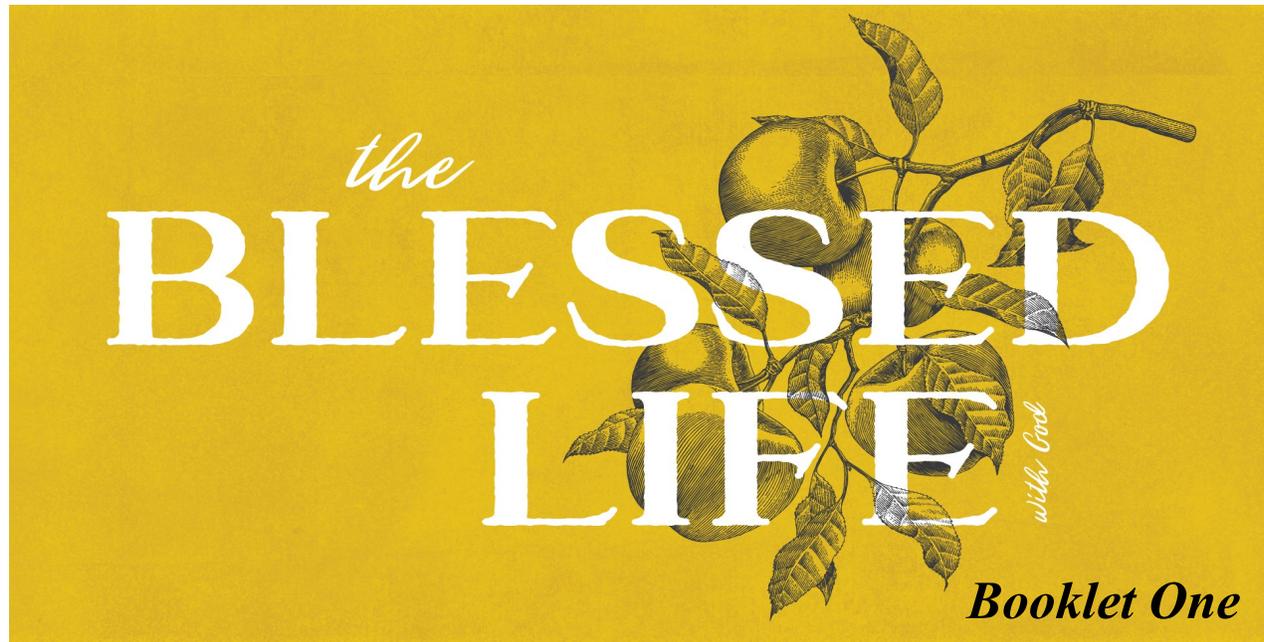


# Rimrock Church

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*“Rejoice and be glad, because your  
reward is in heaven (with God)”  
Matthew 5:12a*

# Rimrock Downtown

514 St. Joseph Street  
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## Matthew 5:1-2 “The Blessed Life”



**“Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them.”**

What does God really want? We are used to growing up with expectations. Parents, teachers, grandparents, friends, spouses, employers all come with different sets of expectations for us. Much of the anxiety and stress we experience every day comes from trying to meet and figure out everyone’s expectations for us. So, does God have expectations for us? Is He just another person waiting for us to do the right thing to please Him?

Many people have read Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount thinking this is just another list of expectations for them to live by in order to please God. They read it this way because they think God is just like them or everyone else. The reality is Jesus’ sermon is completely the opposite of how many people read and understand God. Jesus is turning the tables. Instead of a list of expectations He is pronouncing blessing on everyone who desires God, even those who don’t meet the expectations of others, even those who don’t seem to have anything going their way. God’s blessing is available to everyone who loves Him! Are you willing to receive God’s blessing? Do you desire God? Do you desire a **blessed life with God**?

The blessing comes from Jesus himself. Instead of a sermon full of expectations to fulfill, Jesus is helping us understand what we were created for; to live life **with Jesus** and His power to transform our lives into His image.

### **Discussion questions:**

1. How does the context (what’s happening?) of Jesus’ sermon help us understand the meaning? Read Matthew 4:12-25. How does the prophesy and message of Jesus in 4:17 help us understand Jesus’ purpose? How does Jesus’ calling of disciples and ministry of healing inform us of the reason for the sermon?
2. What is the significance of Jesus seeing the crowd? Who was in the crowd? Why were they following him?
3. How does the setting (on the side of a mountain) help us picture what it must have been like? How does this setting highlight some of Jesus’ illustrations later in the sermon?
4. What are some expectations from others that you are struggling with ?
5. What are some perceived expectations from God that you are struggling with?

## Matthew 5:3



**“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”**

Jesus’ opening word of the sermon sets the tone for the whole message. “Blessed” or fully satisfied is a key word to understanding the whole sermon. Another way to look at this word is as a description of success. Our world and culture has some very specific categories for calling someone “blessed” or successful. These definitions are usually circumstantial. Our consumer driven culture defines success based on what you have. Having a large house (or a cool tiny house), cars, toys, clothes, jewelry, or the newest phone can all be measurements the world uses to define success. The world can, also, define success by those who possess talent, physical attractiveness or athletic ability, the attainment of advanced education. Business or professional accomplishments can mark certain people as “successful” over others. The accumulation of wealth and financial security can also define people in our culture as “blessed”.

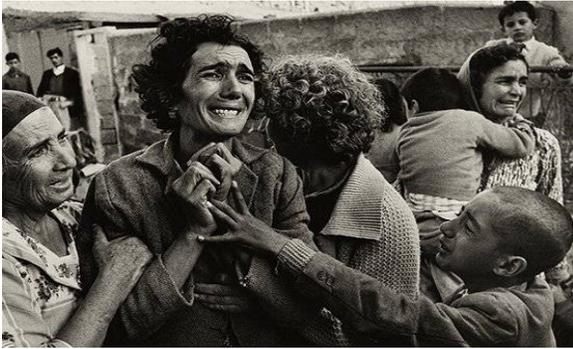
The words of Jesus immediately shock us as we realize that He has a completely different definition of “blessed”. Jesus’ declarations of those who are blessed slaps us in the face. His categories are the exact opposite of ours. Instead of wealth and possessions, Jesus names the poor. Instead of those who are attractive and have power at their disposal, Jesus names those that mourn and are meek. The most important word for us to understand in Jesus’ sermon is the word “blessed”. What does this term mean in the sermon? This word helps us interpret everything else in the sermon.

The word Jesus uses for “blessed” (*Μακάριοι*) highlights the presence of God. Jesus is announcing the indwelling presence of God with people! This word for blessed has everything to do with being, and not our circumstances. The being and indwelling presence of God, himself, is the new definition of success (being fully satisfied) no matter what circumstances we find ourselves in.

### Discussion questions

1. How would you define success? How does the world around us define success?
2. In Luke’s version (Luke 6:24) of the sermon of Jesus he includes a list of woes that parallel the blessings. Is Jesus saying its better to be poor than rich? If not, what do you think Jesus is referring to here when he talks about poverty?
3. If “blessed” by Jesus’ definition is the indwelling presence of God, how does this change how we view our life circumstances whether rich or poor? How does this differ from the world’s definition of success?
4. What can we learn from Jesus’ example in how he lived and how he interacted with both rich and poor?
5. What would it look like for us in our life to be fully satisfied with Jesus above everything else?

## Matthew 5:4



**“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.”**

I will never forget the cry's and tears. I was a 5<sup>th</sup> grader in Venezuela when one of my neighborhood friends was killed in a car accident. His mother and family cried loud cries for hours into the night. The impression on my mind was that for this family there was no hope or comfort in their grief.

As an adult I have sat with people in the middle of mourning. A husband and father who was suddenly snatched away by sudden death still in the middle of a pleasant time of life. A child who died before reaching 11. A Pastor in the prime of his life and ministry who suffered a catastrophic stroke. In the tears and grief I have experience the words of Jesus. “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted”. How can Jesus say there is full satisfaction and blessing in mourning? The only hope is God's presence with us in the middle of the mourning.

I will, also, never forget watching the slow physical decline and death of my grandfather as he battled Parkinson's disease. There was a mourning in watching him lose his physical abilities and watching my grandmother sacrifice her life to care and love on him though the disease. Yet, what sticks in my heart and mind is not the mourning but the peace, joy, love, gentleness, kindness, and self-control that were exhibited in their lives as they faced this physical crisis. The power of Jesus' words came alive to me as I saw the blessedness of God's presence with them and all the beauty He produced in them that left a lasting mark of full satisfaction and success in my life, in Jesus Christ.

### Discussion questions

1. How have you seen an aversion to mourning in our culture? How have you seen or experienced mourning in your life?
2. How did Jesus, in his life, model mourning (John 11)?
3. How does the presence of God bring joy and comfort, even in pain and mourning?
4. What is the significance of the promise of comfort for us when we face mourning in our lives?
5. How does Jesus' promise of blessing change the way you think about grief and mourning?

## Matthew 5:5



Mild, gentle, humble

In our world we are bombarded with messages that tell us the strong, attractive, and winners get ahead. The message says, that to be successful you have to be better than others and win at any cost. We see the temporary reward for this mindset in many of our athletes, entertainment stars, politicians, even pastors and spiritual leaders. Meekness is rarely one of the top traits employers are looking for in their resumes (even many churches).

It was this world system that Jesus confronts in His sermon. Jesus turns upside-down the conventional worldly thought that it is the strong and leaders that survive and thrive. The announcement that it is the meek that are truly blessed by God and will inherit the earth was and is countercultural!

Jesus presents us with a different value system that identifies true blessedness with God Himself. With this God value even the mild and gentle person who can inherit the earth with God! You don't have to be a super leader, and stronger and more powerful than others to truly be successful. True success is found in God!

### Discussion questions:

1. How does Jesus' statement on meekness surprise you? How have you witnessed meek people get run over by our world system?
2. Why do you think Jesus extends blessing and success to the meek?
3. How did Jesus exhibit a different kind of leadership in His life?
4. How does viewing success in God change how we view ourselves in a world that runs over people who don't seem to have it all together?
5. How does the promise of God's inheritance give you hope even in weakness?
6. What would it look like in your life to find success in Jesus?

## Matthew 5:6



**“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.”**

Hunger and thirst are some of the most powerful physiological desires that we have as human beings. I was always fascinated by my sons' desire for food as infants. Their whole faces, voices, and bodies would squirm, sound, and contort to communicate one thing, “Feed Me!” As adults we don't lose this basic desire for food and drink. Dallas Willard says, “Few people arise in the morning as hungry for God as they are for cornflakes or toast and eggs.”

As adults we expand or build on this drive to desire things that are not necessary just for survival but for fulfillment. We convince ourselves that we need some things at any cost. Power, sex, alcohol, drugs, sugar, and toys all become the objects of our hunger and thirst even though we don't really need these things to live. We live in a world consumed by desire and every day we are reminded of the destructiveness of these unfulfilling desires that leave a path of destruction and pain in their wake in people's lives.

Jesus speaks of this drive towards desire in the human heart. As the world burns with desire for many things that don't fulfill, Jesus points out that there are those who desire righteousness. They desire God and His ways. People who desire God are viewed as strange and unnatural to those around them. Jesus points out that these are the truly successful people who are blessed with God's filling. Their reward is fulfillment and satisfaction of their deepest desires.

### **Discussion questions:**

1. What are some human desires that are promoted through advertising in our daily lives? How do our natural desires plus the environment of our culture foster these desires in our lives?
2. What is the relationship between our desire and our love?
3. What does a love (hunger and thirst) for righteousness look like?
4. How does the fulfillment of love and desire for God manifest itself in your life?

## Matthew 5:7



**“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.”**

As a kid I played a game with my friends and brothers where you would interlock fingers and then work to twist and overpower your opponent until in pain they cried “mercy” (some people say, “Uncle”). As soon as they said “mercy” you let go of their fingers and allowed them to compose themselves. It was humiliating to lose but the game hinged on the discipline of the stronger person letting go when “mercy” was asked for.

Mercy is often seen as weakness by our culture and world. Jesus extols the merciful person (the one who relents) as blessed. In a world that celebrates strength and power, mercy seems old fashioned and unproductive.

Jesus says the person who stops when they realize the pain of another person is a blessed person. Not only will they be blessed they will also receive mercy. I have not met a person yet who does not like receiving mercy. Jesus flips the script and says to receive mercy you have to have given mercy. The strong and powerful in God are people who show mercy.

There may be people in your life who you think don’t deserve mercy and so it gives you great pleasure to keep twisting because they deserve it. You may even be celebrated for staying strong in your resolve and rights. Yet, today, we are reminded that the blessed life is found in Jesus who is the mercy giver which we all desperately need.

### **Discussion questions**

1. How would you define mercy? When is a time you have received mercy or seen someone else receive mercy?
2. How is God’s mercy revealed throughout the story of the Bible?
3. In what ways does the world/culture reject mercy as a value? Where have you experienced or seen this rejection played out?
4. How does Jesus show mercy?
5. What would it look like to be merciful in your life?

## Matthew 5:8



**“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.”**

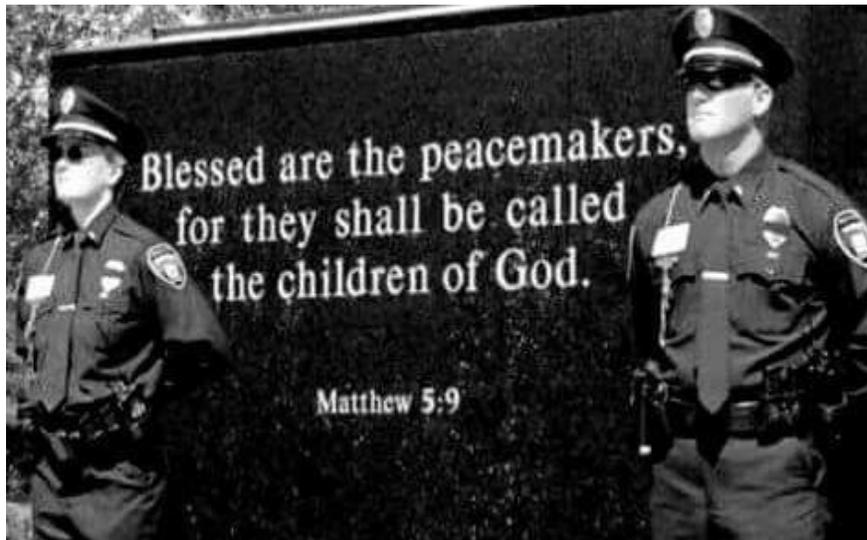
There is an old insult kids liked to throw around when someone was trying to do what is right. They would call that person a “goody two shoes”. Peer pressure is an old reality and a present-day force everyone feels when with a group. Many times, the pressure is to engage in an illicit and impure behavior. The world looks at purity and scoffs. It’s no fun and unpopular. Why would you not do what you feel like doing? Don’t you have the right to do what you want? No one should tell you what is right or wrong.

Jesus flips the script. He says purity in God is a blessing. Instead of loneliness and being made fun of He says the pure in heart will be blessed and ultimately see God himself. Purity, by definition means things are filtered out. It means we say no to many things to keep a few things. I don’t know anyone who does not want a drink of pure water. People are not buying bottles of water with all the bacteria, contaminants, and sediments normally found in water. Pure water is good and blessed. When people buy gold, they don’t want gold filled with other minerals and imperfections. They want pure gold. Jesus says the pure person is blessed. The pure in heart are willing to discard and give up all the pleasures and desires of the world because they know the greatest pleasure and treasure is God himself!

### **Discussion questions**

1. What is something you enjoy when it is pure (food, drink, item, experience)? Why is it enjoyable?
2. How would you define purity? What is the significance of heart purity in a person?
3. In what ways does the world/culture reject purity in heart and behavior? Why?
4. How does Jesus reveal purity in heart in His life?
5. What is the significance of the promise of they “will see God”?
6. What does purity in heart with God look like in your life?

## Matthew 5:9



If you watch sports there is one person that both teams and fans can revile together, the referee. Being a peacemaker is not always the easiest role to play. Every person wants to win and sometimes a peacemaker can get in the way of the drive to win. We see this in many areas of life and conflict. The burden of the peacemaker is not to win but to arrive at truth, humility, and reconciliation.

The amazing thing about the blessing of being a peacemaker is that you share in who God is. This is seen in how Jesus describes this person, "they will be called children of God". As a peacemaker you share in the inheritance and identity that only God provides.

It was prophesied in Isaiah that one of the titles of Jesus is the Prince of Peace. The longing and desire that every person has for peace is found in Jesus! He makes peace a reality for those who dwell in Him. He invites us to the way of the peacemaker.

### Discussion questions

1. Have you ever been helped by a peacemaker or been a peacemaker? If so, what was the key to the role to bring about peace?
2. Why and how are peacemakers rejected by the world and culture?
3. How is God, as peacemaker, revealed in the person of Jesus?
4. What is the significance of the promise given to peacemakers to be "called children of God"?
5. What does peacemaking look like in your life?

## Matthew 5:10



**“Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”**

Just because you do the right thing or the thing God calls you to do, it does not mean that you will be celebrated or rewarded in this life. If this was the case the incentive to do the right thing would be so much higher and fewer people would choose to participate in unrighteousness. The reality is that many times this world rewards those who live and do unrighteousness and persecutes those who do what is right in God’s eyes.

Jesus says these people who are persecuted experience the blessing of God’s presence and favor. Jesus says the kingdom of heaven is theirs! This is one of the greatest promises in the Bible. The rule, reign, and power of God are available to these people. It is better to have God’s blessing than all the praise of the world!

### Discussion questions

1. How would you define persecution? If you have experienced it what is it like? If not, what do you think it would be like to be persecuted for doing the right thing in God’s eyes?
2. What are some reasons that the world/culture hates and opposes God’s righteous ways?
3. How is it possible to be “blessed” even when being mistreated for doing the right things? How does this shape our definition of being “blessed” according to Jesus?
4. How do you personally grapple with unrighteous people being rewarded and righteous people being persecuted in our world? Where do we find hope in Jesus’ words and promise in this reality around us?
5. What does being persecuted because of righteousness look like in your life?

## Matthew 5:11-12



**“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”**

Of all the blessings on the person with God, this one makes us stop and wonder. Each beatitude reminds us Jesus is turning the tables or saying the opposite of what everyone expects. The world says the successful person is the one everyone admires and says good things about. No one wants to be on the other end of insults and accusations. Yet Jesus tells us the person being insulted and persecuted because of their relationship with God are blessed.

Dallas Willard says, “A carefully cultivated heart will, assisted by the grace of God, foresee, forestall, or transform most of the painful situations before which others stand like helpless children saying “Why?”. The heart that finds its ultimate blessing in God does not respond to the rejection of others in despair and questions. Rather it responds with joy and gladness because the source of blessing is God himself as the reward. **This is incredible!**”

The good news is that this is not something we do on our own or produce through our own strength. This is the work of God in the human heart to cultivate a transformation. Our value system of how we measure success is changed to God’s value system. This gives us the freedom and ability to find joy even in insults and persecution because of Jesus.

### Discussion questions

1. Why do you think Jesus set the expectation that those who identify themselves with Jesus would be persecuted? How is this a blessing? Have you ever been mistreated for being a Christian? Have you met someone who has?
2. What makes joy and gladness possible even in persecution? Have you ever observed this in someone who has been persecuted with Jesus? How did the disciples face persecution in Acts?
3. What role does God’s reward play in our Christian lives?
4. How does being blessed for persecution look like in your life?

### **Matthew 5:13-16**

**“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.**

We can only understand and interpret the Sermon on the Mount correctly through the lens of Jesus purpose of redemption and reconciliation through the cross and his glorious resurrection defeating sin and death once and for all. Matthew’s gospel was written post resurrection of Jesus. As Matthew wrote the words of Jesus by the Holy Spirit, he and every person since has a bright light to guide our understanding of these teachings of Jesus.

This light is the living presence of God in us through the Holy Spirit. The presence is possible because of the resurrection. The resurrection is the ultimate victory and fulfillment of all the promises of God that humanity would be made new. This new life starts in our hearts and lives and culminates in our own resurrections. We are the resurrection people!

As resurrection people we live blessed lives. The blessing is not meant just for us, but for everyone we come in contact with. We become conduits of blessing as God’s presence radiates from us. Both salt and light are powerful properties that are activated by contact. God’s light shines through his resurrection people as we live out the teachings of Jesus in contact with the world around us, bringing glory to our heavenly Father in everything we do.

