”

We pray for everyone going through this type of persecution that you will be comforted today. Amen.

—Bro. James Bell

**JUNE 11, 2017**

**BLESSED IS THE MAN**

Psalm 1:1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.



2 But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

Psalm 32:1 Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

2 Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.

Psalm 40:4 Blessed is that man that maketh the Lord his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies.

Psalm 41:1 Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.

2 The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth: and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies.

3 The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.

Psalm 65:4 Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and causeth to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple.

Psalm 128:1 Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord; that walketh in his ways.

2 For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. —James 1:12

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Blessed, or happy, is the man who fears and trusts in the Lord and delights in Him; the Lord chooses him to dwell in His courts. His sins have been forgiven and his spirit is free from deceit. He doesn't show favoritism to the proud, but considers the poor. He endures temptation and receives the crown of life.

## WORD DEFINITIONS

Psalm 1:1 “Counsel”: advice; guiding wisdom; plan; purpose. “Ungodly”: morally wrong; actively bad; wicked; guilty; condemned; one who is without God; has not God in him. “Sinners”: those who go astray from the path of righteousness. The root word means to miss the mark; to pass over the prohibited limits; to transgress. “Scornful”: have in derision; make a mockery; “Those who make what is good and holy the object of their ridicule; defiant and cynical freethinkers” (*Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*).

Psalm 1:2 “Delight”: from a root meaning inclination, or to bend. Pleasure; desire. “Law of the Lord”: the law of Jehovah; doctrine; the written revelation of the will of God; the revealed truths of God. “To the law of Jehovah is his inclination.”

Psalm 32:2 “Imputeth”: charge; make account of. “Guile”: deceit; treachery. (Webster’s defines “treachery” as violation of allegiance or of faith and confidence.)

Psalm 41:1 “Considereth”: give attention to; ponder. “Thou wilt make all his bed”: to turn; overturn; transform; relieve his suffering; make him comfortable.

James 1:12 “Endureth”: remain under; bear up against; persevere. “Tried”: proven, tested and found worthy.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

The Psalms begin, as the Gospel does, with a beatitude, and there are several other psalms that describe the blessed man. We have included a few for this lesson. Each of the verses could be an extensive lesson on its own; however, we will only comment briefly today. Along with Jesus’ Beatitudes, altogether they present a word picture of a beautiful, joyous life.

Our memory verse is from the book of James; no doubt as he wrote he was remembering back to the “blesseds” he heard at Jesus’ feet.

Psalms 1 describes what a blessed, happy man does not do, in progressive steps; from walking in, or following, wicked counsel; to standing or choosing a career in the pathway of active transgression; to sitting, or taking up permanent residence, as one of their number,

in the assembly occupied by atheists and scoffers. “He who acts by bad counsel may soon do evil deeds; and he who abandons himself to evil doings may end his life in total apostasy from God” (Adam Clarke, *Clarke’s Commentary*).

Keep in mind that when the Scripture talks about *man*, it speaks of *mankind*. Any person. A man, woman, boy or girl, whoever it is that chooses to walk in the Lord’s ways, will be joyful, prosperous, delivered in the time of trouble, and given everlasting life.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

## **DISCUSSION:**

1. *Progression of Sin*: How is this described in Psalm 1:1?
2. *Remedy for Sin*: What has the blessed man done with his sin?
3. *Toward God*: Describe the blessed man’s bearing toward the Lord.
4. *Toward Men*: Describe the blessed man’s dealings with the proud, the dishonest, and the poor.
5. *The Reward*: What shall be done, in this life and for eternity, for the man who is blessed by the Lord?

## **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

I have seen young people choose to go their own way. They prove the Bible true, albeit negatively, to the letter. Their pathway progresses downward just as these verses describe. They go from being a curious, simple-minded young boy or girl naively open to worldly counsel and the influence of their friends; to an adult desperately seeking for happiness and fulfillment, going from one relationship to another, becoming more and more entangled with addictions, and pursuing daring and dangerous lifestyles; to a cynical, embittered, burned and battered, too-old-too-soon, middle-aged individual; too callous to care, too tired to try, and too blind to believe.

Contrast that with this picture painted by the scriptures: A saint of God, like a beautiful, fruit-bearing tree planted by a river, whose sins are forgiven, whose record is clean, and whose life is totally open and honest. His inclination and desire is to study and meditate

on God's will and Word revealed to him. He reverences the Lord, trusts wholly in Him and daily walks in His ways. God chooses him to dwell in His house and in His presence. He enjoys the honest labor of his hands and the love of his family. He doesn't seek the fortune and fame of this world, but seeks to walk among the honest and humble people and relieve the misfortunes of the poor. This person enjoys the precious privilege of having the Lord deliver him in trouble, stand by him and comfort him in affliction, and heal him in times of sickness. The Lord will prosper and bless everything he does in life.

And at the end of his earthly walk—his faithfulness, patience and trust in the Lord tested, proven and found worthy—he is rewarded with a crown of everlasting life.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

## REFLECTIONS

### What a Blessedness is Mine!

Consciousness of pardoned sin, Perfect peace where fears had been,  
Life, abundant life within – What a blessedness is mine!

Now for me 'tis Christ to live, Everything – myself – I give,  
I who freely did receive – What a blessedness is mine!

Comradeship with Him I love, Satisfied if He approve,  
His the Name, all names above – What a blessedness is mine!

Now the dread of death is past, Rest, true rest is mine at last,  
Overwhelmed in love so vast – What a blessedness is mine!

I am saved – I know I am! Everlasting life I claim!  
Trusting in His mighty name – What a blessedness is mine!

—T. O. Christolm

#67 in *His Praise Anew*, Gospel Trumpet Company, 1936

—Submitted by Bro. Harlan Sorrel

**JUNE 18, 2017**

**BLESSED ARE THE PEOPLE**

Deuteronomy 33:29 Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places.

Psalm 2:12b Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

Psalm 33:12 Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance.

Psalm 89:15 Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance.

Psalm 119:1 Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord.

2 Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart.

3 They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways.

Psalm 144:15 Happy is that people, that is in such a case: yea, happy is that people, whose God is the LORD.

Isaiah 30:18b Blessed are all they that wait for him.

Luke 11:28 But he said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.

**MEMORY VERSE:** And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them. —Revelation 14:13

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** The people—the nation, the congregation—who put their trust in the Lord, walk in his ways, wait for him, make Him the Lord God, and keep His Word, His laws, and His testimony, shall be blessed, made happy, experience the privilege of being the Lord's chosen inheritance, and enjoy His rest at the end of life's labors.

## WORD DEFINITIONS

Psalm 33:12 “Inheritance”: heritage; portion; treasured possession; peculiar treasure.

Psalm 89:15 “The joyful sound”: the joyful sound of the jubilee trumpet, which proclaimed liberty to the captives and restoration of all forfeited estates. “They shall walk”: they shall walk vigorously. “In the light of thy countenance”: in the Lord’s favor and goodwill; as in the Levitical blessing, “The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace” (Numbers 6:24-26).

Psalm 144:15, Proverbs 29:18 and Deuteronomy 33:29 “Happy”: same word as blessed.

Revelation 14:13 “In the Lord”: Any persons that die united to Christ by a true and lively faith; however, often in Scripture *in* signifies *for*, so it also could mean a *martyr* who died for the Lord.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Today we focus not only on the individual who is proclaimed *blessed* by God, but on the blessed nation or people who have the special privilege to be the Lord’s own chosen treasure, His special jewel. There are several Old Testament passages that express this thought about the Israelites, including Exodus 19:5, Deuteronomy 4:20 and 7:6, Psalm 74:2 and Malachi 3:17.

Another reference to Jewish history is the “joyful sound,” which alludes to the trumpets blown to announce the feasts, particularly the year of jubilee, which was the fiftieth year following a period of seven sabbatical years (49 years). In this year, which began on the Day of Atonement, the land was given a rest, all slaves were set free, and land was returned to its original owner or his heirs.

The Scriptures in our lesson describe the blessed people as those who put their trust in the Lord, and wait on—lean on, attend upon—Him. They are undefiled and free from iniquity; they walk in the way of His law, keep His testimonies, and seek Him with their whole heart. They hear His Word, and do it. They experience His soul rest in this life, and in the life to come, enter into their final rest from all

their labors, their good works coming behind them as a witness and testimony to those who follow after.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

## **DISCUSSION:**

1. *Special*: Give the expressions that God used to describe His people.
2. *The Blessed*: Share the characteristics of this kind of nation or people.

## **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

A clear application of the Old Testament “chosen people” to the New Testament church is made in I Peter 2:9-10: “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God...” Now, not only Jews but Gentiles too can share in God’s inheritance and be His special treasure.

The day of Jubilee is an important type that points to the soul rest that we have in Christ. Also, as slaves to satan and sin, because of Christ’s atonement, we are set free. The “land” which was stolen away by satan—our victory, our inheritance, our purity, joy, peace, the Divine presence—is redeemed back to us by the shed blood of Jesus Christ. We who were estranged from God are brought back into His family and made “one” with Him, just as freed slaves were united again with their families. Also in Christ, we who by sin and selfishness were estranged from each other are made one.

While we rejoice in the blessedness that Christ affords to each one of us individually, if we look deeper into the Word, we always find that wonderful plan He has for a *people*. He came to build a kingdom; establish a church; join together a body.

A very precious picture of this is found in yet another Old Testament example. The Queen of Sheba, in her quest to verify the greatness of Solomon’s kingdom, and the secret thereof, at last sank in amazement and exclaimed, “Happy are thy men, happy are those

thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom." This is fulfilled in Christ and the chosen, happy people who stand before Him, hear His Word, and keep it.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

## REFLECTIONS

The prophet Isaiah had these words regarding the coming of Jesus Christ, "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end." When Jesus came down to earth from heaven, He created the kingdom of God within the heart of man. This kingdom could be present in any country, within any government rule and under any political power.

The disciples of Jesus were awaiting the setting up of an earthly kingdom. They were looking forward to conquering their oppressors. No doubt they had many conversations among themselves as to how Jesus would handle the hierarchy of this new kingdom and where they would rank. On the contrary, Jesus told them that the kingdom of God would be established within the heart of man. What a perfect plan! This superceded any literal kingdom and was the great mountain that Daniel prophesied of that filled the whole earth.

When governments imprison the saints of God, the kingdom that is within can sing of freedom divine. Under political powers seeking to dissolve or persecute the Church of God, the kingdom remains safely intact. Where hate rules, the child of God can love beyond all measure. This beautiful kingdom cannot be torn asunder, beaten, conquered, subdued or killed. No law can touch it, no power can annihilate it and no government can quench it.

As a partaker of this wonderful kingdom of God, I can truly say that I am blessed!

"I am lost in its splendor and beauty,  
To its ne'er fading heights I would rise,  
Till I see the King come to receive me,  
And explore it with him in the skies."

—Sis. LaDawna Adams



**JUNE 25, 2017**

**THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM**

Matthew 13:11 He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.

12 For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.

16 But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.

17 For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.

Matthew 16:18b Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Luke 10:19 Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

Acts 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. —II Peter 1:10-11

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Those who have received Christ and heard His Word are given insight into the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven and keys of access into the authority and power of the

kingdom of heaven. For those who are diligent unto the end, access into the eternal aspect of the kingdom of heaven is abundantly given through Christ.

### **WORD DEFINITIONS**

Matthew 16:18b “Gates of hell”: Hades, or death; “all the powers of Hades, all the forces of destruction that attack and in the long run overpower other societies, should attack, but not overpower” Christ’s church (*Ellicot’s Commentary for English Readers*). “The machinations and powers of the invisible world” (Adam Clarke, *Clarke’s Commentary*).

### **LESSON BACKGROUND**

Today in our lesson we are looking at different places in the Gospels where Jesus shared special things concerning the kingdom of heaven with His disciples.

In the first instance, Jesus had been teaching the multitudes using parables, or dark sayings. Later, the disciples questioned him on the meaning of His stories, wondering why He wasn’t explaining them more clearly to all the people. Jesus explained that there were qualities of spirit that not all people had; only those who believed in Him had the privilege of being given spiritual vision and understanding into the mysteries of the kingdom. Jesus proved this by example; spiritual understanding was given, not just to the twelve disciples, but even to Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, a Pharisee and a rich man, because they received His Word and sought after the kingdom of God (John 3:1-21 and Mark 15:43).

The second example is what Jesus said to His disciples after Peter had emphatically stated that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the living God. Jesus let him know that His heavenly Father had revealed this truth to him, and upon this rock—the foundation of Christ, the Truth, revealed to the heart—He would build His church. Against His church—those to whom Christ had been revealed—even the gates of hell could not prevail.

He then made a very important statement, which I believe is at the heart of this series of Bible lessons. “And I will give unto thee the

keys of the kingdom of heaven..." A lot of different teaching, as to what kind of authority Christ meant by this statement, has been offered down through the years. But for this series, let me offer this: keys give access. They allow entrance. *What has Jesus given, in the establishing of His kingdom on earth, in the instructions He gave concerning how a man might enter the kingdom, and how it might enter him; in the insights into the mysteries, riches, power and authority of the kingdom and in the doctrines and commandments of the kingdom—the full declaration of the way of salvation?*

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

## **DISCUSSION:**

1. *He That Hath*: What do you think a man must have before more is given to him?
2. *Enquiring Prophets*: What did the disciples of Jesus know and understand that the Old Testament prophets could only dimly see?
3. *Upon This Rock*: To what rock did Jesus refer?
4. *All the Power of the Enemy*: Does this verse (Luke 10:19) give clues as to what Jesus meant by the binding and loosing in earth and heaven? What else could be included?
5. *Entrance*: What kind of entrance into the eternal kingdom is given to those who are diligent?

## **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

We asked a question in the Lesson Background to which we will now provide a possible answer. As was said, many interpretations have been put upon the statement about the keys of the kingdom, but there are some things I believe have been brought to light through the lessons on the Beatitudes.

In the first lessons, the humble in spirit are blessed because the kingdom of heaven is given unto them. They possess it. It is theirs.

In the next, they that mourn—the ones who humbly repent and seek for forgiveness—are granted the comfort of pardon and the comfort of the Holy Spirit. Paul tells the Colossians that we are translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, in Whom we have

redemption and forgiveness.

Afterward we learned that the meek would inherit the earth; the land of promise, which we discovered is the life, conquest and victory of the Holy Spirit.

We also found out that those who hunger and thirst—earnestly seek—after righteousness would be filled. This also pointed to the satisfaction and fullness which comes through the Spirit of God.

Three more requisites—being merciful, pure in heart, and being peacemakers—are listed, which have to do with the ongoing work and witness of the Spirit-filled children of the kingdom of God.

The last beatitudes promise the comfort, power and authority of the kingdom to those who are persecuted; the *godly* who suffer with and for Christ.

Jesus has given these keys to us as His disciples. These, among other keys, such as believing faith, importuning prayer and fasting, give entrance and access into the wealth, treasure, mystery, power and authority of the kingdom of heaven, which is “righteousness, and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Romans 14:17). They are the doctrines of full salvation that admit or forbid those who would enter the kingdom of God.

What a wonderful inheritance is ours through the Holy Spirit! What a blessed people we are! What a kingdom!

“We possess it right here, when He saves from all sin;  
And it will last while the ages shall roll.”

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

## REFLECTIONS

We all know of people who have an extra house key hidden outside their homes. It’s in an inconspicuous place by necessity but it would be accessible to anyone if they only knew where to look. It may require a bit of work—lifting a rock or digging in the flowerbed. But once you have the key you then have full access to all that’s inside the home. But not just anyone knows where the key is. That knowledge is only shared with the people with whom there is a relationship—family or friends.

Though plain and simple, some scriptural teachings are shrouded in mystery. Though they are accessible to everyone, not everyone can see them. The key is the condition of the heart that establishes a relationship with God. *Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.*

Humility is a key that has unlocked a multitude of blessings down through the ages. It gives ownership to the kingdom and unlimited access. *Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* When you meet the conditions, the kingdom is yours and you are given the keys. You are not a guest. You are a member of the family of God and what belongs to the King belongs to His children.

*Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God.* As a child of God, you have become an heir of God and joint-heir with Christ. Your treasures are there. Your heart is there. The things that are of value to you are there. It's your home—your eternal home. Does it not make sense to have access to the keys?

—Bro. Darrell Johnson





