

All last week you saw interview after interview at the Super Bowl, so many clichés and bragging it maybe made you sick. The week leading up to the big game you hear humble things like, “They’re one of the best teams ever. Peyton Manning is the best in the business. His mind is so complex I’d get lost in it. We’ll have to play perfect, plus get some breaks, only to stand a chance.” “Seattle is the best defense in the league – the toughest team we’ve seen.” Once the confetti falls, and the sideline reporters make their way through the maze of people to quick catch the MVP or the player who made the winning play, well, that pre-game humility usually gets immediately thrown out the window in post-game emotion. “I’m so good. I’m the top ___ in the league. We beat our sorry opponents – they never had a chance.” “We’re the best team in the whole world. We’ve put in our hard work all year long, and we deserved to win.” In this world, if you want happiness, it gives you an easy solution: just take a look in the mirror.

How long can that last? Brett Favre said after winning the Super Bowl, "Is this all there is? I thought it would feel so much better." Happiness can come and go, dependent on the breaks in the Super Bowl or in life. But what about blessedness? That’s a little different. Can that really come from taking a look in the mirror? If we get rid of the clichés and superficiality and are honest with ourselves, we see weakness in our bodies reflecting back at us, sorrow in our families and friends, and persecution once we’re bold enough to step out into the real world. That sounds like the furthest thing from blessedness. The world would call that person a doormat to walk on. But in the opening to the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus turns our world upside down. He trades happiness from yourself for blessedness from God. He trades being a doormat to the world for an inheritance from God. He gives you a far greater perspective: a perspective that sees the big picture and thus can only trust God for more strength as he promises even more blessing. Jesus encourages us his disciples, **“You’re Already Blessed: Trust God for More!”**

If you were to ask anyone off the street if they knew something about Jesus’ teaching, the Sermon on the Mount would probably be right at the top of the list. Even though it’s famous, it can also be one of the most misunderstood or confusing parts of all Jesus’ teaching. Many consider this to be more “Jesus-like” than even John 3:16, the “gospel in a nutshell” where God loved the world so much he sent his Son so we could have eternal life. Mahatma Gandhi, the famous leader of India’s independence, once admitted he never cared about a historical Jesus actually existing, or even if what the Gospels say was a complete figment of one’s imagination. *“For the Sermon on the Mount would still be true for me.”* Many see Jesus here as the epitome of a nice, religious teacher – but nothing more. Or telling you how to increase self-esteem, or make yourself blessed, or work to get to heaven by yourself, or to take over the world. Is that all we can take away from this? Fatalism? Defeatism? A new path to heaven – whether Jesus ever lived at all or not?

It’s vitally important to see whom Jesus is teaching. Don’t skip over those first two verses! They’re absolutely key to understanding the Beatitudes, and the whole Sermon on the Mount, ***“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.”*** Jesus is teaching his disciples! Those who already believe in him as the Messiah. Those who have already heard about how to get to heaven: through Jesus. Those who already have faith. Now granted, their faith wasn’t rock solid yet. That’s why Jesus patiently taught them for three years. That’s why he poured out his Holy

Spirit on them. Neither was the faith of the crowds who followed him rock solid. Yet even they had heard Jesus' preaching before. This isn't showing you how to earn God's blessings by who you are or what you do. It's telling us who we are and what we do because of God's blessing he's already given to us. It's encouraging us to keep growing in our Christian lives as God promises us even more of his gracious blessing.

That word "blessed" here doesn't necessarily mean "happy," as if you will automatically be a happy person with a bubbly personality or have a perfectly happy life. This doesn't mean everything on the surface in your life automatically must be peachy keen. But it does mean you are privileged to receive God's favor in your life.

Where's the first place you look for that happiness in life? Looking ahead to that blessedness in heaven can take far too much effort and patience. After all, the world and its priorities have far greater influence and appeal. They offer more bang for your effort than God's promises. It doesn't take much to notice: those who are self-sufficient are happy. Those who are prideful get the attention. Those who are vengeful get ahead. When your co-worker wants to treat Christianity like a doormat and wipe their dirty feet all over you simply because of your faith, do you automatically trust God ... or want to put them in their place and win an argument? When the intellectual elites call Christians stupid, is your first gut emotional reaction to rejoice in that persecution, or look to your own smarts to show them up? Satan whispers, "A long term view of blessedness and happiness takes the fun out of life now. Too much patience. Too much work. You're passing on what you could have right now. Trust what you can see now, not some uncertain hope you maybe won't even experience in the future. Trust in yourself."

Satan comes knocking at the door of your heart and expects to find you home. He wants to give you his own deceptions as to what your own self-righteousness can do. But Jesus answers the door ... "Yes, they used to live here. Not anymore. I live here now!" He lives in all of your hearts as he carries out his gracious rule over believers. You personally already possess the kingdom of God! It's yours right now! Jesus already rules in all your hearts! Jesus knows you're spiritually bankrupt to be able to demand anything yourself. He knows you like to diminish it by looking over it; he diminishes it by replacing it with his own perfect rule. He gives you his perfect merits for your spiritual bankruptcy. He already has blessed you! And he promises even more blessing!

When you crack open a book for the first time, what's the first thing you're tempted to do? If you're like me, you do not blindly turn to page one and dutifully read nothing else but page after page. No – I first check out the table of contents, the back cover, read through the evaluations of others on this book, study carefully the summary so I know exactly where this author is going. Purists would protest, but some even read the last chapter ahead of time. No, how dare you! You're destroying the whole plot line! You're destroying the whole fun of it all! In the Beatitudes, Jesus takes our hand and jumps with us to the last chapter of the novel of our lives. He takes out the mystery of our lives. He shows us the end. He shows us the blessed outcome of a life that can be filled with sorrows. He shows us what happens when we trust him for even more blessing.

Jesus has already blessed you with the kingdom of God. You already share in the kingdom's blessedness. Live as the poor in spirit. That doesn't mean you lack courage as you approach God or approach others. You just know where to find it. You know it can't come from your own spiritual bankruptcy and unworthiness but on your dependence on God.

Jesus has already blessed you. He promises you comfort over your sins. He wipes away your tears of repentance for the humiliation we cause our God and replaces it with a hug that

only a friend can give. He promises you comfort for your difficulties. Trust him for even more comfort when you mourn.

Jesus has already blessed you. Live meekly. You're not impressed by your own self-importance but are impressed by Jesus' importance in your life. You will receive far greater self-importance when you inherit the earth. The Lord promised the Israelites they would inherit the promised Land of Canaan. That points ahead to the Promised Land of heaven, which Jesus will give you on the Last Day.

Jesus has already blessed you. Hunger and thirst for a more righteous life. You'd never think about giving up your three meals a day or water just to make things more interesting. No, they're so important they're automatic. Jesus fills you with his own righteousness. That's your strength to have an insatiable appetite to grow in your own righteousness as you live as a Christian.

Jesus has already blessed you. Show compassion, show pity, show help to others in their dire need. Yes, even that friend that's just really annoying. Yes, the random stranger you might never see again. God will show you even more of his mercy. His emotional reaction can't bear to see you suffer by yourself. He take up your need as if it were his own.

Jesus has already blessed you. Make your heart pure. Clean out your own self-deception and Satan's lies. Clean out those jealous thoughts of the perfect life you see others have. Clean out those gossipy words and those impure thoughts the TV fills you with. You see God now through Jesus in his Word. You will see him fully in heaven.

Jesus has already blessed you. Eradicate division and strife. Create peace. Peace when you want to run away to college and get rid of your parents. Peace when you want your kids to run away to college so you can get rid of them. Peace when Christian friends turn into pseudo-Christian competitors. God has already called you "children" – that peace in a family as you will inherit all the blessings God will give you.

Jesus has already blessed you. Embrace that persecution for your righteous lives. Rejoice in the insult. Be glad with those lies people in society tell about you. You already have a king ruling in your heart. You already possess the kingdom of God. Jesus will give you an even greater reward in heaven.

Jesus has already blessed you. *Expect more blessing from him!* He has already promised to give you it. Trust him to make you more ready to receive your future reward the weaker you are in life. Trust him to make you stronger the weaker you are in life. Look to his past strength. Trust him to give you even more strength to grow in your Christian live as he gives you blessedness after more blessedness. Amen.