

Matthew 5:1-12

Certain members of the academic society are rewriting Mark Twain's "Tom Sawyer," and "Huck Finn." But you cannot rewrite history. The books are simply a reflection of the language of the time period. Many have tried, and are trying, to rewrite the Bible. Thomas Jefferson took his scissors to those parts that he did not like. Today liberal groups are turning the Word of God into the word of men by rewriting Christ out of the story. But this should not surprise us. We do the same thing. We sit in church and God's Word enters our ears, but within our minds we twist and turn everything around. In our minds we rewrite what God spoke into our ears. We make His words easier for our throats to swallow.

Today we heard the Beatitudes of Jesus. "Blessed are the poor in spirit...Blessed are those who mourn..."and so on. We hear these "blessed's" of Jesus, but we have our own set of "blessed's." One of them right now may be, "Blessed are those who live in Southern California or Hawaii, for theirs is a life free from snow and ice." But it gets worse. Jesus speaks, "Blessed are the poor in spirit" into our ears, but we turn His words around and think, "Blessed are those who have everything, a nice home, nice cars, lots of friends, and no money worries." We hear Jesus say, "Blessed are those who mourn," but we think, "Blessed are those who are always happy, always positive, who do not have to deal with cancer, heart disease, and other terrible sicknesses." We hear Jesus say, "Blessed are those who are persecuted," and we think, "You've got to be kidding! Blessed, rather, are those people who do not seem to have an enemy in the world, who are popular and loved by all."

Part of our problem may be that we do not see ourselves as being all that blessed. We see that others are blessed, but for ourselves, many days we feel more cursed than blessed. We need to get over ourselves already. We just finished singing, "Lift High the Cross," not "Lift High Yourself." We think we are blessed only if the world sees us as blessed. We judge our life not by the life of Christ, but by the life of our wealthiest neighbor, or by those we see portrayed on television and in the movies. Woe is me, we think, if I don't have a perfect marriage. Woe is me if I'm not popular in school. Woe is me if my coworker gets the promotion I was wanting.

Friend, you are not blessed only if you feel blessed. You are not blessed because of the things that you have. And you are not blessed only when your path in life is smooth and rosy. You are blessed for one reason...because Jesus calls you blessed. And He calls blessed those who are His by faith. The young man who is dying of cancer is blessed because he trusts in Jesus, but the successful businessman who is very healthy but has no use for the Lord is cursed. The poor family in Somalia who is under persecution by Muslims because they are Christians is blessed, but the family in America who has a good life but is living apart from Christ is cursed.

No one was cursed more than Jesus. He was cursed by His enemies. He was cursed even by His friends in moments of weakness. He was cursed by the mob in the court of Pontius Pilate. He was cursed by soldiers who did not know Him. And He was cursed by God, for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree." God cursed His Son because He was bearing your sin and guilt. God cursed Jesus for every wrong you and I have ever done. God cursed Jesus by forsaking Him to hell, rejecting Him, turning His face away from Him. Jesus took every curse that God had to give, and that is why now, for you, all God has left are, not "cursed's," but "blessed's."

Those who stand outside of Christ are cursed, but you friend, you who are baptized in Him, who cling to His promises, who hunger and thirst for His body and blood...you are blessed and yours is the kingdom of heaven. You who belong to Christ are blessed even though you have cancer. You who

trust in your Savior are blessed even though your life is a complete mess right now. You dear Christian are blessed even though the world says otherwise, even though you may not feel blessed. You are the blessed of God not because your name is on the church roster, not because of how you serve God and country, not because of anything you have done. You are called blessed by God because of Jesus, because your spirit is poor within you...you mourn over your sins, you repent of all the wrongs you have done and you hunger and thirst for God's mercy in Christ. You are forgiven; you are cleansed of your sins, you are blessed.

And Jesus does not say in the Beatitudes, "You will be blessed when..." He says that you are, present tense, blessed right now. It's not when you get your finances back in order that you will be blessed then. It's not when you get through your sickness and start feeling better, or when the crisis in your life is over that you will be blessed. Right now, Christian friend, you are blessed. Right now in the thick of your troubles; right now in the midst of your illness; right now with nothing seeming to be going well for you, you are blessed because you have Christ--or even better said, "Christ has you."

He has you and He will not let you go. He has you and He will never forsake you. He will never reject you nor turn His face away from you. He has you and He calls you His blessed one because He died for you, He washed you with His blood, He has forgiven all your sins. No "cursed's" await you in life, only "blessed's." That illness you are struggling with, that headache, that problem, that crisis, they are not curses for you. There are no "cursed's" for those who are in Christ, only "blessed's." And so every trouble, every struggle is only an opportunity for Jesus to draw you closer to Himself.

Why would we ever want to rewrite what Jesus here has spoken to us? He means every word He has said. Do not leave here today wondering if God is for you, if He is on your side, if you really are His blessed Christian. Leave with joy. Leave with confidence. You are what God says you are. What He has spoken, what He has written is the truth...you are His blessed one, forgiven and made His own in Jesus Christ. Amen.