

Good morning.

The Church Town Church of God, the Sisters in Grace, Barrels of Blessing, is a giving ministry adapted from the thank offering barrels that once were offered by the conference.

Over time, the Sisters in Grace grew away from that model and that is when they, as a group ministry, decided to create and lead the local version that we know today as the Barrels of Blessing.

Today, if you choose to participate over the coming year, you will take home a barrel and throughout the year, whenever you are thankful for something in your daily life and want to thank God tangibly, place a few coins in the barrel and pray a prayer of thanksgiving.

For many, it becomes an irreplaceable daily act of worship and for that we all are thankful.

On the barrels are marked several specific areas of need for Church Town.

As the giver, you can mark whichever fund or funds towards which you would like the money to be given.

Sometimes it is very specific.

For example, the stained glass window beside the entry to the sanctuary was in desperate need of refurbishing.

The Sisters took it upon themselves to accomplish this and the result is the beautiful window that you see today and it has been rededicated to the Sisters for their combined effort.

This year, on the barrels, the giver can designate money to be set aside for the general fund, the maintenance fund, the benevolent fund, the newly created carpet fund, or an individual can designate something of their own choosing.

The Sisters in Grace are blessed to be able to provide this ministry of giving to the little church on the hill and we hope heartedly thank every person who participates.

Good morning.

As King David spoke to the gathered in Jerusalem upon the commissioning of the First Temple in 1 Chronicles 29 verses 10 to 17.

May you be blessed, O Lord, God of our Father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting.

Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the splendor and the majesty for everything in heaven and on earth belongs to you.

Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom and you are exalted as head over all.

Both riches and honor come from you and you are the ruler over all.

In your hands are power and light to exalt and give strength to all.

Now therefore, God, we give you thanks and we praise your glorious name.

But you are mine and you are my people that we should give to give as generously as this.

For everything comes from you and from your own hand we have given to you.

For we are foreigners and strangers in your presence as were all our forefathers.

Our days on earth are like a shadow without hope.

O Lord, our God, from your hand comes all this abundance that we have provided to build your house for your holy name and all of it belongs to you.

I know, my God, that you test the heart and delight in the brightness.

All these things I have given willingly and with an upright heart and now I have seen your people who are present here giving joyfully and willingly to you.

Thank you all.

Keep looking up and may God continue to bless our assembly.

This reading, known as the Father's Love Letter, speaks to God's many loving attributes and the way that he cares for his special creation.

Every one of the statements made about God is backed up by scripture and I encourage you to pick up a copy of the letter and research each one of them for yourself.

The Father's Love Letter.

You may not know me but I know everything about you.

I know when you sit and when you rise up.

I am familiar with all your ways, even the very hairs on your head are numbered, for you remain in my image.

And me, you live and move and have your being for you are my special creation.

I knew you even before you were conceived.

I chose you when I planned creation.

You were not a mistake and all of your days are written in the book of life.

I determined the exact time of your birth and where you would live.

You are fearfully and wonderfully made.

I knit you together in your mother's womb and brought you forth on the day you were born.

I have been misrepresented by those who don't know me.

I am not distant and angry but I am complete expression of love and it is my desire to lavish my love on you simply because you are my child and I am your father.

I offer you more than your earthly father ever could for I am the perfect father.

Every good gift that you receive comes from my hand.

I am your provider and I meet all your needs.

My plan for your future has always been filled with hope because I love you with an everlasting love.

My thoughts toward you are as countless as the grains of sand on the seashore and I rejoice over you with sin.

I will never stop seeking good for you for you are my treasure possession.

I desire to establish you with all of my heart and all of my soul and I want to show you great and marvelous things.

If you seek me with all of your heart you will find me.

Delight in me and I will give you the desires of your heart for it is I who gave you those desires.

I am able to do more for you than you could possibly imagine because I am your greatest encourager.

I am also the father who comforts you in all of your troubles.

When you are broken hearted I am close to you.

Just as a shepherd carries a lamb I have carried you close to my heart.

One day I will wipe away every tear from your eyes and I'll take away all the pain you have suffered on this earth.

I am your father and I love you even as I love my son Jesus.

For in Jesus my love for you is revealed.

He is the exact representation of my being.

He came to demonstrate that I am for you not against you and to tell you that I am not counting your sins.

Jesus died so that you and I could be reconciled.

His death was the ultimate expression of my love for you.

If you receive the gift of my son Jesus you will receive me and nothing will ever separate you from my love again.

Come home and all of habit will rejoice with me.

I have always been a daughter and will always be a daughter.

My question is will you be my child?

I am waiting for you.

Love your father.

God Almighty.

I will be reading through Matthew 5, 1-12.

One day as you saw the crowds gathering Jesus went up to the mountainside and sat down.

His disciples gathered around him as he began to teach them.

God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

God blesses those who mourn for they will be comforted.

God blesses those who are humble for they will inherit their whole earth.

God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice for they will be satisfied.

God blesses those who are merciful for they will be shown mercy.

God blesses those whose hearts are pure for they will see God.

God blesses those who work for peace for they will be called the children of God.

God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you.

Because you are my followers.

Be happy about it.

Be very glad for a great reward leaves you in heaven.

And remember the angel prophets were persecuted in this woman.

Anyone hear me?

Good morning.

Good morning.

So I'm used to speaking to children so this is a little nerve-wracking but you are very quiet.

Good morning.

It's my honor and my privilege to be able to speak to my family today and about the word of God.

So I'd like to start off with prayer.

Let us pray.

Lord of all, please prepare our hearts as we gather to worship you.

Let everything spoken today glorify you and grow us even closer to you.

And it's in Jesus name we pray.

Amen.

Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Follow me and I'll make you fishers of men.

Statements like these would make great headlines in today's world.

But these simple statements are powerful to the ministry of Jesus.

And often times when I was telling calendars before the service, I don't know how Brian does this everybody.

This is hard stuff.

He deserves a raise.

Okay.

But I often find when I'm going to speak in front of people that I'm actually speaking to myself.

And I know Brian says that a lot but this caused me to start off with the attitudes and I've been kind of reading over this for several months and it really is a lesson for me today.

So I hope you get something out of the lesson for me as Jesus began to gather his disciples.

He started to gather fame all around Galilee.

He was teaching in the synagogues preaching the gospel the kingdom healing sickness healing diseases.

And he's casting out demons of the possessed and as you can imagine, he had multitudes of people that followed him in order to learn more about him.

I know if I saw things like that happening today, I would be curious as well.

And it before he decided to present this one of his longest sermons, the Sermon of the Mount, the crowds came to him and he went up on the mountainside.

And I think it's interesting that he went to the mountainside away from all man-made things in the midst of God's creations who speak to multitudes.

So as a teacher, we sat down and he talked about the true will of God and the guidelines of what life in his kingdom should look like and about the qualities of righteousness that we should possess.

So through the attitudes, we see what the character of life and the true people of God should look like and how we need to be righteous to order his to enter his kingdom.

Now with the Christ first coming, we understand what the kingdom would look like for believers.

And with the second coming, we look forward that we will actually see his prophecy fulfilled.

So the Beatitudes are just basically a collection of, as you heard Morgan read, a collection of declarative sentences and they all have that similar phrase, "Blessed are they."

Now since that's in each section, I think it's important that we have the true meaning of blessed and it helps us to understand each of these statements in his name.

So frequently people will use that in place of the word happy.

Although happiness can be a part of that, being truly blessed is an inner joy and peace that can only come from being right with God.

So when Jesus uses that statement, "Blessed are they," he also speaks of the reward that will come for those who are right with God.

And in addition to these rewards, he also speaks about judgment that will come for those who continue with their wicked ways and refuse to repent.

Now in the Old Testament, he tells us in Proverbs 6 verses 16 through 19 about the ways of a wicked man.

It says, "These six things the Lord hates.

Yes, seven are an abomination to him, a proud rook, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that deceives wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among the brethren."

So these are the exact opposite things of what the Lord loves.

So as we take a look at each of the Beatitudes, we're going to see what it means to be blessed in his eyes.

So the first one says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Now when we hear that word "poor," especially the children I teach, they think it's somebody who has very little money, very little possessions, or a poor child, very little video games.

So in this part of the word, poor isn't actually a physical thing, it's a spiritual meaning.

And not only is it those you can be without money or without things, but it could be those who are without power, without hope as well.

Now many of us have probably been in a place in life where you've been physically poor or spiritually poor or maybe both at the same time.

And in Isaiah we hear that his people would be delivered from bondage, and when we have nothing left in this life, we can still stand firm on that promise of the kingdom of heaven.

Our worldly deeds, our worldly possessions, they do nothing to help us to inherit the kingdom.

So we must come to him as hopeless and helpless sinners in order to receive the free gift of salvation from God.

It doesn't matter if you're poor or rich, every person may repent to receive his kingdom as long as we recognize our need for a savior.

This is a clear example in the Parable of the Sower, you see this.

Not only was he physically poor, he was also spiritually poor, needed to repent of his sin and submit to the will of God knowing that alone he could do nothing.

Even though we try to be very self-sufficient, maybe I I I can do this, we have to humble ourselves.

The second part of this, blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

So when we mourn, we are promised that we will be comforted.

And when we think of mourning, we think of it as something that's grief over the loss of a loved one.

Some people mourn the loss of something important, like the loss of your good health, the loss of a job.

There are lots of disasters that happen in the world that causes mourning as well.

And through all this mourning, we sort of lose hope, many of us.

And most of the times we can't be comforted for those things in the worldly ground.

I can speak to the death of my father.

I could not be comforted in this worldly ground.

I needed a big God to come from me.

And in this part, the mourning is more for our sin.

We read the status in this life and in this world, this world we know it's lost.

It's simple.

It's ruined.

It's full of sin.

But we mourn for only a time because we take comfort in the kingdom to come.

We have hope, that faith that are in our final victory over death.

And what promise that God will wait as you heard the ladies read that God wipes away all the tears.

That's what we do more.

And as a member of his kingdom, we have to have faith in what is to come.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they should be filled.

If you have children, you know what hunger and thirst means.

It's a basic human drive.

And it's the most basic of our needs in this physical body.

And these are things that we must have in order to survive.

But in this part, in this sentence, Jesus isn't talking about food and water.

We know he's talking about the desire for righteousness.

This can be desired for ourselves in the world that we live in because we walk as Christians with this strong urge and strong desire of will.

In doing this, we receive righteousness.

And we can also pray that there would be righteousness in the world around us through the guidance of Holy Spirit.

We can hunger and thirst for the help of the hand of God and we become more Christly.

We are declared righteous in heaven by justification, sanctification, and we're given a promise of righteousness to be fulfilled when the Lord returns and we are finally glorified by him.

Blessed are the mercy people, for they will be shown mercy.

If you have ever had a time in your life where you felt inadequate or incomplete or weak, you understand what mercy is.

You may have heard some say that, you know, we say it all the time, you're here to love the sinner but not to sin.

And that sounds like kind of how God is merciful to us.

Once we've been shown the mercy of the Lord, we feel compelled to show kindness to others, to forgive others, to show compassion from the needy.

And upon judgment, we will be shown mercy, but not through our good deeds, as I said before, but because we understand that the grace of God is in our own lives.



And in the walk of a believer, we should seek to confess our sins, to ask forgiveness, because we know his grace is not deserved.

Giving mercy to others is truly a spiritual blessing.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Your heart condition is truly between you and the Lord.

No other human can know your heart condition other than by judging the fruit of your spirit.

And being pure in heart has to do with more choices that you make for your inner purity.

This could be desires that you harbor in your heart.

It could be your thoughts, your experiences, your intentions.

It could simply be a decision you've made in life.

All of these should be pleasing to God.

You're to be considered pure in heart.

So the fruit of the spirit of someone who is pure in heart will reflect good things.

It will reflect love and mercy and justice and decisions that are pleasing to God.

And in Matthew 15, he shows us that these are those that are not pure in heart will show impure desires.

They will show selfishness and they will show evil thoughts.

So since we're told throughout scripture that no one has ever seen God, the promise that the pure in heart will someday see God, should cause us to be pure in heart.

By faith, we know that one day when heaven is opened up, that we are promised to see him with our own eyes.

And it's somewhat of a challenge to the believer to allow him, allow his will to be done, allow him to reveal our impurities to us so that we may deal with them and make a change.

And in this, we can gain a new heart made pure by him.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the sons of God.

The Messiah is the Prince of Peace and unity in this dark world.

And as humans, we can't have hope for peace and for unity without the work of God.

In a world that has so much conflict and strife, to have hope and peace, you must rely on being at peace with your creator, your savior and accept the peace that surpasses human understanding.

It's a spiritual peace that comes from him only, not a worldly peace.

And when believers work towards promoting the kingdom of God, they're showing love, not hate.

They unite, they provide.

And in this, they become the true children of the Most High.

Oftentimes we'll say this, that we're proud to be a part of the family of God.

And we were born into this family by the Spirit and we can have this personal relationship with the Father through the Son.

We are joint heirs with them and by faith, we await our place in our heavenly home.

As we repent, we pick up our cross and we spread the gospel to the world.

We are truly hearing the work of the Lord.

And finally, blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of justice for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

And our office says, we're under attack.

We're doing it right.

And as believers, we're never given a promise that this walk would be easy.

I remember when I became a believer, no one warned me about what was to come.

We live in this fallen world and we're kind of slaves to our flesh.

And even though we believe that living this life for Christ would attract people, it clearly does not.

It clearly brings opposition.

And a lot of people in this world are focused on things like power and money and possessions, privilege over others, self-righteousness.

And we're told we will suffer persecution for the sake of his name.

As believers, we should rejoice in the midst of the persecution because the kingdom of heaven awaits.

Many people in the Bible suffer and even die for his name's sake.

So we must understand that opposition may come and by faith, we should understand that our reward isn't in the flesh.

That it awaits us as we claim victory over death.

Now, I can only imagine, as you can probably imagine, what it would have been like to be in the crowd of the masses gathered at this ceremony and the moment that Jesus began to speak.

I feel that there are probably many that walked away that day and wanted nothing more to do with him.

I've also read this part of the Bible many, many times.

And I enjoy this pivotal moment in the ministry of Jesus.

And the attitudes I feel is very much a parallel of how we walk as a believer.

As a new believer, I was spiritually poor.

I tried to do life on my own accord and failed miserably time and time again.

I was 12 when I was saved, but I was around 40 when he truly threw me on my back and forced me to look up.

And he gave me no other way out other than to rely on him.

I am so grateful for that rock bottom moment.

I began to mourn my sin.

I no longer wanted it.

As Brian teaches all the time, I no longer wanted to sin.

I wanted to fill in those missing pieces that I've been missing with the Lord.

And I wanted to become me and I wanted to emulate the nature of Jesus.

And the more I walk with him, the more hungry and thirsty I became.

I wanted to hear more of his word and learn more about his character.

And in his word, he revealed to me the importance of forgiveness and compassion.

Forgiveness is tough.

I was able to forgive others when it seemed impossible in my humanness.

And I especially grew the day that I was able to forgive myself, even though I knew the Lord had already forgiven me.

I began to be able to show mercy in ways that I had never imagined and through it all, God keeps putting in that fire as he refines me and molds me to be more like him and less like me.

Thank God.

I strive to have a pure heart and please God, how would I do?

Do I always make it?

No.

I pray that I may bring his peace into this world.

It doesn't always happen now.

I pray that he will use me to complete his purpose and do his work and do it well.

In this, I've been called Jesus free many times to the point where I think I need a T-shirt because I'm very proud to be a Jesus free.

And we should all be proud as believers when we're called that.

Now, if you have never known Jesus, I'd like you to give your life to Christ.

If you reach out to me, reach out to one of the family members, reach out to the pastor, reach out to another believer, say something.

It is the best decision you'll ever make.

And it's my hope and my prayer that somebody listening today, even if it's in the family, whatever the kingdom and the family of God with the words that the Lord has given us in Matthew five.

I encourage you to reread this section and to continue to study the rest of Matthew five.

And it's I hope it serves to encourage you as it does mean.

So let us pray.

Lord, I just thank you for your word today.

Thank you for your unfailing love and grace and mercy.

And Lord, I would like you to help us to be a light in this dark world so that we can continue to do the work of your kingdom.

You are.

And Lord, we love you and we thank you.

And it's in Jesus name we pray.