

Matthew 5:1–12: <sup>1</sup>Seeing the crowds, [Jesus] went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. <sup>2</sup>And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

<sup>3</sup>“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>4</sup>“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

<sup>5</sup>“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

<sup>6</sup>“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

<sup>7</sup>“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

<sup>8</sup>“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

<sup>9</sup>“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

<sup>10</sup>“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>11</sup>“Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. <sup>12</sup>Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

### Jesus Brings Blessing to a Sin-Cursed World

#### INTRODUCTION

Do you know what they call it when human beings try to create heaven on earth? It’s called Utopia. The whole idea behind communism and socialism is to create utopia—heaven on earth—a worker’s paradise—a place in which human society is so ideally perfect that there is complete contentment. But do you know what utopia actually means? People who know Greek may say, “a good place”—from the Greek words eu for good and topos for place. But that’s incorrect. The first letter of Utopia—“U”—comes from the Greek word for no or not. So, Utopia actually means “no place” or “not a place.” Utopia refers to non-existent or imaginary place. It’s the place where Peter Pan came from—Neverland!

Actually, utopia did exist for just a brief period of time. It was called the Garden of Eden—a place where human beings were completely content. But then came temptation and the Fall into sin. And with Adam’s sin came the curse of the Fall. No longer was creation EU-topian—

meaning a good place—it was now a cursed place.

There was no longer peace and harmony between God and man, mankind and creation and husband and wife, now there was but conflict.

Eve, the mother of all living, would now give birth in pain.

The name Adam means earth or ground. The ground from which Adam was created would now fight against him. He would now have to work the soil by the sweat of his brow, fighting against thorns and thistles.

And in their sin, they had separated themselves from the One who gave them life. God is life, and to be separated from Him is death—temporal and eternal death. With the Fall into sin, Adam and Eve and all their descendants would eventually return to the earth from which they were made—the curse of death.

As you look at today's Gospel reading, you can see the curse of the Fall.

In a cursed world there is poorness of spirit. The spiritual impoverishment that exists in the world today is the result of being separated from God by sin.

In a cursed world, there is mourning. Conflict, war, suffering and death all bring tears to our eyes, especially as the wages of sin take from us the ones we love.

In a cursed world the meek are abused and trampled and taken advantage of. In this sin-cursed world, elder, child and spousal abuse are epidemic. And abortion—even into the last day of gestation—and euthanasia aren't great evils, but basic human rights. The prophet Isaiah was right, we are in a time when evil is called good and good evil, and the meek suffer the most.

In a cursed world there is a hunger and thirst for righteousness because there is no righteousness as God's Word is trampled and people do as they please.

In a cursed world there is the need for mercy because life is fragile and there is so much suffering. But there is so little mercy as sinful people watch out for number one.

In a cursed world there is no pureness of heart. As Jesus said, it is the sinful heart that produces all kinds of evil and wrongdoing. “For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander” (Matt. 15:19). The sinful heart contributes much to the inhumanity of this age.

In a cursed world there is no peace—no peace between people, no peace between people and the creation—but especially no peace between God and mankind. In a sin-cursed world, there is only fear of God, for God is regarded—if He’s regarded at all—as a God who is full of wrath and vengeance.

And In a cursed world there is persecution for the people of God as a fallen world follows its prince—the devil—and makes trouble for godly men and women.

When it comes to making a utopia out of this world, history is a great teacher—all efforts to make a utopian society have utterly failed. No matter how much effort or money human beings pump into society to make it better, it just gets worse. Just look at the murder rate in Chicago. Chicago has some of the most restrictive gun laws in the nation—all designed to make Chicago a safer place—and what have they accomplished?

Now, God could have walked away from Adam and Eve—He could have left them to their own devices. But He entered this fallen world and He had mercy on them. He sought them out in their fearful condition and gave them clothes to wear and provided for them a way of salvation—a way of salvation where God Himself would take the punishment for sin—where God Himself

would bear the curse of the Fall.

And that promise in the Garden of Eden was fulfilled when Jesus Christ became man and entered this sin-cursed world to bring God's blessing.

For the poor in spirit—for those who know and feel their separation from God due to sin, Christ brings the blessing of atonement and forgiveness. Jesus begins the Beatitudes with this blessing because this is the greatest need of humanity—to be restored to God through the forgiveness of sin. And that restoration takes place at the cross where Jesus died to overcome sin and win forgiveness for all. There on the cross, Jesus became the poorest of the poor in spirit as He suffered separation from His heavenly Father—"My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?"—and the pangs of hell for all people as God laid on Him the burden of all of our sins, that through Jesus God may lay on us grace and mercy and eternal life.

For those who mourn Jesus blesses with comfort—especially the comfort of knowing that He has defeated our greatest enemy—the enemy that brings tears to us all—death. Christ's resurrection is proof of His victory over death—a victory that we celebrate today, All Saints' Sunday. And with His victory over death, Jesus blesses you with the sure and certain hope of your own resurrection, and on that day that God the Father Himself will wipe away every tear.

For the meek—for those who are trampled and abused by a sin-cursed world—Jesus brings the blessing of inheritance—"they shall inherit the earth." But who wants to inherit this earth? This is future blessing—Jesus promises that for those who turn the other cheek for His sake, who are reviled in this world because they follow Him—they will inherit the new creation that is to come.

For those who hunger and thirst for righteousness Jesus brings the blessing of His own

righteousness. We can't be saved by our own righteousness, because all that we do is tainted by sin and unrighteous in God's sight. As believers, you're fully aware of your sins before God—and that you can't bring to God a righteousness of your own. But Jesus is the Righteous One, and through the gift of faith in Him, God declares you righteous. As baptized believers, you've put on Christ—your hunger and thirst for righteousness filled by the complete righteousness of Christ.

For the merciful, Jesus brings the blessing of mercy. Bringing mercy to those broken by sin is an endless and thankless job. But Jesus blesses those whom He has called to give mercy with mercy.

And because Jesus has purified your hearts with His righteousness, you will see God. What wonderful words John gives us in the Epistle Reading that reflect this blessing: “Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.”

For the peacemakers—for those who bring God's peace to this sin-cursed world through the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, they are blessed by Jesus to be called sons of God. Now, the world may call those who proclaim the Gospel other names, but God calls them sons—heirs of eternal life.

And for those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, Jesus gives them the kingdom of heaven. This election cycle has taught me one thing—the lengths of which people will go to fight for this dying world: the lies, the abuses of power, the unholy rhetoric, and even the desire to take away our First Amendment rights to protect the sexual revolution. Yes, this world is dying—and it wants to take you down with it. But the kingdom of heaven is an everlasting

kingdom—and it's yours in Christ no matter what the world does to you! And it's yours no matter how this or any election turns out! Can I get an AMEN to that!

## Conclusion

This is a sin-cursed world. It will never be utopia. Even in Peter Pan's Neverland there was trouble and difficulty—Captain Hook and his gang, and that old clock-eating crocodile.

And if your noticed, Jesus didn't come into this sin-cursed world to fix it—that fixing will take place on Judgment Day when God destroys this world and creates a new heaven a new earth free from the curse of the Fall. Jesus came into this sin-cursed world to bring you His blessing of salvation and life in the world to come.

But for now, Jesus blesses you with forgiveness when you sin, mercy when you suffer, comfort when you mourn, and sonship when you're alienated by a dying world. And with the very body and blood that won for you these many blessing on the cross, Jesus satisfies fully your hunger and thirst for righteousness!

In Jesus' Name. Amen.