

To God Alone Be The Glory

It happens to everyone—at least to most Christians. You're reading your Bible by yourself or sharing a family devotion or listening to a sermon or sitting in a Bible class or pondering a Bible truth as you drive down the highway. BAM! It hits you. No, you haven't had a car accident. You've had an epiphany. You didn't know it, but the Holy Spirit has been working on you through the Bible. And it dawns on you: "I've been looking at life (or an aspect of it) all wrong. God's way of looking at this is far better."

Now, after this happens about three or four times, you start to wonder, "How much of my view on life is out of skew with the Lord's? Hmm. I ought to ask the Holy Spirit to make clear to me more and more of God's Word." It's one thing to read or hear the words. It's quite another to understand what God means and adopt his point of view as the correct one. This morning the Savior of all sinners gives you the opportunity to **MATCH YOUR VIEW OF BLESSINGS TO THE LORD'S**. It's the same opportunity Jesus gave to his disciples—not just the large crowd who had gathered to listen that day, but also the Twelve whom he had recently chosen as apostles. Jesus' words were part of the training they would need in order to proclaim God's Word to the world. So then Jesus' words are a part of our training too. That's right, the world still

needs to hear God's Word. Since Jesus hasn't come back yet, there still is time to tell your friends and family how much the Lord has done for them; and there still is time to learn how to think more like the Lord.

Maybe people today would be more eager to come to God's house if the Lord Jesus was doing miracles of healing like he did back then. Isn't this awesome what's described here? ¹⁹...*the people all tried to touch [Jesus], because power was coming from him and healing them all*. Jesus wasn't going for the sensationalistic angle, even though miraculous healings are quite sensational, especially when the people touched him and were healed. Jesus could have healed the people by touching them, or he could have healed them from a distance without even seeing them. But this time he chose to let them touch him. They realized he was not just an ordinary human. And they had not come for just physical healing. Luke reports that they had also ¹⁸*come to hear him*. After all, what good does it do to have a perfectly healthy body if you don't listen to Jesus and trust him as Savior? Perhaps that's why God has not permitted us to do any miraculous healings today. He never wants us to flip out over spectacular miracles. Now is the time to listen.

²⁰*Looking at his disciples*, Jesus starts several statements with the words,

“*Blessed are you who...*” There’s
“*Blessed are you who are poor...* and
²¹*Blessed are you who hunger now...*
and *Blessed are you who weep now...*
[Although these “blessed statements”
sound similar to Jesus’ Sermon on the
Mount, there are differences. Here Jesus
speaks only four “blesseds”; in Matthew
5:3-12 Jesus spoke eight. Here Jesus
also speaks four “woes.” Here Jesus
speaks to “you.” There Jesus speaks of
“those.” These two sermons probably
happened on two different occasions,
with Jesus repeating some of the
thoughts he had spoken before.] Uh-oh!
I don’t know if any of these statements
applies to you. “*Blessed are you who are
poor*”? That leaves out just about
everyone here since none of you are on
your last dollar. And if that’s true, then
you who had breakfast this morning are
also left out because you don’t hunger
right now. And all I see are dry eyes.
No weepers here. Does this mean we’ve
all been left out of Jesus’ blessings? No.
You just need to **MATCH YOUR VIEW
OF BLESSINGS TO THE LORD’S.**

*Blessed are you who are poor, for yours
is the kingdom of God.* Jesus does not
want us to believe that the poor get into
God’s kingdom because they have no
money, nor are the rich excluded from
God’s kingdom because they are rich.
*Was that big sighs of relief I heard from
everyone who owns a home or a car or a
cell phone? We are all rich! But I hope
all of us are also poor. The Greek word

for ‘poor’ in this verse means ‘those who
are so poor they must beg.’ As I say, I
hope you are this poor. Why? Because
“the poor” Jesus refers to are believers
who recognize that they have no riches
of their own to bring to God. That’s us!
“Nothing in my hand I bring. Simply to
Thy cross I cling.” That’s why we all
begged earlier: “Deliver us, Savior, from
the punishment we deserve.” And he
does! For Jesus’ sake God gives us the
kingdom, that is, he rules in our hearts by
his Word. Jesus says that all who realize
their spiritual poverty are blessed. You
are blessed, dear friends!

²¹*Blessed are you who hunger now, for
you will be satisfied.* The hungry are
those believers in Jesus who are not yet
satisfied with what they know about
God. They want to know Jesus better.
When they come to church or read their
Bible at home or listen to their Bible in
the car, they show they are hungry for
the bread of God’s Word. And what
happens? The Holy Spirit draws such
people closer and closer to Jesus. That’s
you, isn’t it? As you learn more of the
Bible, your hunger for Jesus is satisfied.
But then your new knowledge makes you
hungry for even more. And if you keep
digging deep into the Bible, you realize
that there are mysteries about the Lord
which have not yet been revealed to us.
So studying the Bible leads you to
hunger for the full revelation of God,
which will be given to you in heaven.
No wonder Jesus says those who hunger

will be satisfied. We get a daily kind of satisfaction now which brings a satisfying peace into our heart, and when God graciously gives us a place in his heaven, we'll know the fullness of satisfaction.

21b Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. ‘Those who weep now’ are all of us believers who see the sad results of sin. Not only is there sin in the world all around us but also in our own lives. One example: God wants us to respect others. How many times this last week did we disrespect others? When we see how our sin brings hurt to people and dishonor to God, sometimes we get tears in our eyes. But Jesus says we will laugh. Do you smile when the pastor pronounces forgiveness each week? You can. It's okay to enjoy God's love, dear Lutherans. But even if you only let yourself experience a little laughter now, you'll laugh when you get to heaven, especially when you realize you will never sin again. But we don't have to wait till then to say, “Jesus is right! How blessed we are!” We can match our view of blessings to Jesus' view now because God sees us as sin-free already.

22 Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. No one likes to be hated. In fact a big part of growing up is learning how to deal with all the nasty things people say about u or s to our

face. But Jesus is talking about the kind of hatred that comes to us because we are associated with him. Pity the Christians who thinks they can be a jerk or a “witch” to people, and then when they are not well-liked they concludes that it's because they are Christian rather than that they're just a jerk. Take courage to help them see: Jesus is talking about when people call you a “goody, goody,” because you won't go along with a sinful plan, or call you “intolerant” because you are willing to hold to what God says in the Bible, even about gender and sexuality issues, or that the only way to heaven is through faith in Jesus. Lots of people don't want to hear the truth. Sometimes they will malign you, sometimes they will just ignore you and exclude you or not come back to church with you. It feels awful at the time, but Jesus says we are blessed. And he want us to match our view of blessings to his.

Do you see just how far Jesus wants you to take this? *23 Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their fathers treated the prophets.* It may sound silly at first to say, “Woo-hoo! Some people hate me because I'm Christian.” But consider the alternative: let's say that you decided to toss Jesus overboard and instead try to gain the favor of people who don't want to be with Jesus. What are you going to do on Judgment Day? No, you don't need the approval of any human. The only

approval you need is God's, and you have that because Jesus died for you on the cross. If people hate you because you want to lovingly say what's right and lovingly do what's right and lovingly hold to the truth of God's Word, say to yourself, "I'm in good company. I'm sitting with Isaiah and Abraham and Peter and Noah—all survivors in heaven."

It's so important we adopt God's view of blessings that Jesus spoke four woes.

²⁴*Woe to you who are rich*, that is, woe to you who think you have something good to offer God, *for you have already received your comfort*, even though it's only the false comfort of thinking you're a good person. ²⁵*Woe to you who are well fed now*, thinking that you know enough of God's Word already. "I was confirmed; so now I'm done studying the Bible." Woe to you, *for you will go hungry*. You could deceive yourself right out of a place in heaven. Won't you be miserable sitting in hell with an empty spiritual stomach? *Woe to you who laugh now* at things that should not be laughed at like dirty jokes and other people's pain, *for you will mourn and weep* when you realize that 'the laughter associated with sin was an empty, deceitful laughter. ²⁶*Woe to you when all men speak well of you* and say things like, "I'm glad you finally saw the light and gave up on that old-time morality." If people are saying such things to you, watch out, *for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets*. It's such a

nice thing when people love you that it's quite a temptation to tell people what they want to hear. "I'm okay, you're okay." "Danger! Danger!" Jesus says.

Dear friends, I wonder if we are afraid of suffering for Jesus' sake. Are we afraid to speak up respectfully at work for what is right? Are we afraid to risk our jobs? Are we afraid to risk the scorn of relatives or friends or neighbors for advocating godly attitudes and actions? Has Satan influenced our view of blessings so much that it is out of skew with the Lord's view?

At our confirmation we stood up before the whole congregation and promised to be faithful to Jesus even to the point of death. But as the saying goes, "The problem with Christians these days is that nobody is killing them anymore," at least not in this country. Jesus doesn't mention death as a persecution here. He mentions things much less threatening—exclusion, derisive language, scorn. Today Jesus calls us to be poor in spirit, to receive his riches in the kingdom. Today Jesus invites us to mourn over sin and rejoice in God's forgiveness. Today Jesus invites us to feed on him and go forth satisfied. Today Jesus invites us to rejoice when people deride us for being Christian. Today Jesus encourages us to **MATCH OUR VIEW OF BLESSING** to his. Then we will truly be blessed!