

The Beatitudes

From a message by Wilmer Esbach
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Versailles Mennonite Church PA.

We are pleased to greet you in the name of our Lord Jesus again this morning. We are thankful for the blessing of gathering with the Sts and worshipping the Lord.

I would invite you to turn with me to Matthew chapter 5 this morning. We have here at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount what we call the Beatitudes. I suppose if we break that apart it which speak to us of attitudes and it would also speak to us of being, be attitudes. Maybe we could say here is a blueprint for us as to what we should be as a result of our attitudes or maybe we could entitle this message A Healthy Mental Outlook. I don't really know what to call it, to title it but I would like to look for a bit use these Beatitudes to help us to face the realities of life with balance and with strength to go on

Our brother spoke of the challenge the disciples faced when they faced the impossible, feeding all those people with five loaves and two fishes ([Matthew 14:19](#)) and the very apparent reality of the case was that it was impossible for man but when they followed the Lord's direction they were amazed and the Lord brought them through that stress. I would simply like to state this morning that this is going to be a very simple message, I don't feel as though I understand the mind of man and I think we don't fully understand how our emotions and our attitudes all work but I do think that the Lord gave direction that the common man could understand so we look at this as common individuals this morning.

I will read Matthew five verses one to twelve,
[Matthew 5:1-12](#)

And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: [2] And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, [3] Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. [4] Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. [5] Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. [6] Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be

filled. [7] Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. [8] Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. [9] Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. [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.

It is a very definite fact that life is filled with perplexing and at times distressing events like we saw in our devotional impossible circumstances and issues and situations. Jesus told his disciples as he would tell us I believe this morning, that these things have I spoken unto you that in many you might have peace, in the world you shall have tribulation but be of good cheer I have overcome the world. ([John 16:33](#)).

One rendering states that verse in this way: In the world you will have tribulation and trials and distress and frustrations but be of good cheer, take courage, be confident, certain, undaunted for I have overcome the world, I have deprived it of power to harm, I have conquered it.

Isn't that an encouraging thought as we face the realities of life? I am sure that all of us at times encounter circumstances that cause fretting and anxiety and make serenity and calmness within a longed for a reality but maybe not a reality. Frequently also I am sure most of us face situations that we hardly know how to proceed to deal with these issues but it is also very true that how we proceed to deal with these issues determines whether it remains a longed for reality or actually becomes a reality that we are not overly distressed and overwrought and so on.

That verse I referred to from John 16 that in the world you will have tribulation gives definite body to the thought that tribulations and anxieties and frustrations are to be expected and I think that statement as well as our own experience decies the idea that is sometimes at the end of a fairytale: And so they lived happily ever after. That is not life, that is not normal life.

Row, row your boat gently downstream,
Merrily, merrily life is but a dream.

That is a falsehood, it is not true is not the way life is. Live simply is not a blind unbroken chain of continual happiness and tranquility and probably one of the first essentials to maintaining a healthy mental outlook is to understand that fact. When these challenging circumstances come and those provoking persons, peculiarities pressure you and sorrow is simply surmount you, remember these temptations and trials and tests are common to man they are to be expected. Accept them as part of God's providential permissions and placements for your betterment and good.

You know the resistance of acceptance of the facts of life, the issues of life, is a great deterrent to a healthy mental outlook. You know we say sometimes: If only we wouldn't have that doctor's bill to pay or Oh if only Sister Mary would be more understanding, if life could only be normal without these bumps and bruises.

Well these things will be and while they do bring concern but if we see them as a part of normal adulthood and adulthood issues to work through and get to work by the grace of God to work through them it is a help to maintaining a healthy mental outlook. We often say that blessedness, or the word blessed here, could actually be restated happy, happy are the poor in spirit, happy are they that mourn, happy are the meek and so on, and happiness we often think of it as an emotion that feeling. Here in the attitudes it tells us that the emotion of happiness, the inner sense of well-being and delight hearted directly connected to being rather than as many suppose having.

Blessed are, speaks of being and the only thing said he says here that brings happiness, I don't think he really says that they bring happiness but it almost infers that is persecution in verse 10 and rejection of fellow man in verse 11. He says happy are you if you are rejected, happy are you if you are persecuted for righteousness sake. Those are the only things that are really mentioned here that are connected to happiness, the others are being or character qualities and those things, persecution, rejection of fellow men are the very things that many longed to be free from instead of have. Oh if only I could be free of that then I could be happy. Well this seems to present as a part of happiness instead of an obstruction to happiness.

Years ago I came across a statement that went something like this: "Happiness is not found as the result of a quest but is found along the way in obe-

dience to Christ's call". And isn't that so true, isn't that so true? You know that I continually dwell on the fact: Well I'm not happy, if only I could be happy, what can I do to be happy? We will never find it. But if we simply decide whether I am happy or not is not of paramount importance that being submitted to Christ's call is and then maybe after a bit we discover: Hey now I am happy. And that is such an elementary ingredient, the ingredient of being what the Lord wants us to be, it helps us to have a healthy mental outlook.

Well here in the Beatitudes, and I recently heard someone say that our preaching in Eastern Churches is far too much subjective and not nearly enough expository preaching or something to that effect, and so I thought this morning I would use an expository approach and just go down to Scripture and look at although I do give it a subjective focus even with that approach, but I would like to do just that look at the various Beatitudes and see the conditions or the qualities of being that lead to inner happiness.

The first one he says in verse three is: Blessed are the poor in spirit. You know a scriptural view of self is essential for a healthy mental outlook. A person that is overly concerned about his or her reputation generally has strong feelings of inadequacy or inability that he tries to hide it and so such a person finds criticism and questioning to be threatening. When your focus is on social acceptance to satisfy a hunger for gratification and rest of a strong self image they will often succumb to self-pity and depression if they feel that they are not recognised properly, it goes together.

Our personal self-worth should always be rooted in acceptance with God. As we recognize, as our brother mentioned in the devotional meditation, our helplessness apart from the Lord well then we can be honest about our weaknesses, they don't need to be hidden. The fact is that we are helpless we do have a numerous weaknesses. You know our society praises self-reliance, self-sufficiency and those who achieve economic or political success are flaunted as great men and great women. But who are they in God's eyes, in God's sight?

You know the wicked may appear to prosper gloriously and they are at times even very religious notwithstanding that they walk in disobedience to the scriptures and they often without interference from anyone do that

which is right in their own eyes. Freedom, happiness? But who are they in God's sight and are they prosperous by the Lord's standards? They may amass wealth and prestige and ease. Are they great in God's sight? And what of their inner needs? And it is so often that one hears of individuals that have all the popularity and all the money and all the life of ease that they could possibly want. I was just reading of an individual that was probably in years gone by, this individual is not living now may be for 40 years already, but they had all that the heart could wish for from a material and natural viewpoint but they went to the psychologist every day. Their inner life was in turmoil.

What of their inner needs? The poor in spirit realise they need help and willingly submit to the authority, first of all God's authority and then others authority. The humble, the poor in spirit have a scriptural view of themselves that places their sense of self-worth in direct proportion to their connection to God and rooted in God's evaluation and standard rather than society's or other people.

I think there is a healthy place to desire acceptance among God's people yet to give that precedence over acceptance with God or accepting help from God's people is a great emotional disturber.

I remember hearing of one individual who would have liked if those in her Sunday school class would have voted whether they liked her or not. Well maybe if she had seen the results of the vote she would wish that they wouldn't have voted, I'm not sure. But poverty of spirit, humility of mind is essential for realizing the Kingdom benefit of blessedness of inner happiness. For theirs is the kingdom of heaven it says.

And right I believe in this vein of thought is the admonition that Jesus gave his disciples when they returned from their missionary journeys and rejoicing that even the devils were subject to them, they had achieved superiority over the devil, and may I assure you that when I experience victory over the tempter I rejoice too so I don't think that is so out of place, but Jesus said your focus is wrong, you are looking at the wrong focus. Rejoice rather not that the devils are subject unto you but rather that your name is written in heaven. ([Luke 10:17-20](#)). Focus where it needs to be in connec-

tion with your relationship to God and that then is where the real rejoicing comes from.

Keep your sense again I say of self-worth rooted in your relationship with an acceptance of the Lord Jesus. And so blessed are the poor in spirit.

In the second Beatitudes that we have here: Blessed are they that mourn. There we frequently use this word to depict sorrow for sin and I think that is right, we do mourn because we have sinned, we have committed an affront against the God of heaven and that is cause for mourning, that should always give us grieving in our hearts when we have failed to honour our Lord Jesus and the God of heaven. Truly the sorrow of repentance issues forth in the blessedness of forgiveness and that is truly the balm in Gilead. [\(Jeremiah 8:22\)](#) No wonder he says: Blessed are the poor in spirit. I think all of us have come that have come to the age of accountability that know the weight and the burden of guilt and sin and have come to the Lord and confessed it and turned our lives over to Him also remember the blessedness of sins that are removed and a glorious freedom of that guilt being lifted, it was a balm in Gilead. Yes those that mourn the sorrow of repentance issues forth in forgiveness and that is truly the balm in Gilead.

May I further suggest that we have observed several occasions of our Lord's mournings and can profit from that observation. In addition to what I have said about sorrow for sin we know that the Lord did not have any sin to sorrow for and yet he mourned, he was acquainted with grief. When I think of the account in Matthew and the corresponding account in Luke where Jesus lamented, he mourned over Jerusalem and he said: O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. [\(Matthew 23:37-38\)](#) [\(Luke 13:34-35a\)](#).

And then the account in Luke says: And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, [42] Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. [\(Luke 19:41-42\)](#). What a cause for mourning!

At Lazarus tomb the Bible says in simple words the shortest verse in the Bible: Jesus wept. [\(John 11:35\)](#).

This word *mourn* here in chapter 5 is used to denote sorrowing because of bereavement, it is also to denote the idea of sorrow because of the awful judgment experienced by those in sin and also the sorrow because of others who refuse to turn from sin in repentance. And I think we see all of those things in these accounts I have just referred to of our Lord's mourning. Unless we get so scattered that we remember nothing I would like to refer to the German rendering of this word, the idea of the word *mourn* here in Matthew five which is *sorrow bearing*, to take up on us *sorrow bearing*, blessed are they which take up on themselves *sorrow bearing* as Jesus did with the family at Bethany with the bereavement of others.

To take upon on us the sorrow bearing of the wayward acquaintance or family member, to take upon us the sorrow bearing of the burden of sharing in concern and prayer for that one who understands not the end of their way of sin, for they understood not the things which belonged to your peace, what a burden to bear and what a sorrow to share. To enter into the needs of others and grieve for their benefit I would say that is some of the thought that I would like to portray here of blessed are they that mourn.

I quote:

While the pagan dances to the drum the Christian there is a burden for that soul. While the unbeliever dashes off into dreams and dissipation the Christian stands in sober contemplation and mourns with concern. While the world reaches for prestige and power the disciple sees the end of such ambition and mourns. To stand aside and witness the world's indulgence of sin gives the Christian a deeper burden."

I think that is the thought that I would convey here as it relates to our healthy mental attitude when we take upon us sorrow bearing with others and for others. Yes it is costly, but there is within it a therapeutic value, not unlike a hard day's manual labour, for our attitudes and our mental well-being. To enter into mourning sorrow bearing with and for another takes our mind off ourselves, we begin to bear their burdens too. To enter into intercessory prayer is to bear another's need and sorrow to the Lord. I think that is all embodied in this thought of blessed are they that mourn that bear the sorrow's and concerns for another. And so if and when you begin to pity yourself reach out and weep with those that weep. When you begin to

envy the prosperity of the wicked consider their awful plight outside of Christ and mourn and pray for such will be comforted with righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

My mind goes to, and it may be a little off to the side, you may have heard of this too and maybe one of you know who the mother was but the account is given of the mother of one of the Presidents of the United States that when her son was elected to the presidency mourned, because she said I had hoped he would be a minister of the gospel. We can relate to that kind of mourning can't we? The thought of a wayward son or daughter. Well blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted as we give ourselves to the benefit and the sorrows of another.

In the third place here. Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth. Meekness is not as many suppose weakness but rather it is an inward virtue of the soul with its attitudes and its exercises chiefly to wards God. It is that inner strength which accepts God's dealings with us as good without disputings and resistance. It is the opposite of self assertiveness and self interest. That is the idea of meekness.

Someone has said it is it equanimity of spirit. And that word equanimity is the idea of a valid source or equal level playing field, it is equanimity of spirit that is neither elated nor cast down, simply because it is not occupied with self at all! What a blessed place to grow to! And I guess that gives all of us a goal doesn't it? What glorious freedom what a blissful centre in which to rest, simply to be not occupied with ourselves at all but to be focused on the Lord. We might think that such a person would of course not be emotionally unbalanced he would have no emotions. Well it does say here that meekness is that which is essential to happiness, the quality of character called meekness is a part of the blessedness of the child of God. It is also interesting to notice that this essential for a healthy mental outlook is couched between those that mourn and those that hunger and thirst and you know those both depict intense feelings and emotions and desire.

I believe this thought of meekness speaks of the condition of heart that is fully yielded to the purpose of God. Not unlike the well-trained horse that his owner can depend on to do his will without delay or resistance. Now we would say: Does that remove from that horse the spiritedness or usefulness? Well you say that is somebody that is a zombie that they don't have

any thoughts of their own. Looking back to the parallel of the well-trained horse can we say: Well that horse is not spirited is it not useful simply because it instantly and very rapidly responds to the demands of its master? Well we would say hardly, but just the opposite. You know the horse that can be depended on in the moment of crisis to do what its owner demands is the one that is really a worthwhile horse and that is something that I believe that relates to the meek.

One who has learnt through the indwelling spirit and the school of Christian discipleship to accept without reaction of retaliation the insult of his fellow man and to accept the betrayed confidence of his associates, without either boiling over or simmering or a cold unfeeling response is one that has learnt the value by the grace of God and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit of meekness and is exercising and displaying the virtue of meekness.

You know either to boil over or to simply move to discouragement and quit trying can be unsanctified and not right and further very self centered. Now I would like to belabor the point with just a short quote again:

"The disciple of Christ bears the marks of the Master, when reproached he holds his peace, when treated violently he endures with patience, [and I would say that is more than just clenching one's fist and biting one's tongue] when driven back he holds his position, when his rights are threatened he offers no defense, when he suffers injustice he accepts it quietly, when he is misrepresented he leaves his right with God.

A meek person remains calm in the midst of confusion, he is gentle in the midst of agitation, he is silent under the force of provocation, he is unruffled with reverses, he accepts insult without a resolution, to him these are as fires in the furnace of God to refine his soul."

What a spiritual giant!

These are the ones who delight in the ways of God's creation even when the way of man is corrupted on the earth. These are the preserving, the salt of the earth and the pleasant savoring elements on the earth when all the rest of humanity is decaying and unsavory. These are the ones who are known as the quiet in the land and are making the greatest impact on society by their prayers and godly lives and so brethren and sisters may we cultivate the virtue of meekness and further these are the ones who will inhabit the new heavens and a new earth. And I don't know what you understand this to mean when it says that they shall inhabit the earth, inherit the

earth, but in that new heaven and new earth dwelleth righteousness. And then the insults, the injustices and the grievances will be behind.

Moving on. Blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness. There are many hungers in our day that are pursued. We speak of those that are power hungry, some are money hungry, some are hungry for affection and acceptance, some are hungry for retribution and revenge and when those hungers are the driving aims of life why frequently every energy is steered into that direction to try and meet and feed that hunger, every nerve is strained, one becomes a slave to that pursuit even to the point of sacrificing principle, suffering stomach ulcers and high blood pressure, that is simply a cost along the way to get where I want to be, considered merely a price to pay to receive the desired result.

Well here is a drive described that creates a holy discontent of everything that displeases God. I believe the thought of hungering and thirsting after righteousness conveys that thought of a holy discontent of that which is displeasing to God. Now I believe that starts within, where we know best the intents of our own heart, personal desire as it remains constant in one's life bit by bit shapes the heart and mind, it develops attitudes and that is true whether those desires are right or wrong. But it does not stop within but it also grieves as we hunger and thirst after righteousness and focus on that with every intent of our being, it grieves instead of laughs at the off-colour jokes at the parts store and moves one to speak a word for righteousness because we desire that that individual may know the filling of the vacancy in his heart as well with the Lord Jesus and the things that are of real value. It is that which moves us to experience and seek companionship with fellow saints instead of the neighborhood gathering places at the stores or the garage or fair or wherever that might be. Not because we are so much better than they but because our focus is so different and we are straining every nerve to be what God wants us to be and within that is a holy discontent for everything that grieves our God. We are hungering and thirsting after righteousness instead of all the vain pursuits of the world.

And may I further say as you and I end our day with the awareness that we have walked with God today in the pursuit of godliness it gives one the fullness of content and all is well, as we begin a new day with the awareness that we pursue righteousness with a desire to thirsting and hungering

after righteousness and God will walk beside us regardless what comes. Again I say what a balm in Gilead, what a rest to the heart, what a peace to the mind! It aids in giving serenity and security and a healthy mental outlook.

Blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled. What a blessed condition, yes blessed are they.

In the fifth place. Blessed are the merciful.

Merciful simply means to feel sympathy with another and to act upon it. I feel this again this here is couched between the pursuit of righteousness and the pure of heart is a quality of showing mercy and forgiveness we just as would demand retribution. I read or heard I don't remember where I got it but there was a lawyer that is no one to have commented that if he is ever given the constitutional right of trial by jury he hopes it will not be a jury of good men. Now that sounds so strange that he went on to elucidate his thoughts further by saying: he said good men have so little sympathy with bad men that they are very seldom kind. He said good men are convicts.

And you know there is a lot of truth in that. I remember that I use a lot of personal illustrations but I remember when I was subpoenaed to come to court to give a witness to a friend of ours who ended up in the county jail and the prosecuting attorney asked me this question: Do you believe that forgiveness removes the need for a reaping for what has been sowed? What would you answer something like that?

His family, his defense attorney was trying to promote this idea that since this man repented, and I really believe that he did that day and that was 10 years ago, and today yet he continues to walk with the Lord and has evidence even though he is incarcerated, he has evidence of a relationship with the Lord that is affecting his life. But the question came and his family and his defense attorney were trying to promote the idea that since he repented and he was a changed man he shouldn't go to jail or at least get a reduced sentence.

Well what could you say if you were an honest man? Forgiveness removes the need of reaping for what one has sowed. All I could say was: Well not necessarily sometimes the Lord graciously removes the reapings but he does not promise that he will.

Well truth convicts and reaping follows sowing but while we don't fully appreciate an outlook like this lawyer expressed yet there is a sobering aspect to it as well that we do well to consider. Are we so good in our own minds that we cannot be kind to the unthankful and the evil as does the Highest? That's what our Lord does. He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Are we so good that we do not need to forgive those who trespass against us? The fact is that we are not so good. The Highest is so good, He has no sin but yet he is merciful and forgives and we are but sinners saved by grace, we are multiple offenders ourselves, how can we withhold forgiveness from our fellow men when the Lord has forgiven us? In fact, maybe I didn't say that quite right, if we are to obtain mercy and forgiveness from the Highest we must be merciful and forgiving to our fellow men.

May I remind us that carrying a grudge is a tremendous emotional burden, bitterness causes weary hands and weak knees and troubled minds but to release by the grace of God with forgiveness that personal offence makes one eligible for God's mercies as well as our fellow men and it is a tremendous emotional weight lifter. Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy. You know, you may know of some who are emotionally distressed to the point of being dysfunctional only to discover later of some ongoing sinful habits or practices that when cleared up resolve to a large extent the other problems.

Well we are called to be forgiving and to be merciful to those who are our fellow men. I remember one individual who was encouraged to make things right in the Fellowship, he was out of Fellowship, in fact he quit going to church for a while because he didn't appreciate the people that he went to church with and they had mistreated him, and only wrong, I don't know what all they had done, but individuals that came brethren that came to try and help him find his way back to the Lord, the church, they told him they said it is time to get things fixed up. He said: "When they come back to me and clear their offences I'll come back and not before".

I don't understand all the details of that situation but those men apparently were wise enough to tell him what they do and were, in essence not exact words but they said, what they do is not your business but what you do is your business and you had better take care of your responsibility and not worry about them.

And it upset him pretty badly for quite a while but he said it finally sunk in that is just exactly the way it was and then he was again to be useful in the work of the kingdom.

Well blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy not only from God but from our fellow men as well.

And as we go on: Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.

Probably the deepest source of emotional imbalance and of attitudes that are burdensome is guilt and they can be imaginary or real but in this context we speak of the real. Knowledge that is hidden, un-forsaken, unconfessed, un-forgiven sin carries guilt and it does affect interpersonal relationships, it tends to make one hostile and restless and irritable and defensive. Well blessed are the pure in heart.

God that did not make us to carry the weight of guilt with ease but rather has made a way to deal with the cause of guilt. I know that the psychologists of our day resent the message of accountability for sin because they say it brings guilt to play on the conscience and that is emotionally disturbing, you should not tell them they have sinned, you shouldn't tell them they are guilty it will make them feel bad and so they call it an illness or they call it a genetic weakness or disposition or a environmentally induced behavior pattern. That is what they label sin and consequently they are victims that must have help to cope with all these un-pleasant and undesirable circumstances that are beyond their control.

Well the fact is that sin is an illness and because of our Adamic genetic code we do have a tendency towards sinning, that is exactly right and our environment encourages it and condones it and even applauds it, but we are not victims. We are accountable individuals before God to deal with sin in God's prescribed manner. And may I remind all of us again this morning that blessed are the pure in heart, down to the very core of our being not merely on the surface but through and through like someone has said onion Christians, every peel that you take off just reveals another peel identical all the way to the centre, it is an onion.

Well my beloved that is the place of rest and peace in our relationship with God and with ourselves and with others, for they shall see God.

What a statement: Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God. And to the impure and the sinner and the hypocrite that sort creates more turmoil and unrest, Oh really I must see God?

But to the pure in heart what longing, what delight, what fullness of joy and complete pleasure forevermore is embodied in that statement: They shall see God. Because the love of when we stand before the God of all the earth with a heart that is pure then will be ushered in the pleasures forevermore. Yes what all is embodied in that statement: They shall see God, we view with longing even though we don't know all it embodies. Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.

Then: Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God.

When that peace with God is intact and when the peace of God is blooming in our hearts then we can be peacemakers.

I would illustrate that by simply some very mundane illustrations. We can be peacemakers from the insignificance of pacifying and irate motorist that can't get into the line of traffic by pulling off and letting him in to the personal work of helping another in his relationship with God and his fellow men. I realise the latter is a lot more involving than simply the irate motorist. But you know in all of that peacemaking efforts it calls for sacrifice, it calls for time, at times it entails misunderstanding and un-gratification and like the apostle Paul said: The more I love the less I be loved, and sometimes that characterizes the experience of the peacemaker, the attempted peacemaker. The more than one gives himself to the benefit and blessing of another the more they accuse one of meddling into the affairs of another that it is none of their business, sometimes maybe that happens too but I believe when engaged in from a heart of humility and mercifulness and gratitude for what the Lord did for us this Scripture tells us it results in blessedness. There is a blessedness that goes along with endeavoring to be a peacemaker.

God is like that. He is a peace restorer and to be called the children of God is an honourable title, in fact I don't know what there would be that would be more of an honourable title than that, to be called the children of God speaks of acceptance and love, it speaks of heir-ship with Christ and all the things that men seek for in the wrong places are realized for those who

seek to be accepted of God. Yes they do receive prestige as the children of God, they receive acceptance because they are part of the family of God. It speaks of all the treasures of God that will be unveiled throughout eternity. What a blessed possession! Many look for peace and blessing at the wrong places, looking for things and people to find them but they are found in the way of obedience to the call of Jesus Christ.

And finally verses 11 to 12. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad. In Luke that says: Leap for joy in that day for great is your reward in heaven for so persecuted they the prophets before you.

Find purpose in living. Blessed are they which find purpose in living. What is blessed about persecution and reviling and false accusations? Why I think it is in the three small words at the end of verse 11 -For My Sake. That is where it is. There is the fulfillment in living.

Yes the reason for the vacant eyes and the hopeless lies, the reason for the emotional derelicts and the spiritual shipwrecks, the reason for the senseless lawsuits and the vengeful and warring pursuits among men is because mankind, society at large has lost their sense of purpose for living.

I again quote: "We have a haunting sense" and this is speaking from a secular viewpoint, "We have a haunting sense of having moved away from a good but irretrievable past into an exciting but empty present all the while facing a hostile future."

And you know that just about describes it apart from Christ doesn't it?

A lack of purpose in life, having little or no sense of mission and being without direction for life leaves a void in the inner man. But as we through confession of sin and repentance from dead works and denying self the right to rule we come to the realization that our purpose for life and our purpose for living is for His pleasure, Revelation tells us that is why it He made us, it was for his pleasure that we and this world and all that is in it was created in our direction in life is to do the will of my Father in heaven. In my destiny in life is an eternity of great reward in heaven and then we can like the Apostle Paul rejoice, yes rejoice that we are accounted worthy when we seek to suffer for His name, He said it is for my sake.

George W Brunk once said: "In this hectic world there is something incredibly reassuring in the belief that there is a divine plan that exceeds all human plans."

Amen. I agree with that.

There is something incredibly reassuring in the fact that God has a purpose in all that comes and all that is a reality in our experience. It is a signpost shall we say.

Why, how can we rejoice in the midst of persecution and animosity and false accusations and so on. I would suggest it is a signpost along the way to heaven that we are identified with the people of God that were faithful in the past and accepted into the household of God today. You know that is a blessed signpost to see when we are travelling through a familiar territory which we are through life and we are not quite sure if we are on the right road how we would rejoice to see that sign that says: Route 64 or Route 70, sure enough this is right after all.

And I believe the disciples counted it a privilege to suffer for the cause of Christ, they saw it as a signpost that others then recognised that they were Christians too, little Christ's, they were identified with Christ and they were glad to be identified there. Instead of facing a hostile future we have a glorious hope for the future that gives us perspective and anchor for the present. The Apostles refused to take the persecution that was against them as a personal offence, they saw far beyond the rejection of their contemporaries and the hostility of their society, through the war of the ages and they recognized that there was behind-the-scenes something more than these wicked and ungodly men who were presently affronting them they were but pawns of the spiritual forces that work behind the scenes.

Yes, this is an affront to my Lord primarily rather than me his servant. Surely I am affected but my attitudes are so much more easily steered in the right way toward my fellow man that mistreat me or use me the wrong way as I refuse to view him as my enemy, he is not really targeting me, there are forces behind the sin that are moving him and sometimes those people are not aware of that in fact most of the time they are not. And so it is as such a heart of compassion is extended toward "my enemy" but unless he changes his course and the camps that he is identified with he will be on the wrong side at last, what a terrible condition to be in. Compassion rather than hostility can be our experience. So blessed are ye. In happiness, soul

rest, emotional equanimity, healthy mental attitudes these are found along the road of obedience and an identity with our beloved Lord.

For God has not given us a spirit of fear and we might add to that anxiety, perplexity, but of power but of love and of a sound mind. (2 Timothy 1:7) For although we live on the edge of eternity it is one filled with expectation that that is based on substance the promises of God. May the Lord give us grace.

Shall we kneel for prayer.