

Hi, here we are. We come before you this morning a humble people. We come before you this morning understanding our need for you and our desire to worship you and you alone. We come together as your children. And if there is anybody in this congregation today that is not your child this day, I pray that by the time this morning ends that they are your adopted child, that the gospel will open eyes, open hearts, people will turn, repent and come to know you as their Savior and their Lord. For you are the pastor and the teacher of this church and of the church universal. And we love you and we pray that you would lead us in all things this morning. In your name, Amen. Psalm 34 is an interesting psalm because David used it to prove that he was insane. To fake being insane so that he could get out of something. But here's the words that he uses as he was pretending to be insane in front of a bottleneck. "I will praise the Lord at all times. I will constantly speak his praises. I will boast only in the Lord. Let all who are helpless take heart. Come, let us tell of the Lord's greatness. Let us exalt his name together. I prayed to the Lord and he answered me. He freed me from all my fears. Those who look to him for help will be radiant with joy. No shadow of shame will darken their faces. In my desperation I prayed and the Lord lifted him. He saved me from all my troubles. For the angel of the Lord is a guard. He surrounds and defends all who fear him. Taste and see that the Lord is good. All the joys of those who take refuge in him fear the Lord you, his godly people. For those who fear him will have all they need. Even strong young lions sometimes go hungry. But those who trust in the Lord will lack no good thing. Come, my children, and listen to me, and I will teach you to fear the Lord. Does anyone want to live a life that is long and prosperous? Then keep your tongue from speaking evil and your lips from telling lies. Turn away from evil and do good. Search for peace and work to maintain it. The eyes of the Lord watch over those who do right. His ears are open to their cries for help. But the Lord turns his face against those who do evil. He will erase their memory from the earth. The Lord hears his people when they call to him for help. He rescues them from all their troubles. The Lord is close to the broken heart. He rescues those whose spirits are crushed. The righteous person faces many troubles, but the Lord comes to see to the rescue each time. The Lord protects the bones of the righteous. Not one of them is broken. Calamity will surely destroy the wicked, and those who hate the righteous will be punished. But the Lord will redeem those who serve them. No one who takes refuge in him will be condemned. Amen. Our second reading is from Ecclesiastes 3, verses 1 through 8. Very familiar scripture. For everything there is a season. A time for every activity under heaven. A time to be born and a time to die. A time to plant and a time to harvest. A time to kill and a time to heal. A time to tear down and a time to build up. A time to cry, a time to laugh, a time to breathe, and a time to dance. A time to scatter stones and a time to gather stones. A time to embrace and a time to turn away. A time to search and a time to quit searching. A time to keep and a time to throw away. A time to tear and a time to mend. A time to be quiet and a time to speak. A time to love and a time to hate. A time for war and a time for peace. I am obviously not a war have I ever been a soldier. But when I read that this week and I thought of that this week I thought probably more than any single person a soldier may know what all of that means. A soldier who has seen the things of war. A soldier who has followed their duty, followed their orders, done what they have been commanded to do, the things that they have seen, the things that they have done, I thought were reflected well in this passage from Ecclesiastes. Today we want to honor our veterans with the patriotic hymn "God Bless America" but I also wanted to make mention that when you see a veteran, whether it be a volunteer of a very modern era or perhaps it is a Vietnam veteran that didn't have much of a choice, think of the unique life that they have led. Think of the unique things that they have seen, the unique things that they have done so that you and I and most of us never have to do that. So thank you. We are happy to have that. Happy to have that accompaniment and many people say, "Oh church and government and politics and blah blah blah." If you can't honor the men and women who have served for you so that we can sit in this church without fear of armed men coming in to break up this worship service, then I don't know what to say to you. But you can take a few moments every year to do that. It is right and it is proper to do. I've been all about lists lately. If you read the Church Town Weekly, you see that it was part two of a

writing I got into last week. And what I did then in that particular piece of scripture was list all of the verbs. The verbs that God does, the verbs that we do, the verbs that God doesn't do, and the verbs that we don't do. And I went through them, each and every one, and tried to lend a bit of a practical application of what it looks like in your life as we read this passage, let's not just, as we always say, read over it. Let's not read over it and say, "Oh that's nice. That sounds really powerful." Break it down. Break this relationship down. And that's what we did in the writing this week. We read the list in Ecclesiastes and we talked about a unique application of that list perhaps an individual on a single deployment would experience all of those things that are spoken of in Ecclesiastes and that is a powerful thing to consider when we consider that it is speaking of our entire lives, but you see and feel the intensity of the soldier in Ecclesiastes and all that they go through through the course of perhaps a single deployment. And now we're going to go to the Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes. And I'm going to speak again of the psalm that we read this morning and we're going to tie it into the Beatitudes. I was drawn to the Beatitudes perhaps because my brain is in this list mode. We know the Beatitudes. We are biblically illiterate in this church. We preach the Beatitudes. I've spoken on the Beatitudes. One of the reasons why is not because of, "Oh, it's there and it's blatant and it's easy. Oh my, no!" It's very there and it's very layered and it's very nuanced and it's very important. It is very fundamental to who we are as Christians. So we do touch upon the Beatitudes. You hear that three, four, maybe five times in the course of a year not to mention the other avenues of information that we have in the writings and the live stream. The Sermon on the Mount is very unique and I've been doing a very deep dive on the Sermon on the Mount following the Bible project this year. They spent the entire year on the Sermon on the Mount and that has been incredible and it has led me not only to listen and learn from them but to go off into various other directions of my own studying the Sermon on the Mount. But there is a reason why the Beatitudes come before the rest of the teaching and that is because the Beatitudes describe a human being who is in the proper condition to receive that teaching. Anybody can receive the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount and go, "Oh, okay. I'll try to live that way. That's fine." But much like we talk about 1 Corinthians 13 and all of that stuff about love and being patient and being kind and not keeping any record of wrongs, trying to live out the Sermon on the Mount without being in the condition of the Beatitudes is impossible. That's why it's here. That's why Jesus teaches right off the bat as he saw the crowds coming or gathering, Jesus went up on the mountainside and sat down, disciples gathered around and he began to teach. And the very first thing, and this is very, very important, the first things that come out of Jesus' mouth in many cases are these fundamental statements like when he is baptized and he begins his ministry. What's the first word out of his mouth, Brian? Repent. We should listen to that. When he begins his ministry on earth, he begins with the word repent. Repent for the kingdom of God is near. The kingdom of God is at hand. And so when he sits everybody down and he knows he's going to give them a teaching that is going to encompass every aspect of their lives, the first words out of his mouth are, "God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him." Now this is an encompassing couple of words here that we need to take a look at in order to understand. God blesses those. This word is very difficult to interpret directly word for word. It's more along the lines of God considers you in the best possible condition if you understand how desperately spiritually poor you are. That is the fundamental statement for all of the Sermon on the Mount, let alone the Beatitudes. The very first words out of his mouth are, "God considers you to be blessed, to be in the best position to receive his power if you first understand how desperately you need him." Boom. That's the cornerstone. That's the fundamental. Just like the fundamental when he begins his ministry is repent, the fundamental here of the teaching of God's power in your life is, "Understand how desperately you need him." This applies to everybody. Jesus, throughout the course of his ministry, will take a poor broken sinner, somebody who is on the outcast of margins of society, perhaps they're spiritually depraved, perhaps they're physically ill, sick, deformed, whatever the case may be, and then he'll take a Pharisee, one of the most religious people in the entire society, and he'll compare them and say, "Which one of these is more prepared to receive the kingdom of God?" It is the individual who is broken and knows they're broken because they've

been told they're broken their entire lives, that they're worthless spiritually, that they're worthless physically. And when that individual who has been cast out by their own culture realizes, "I have nothing," God comes along and says, "That... you have everything. You have everything. For I did not come to heal." The healthy do not need a physician, the sick do. And he's constantly talking about those who are behaving in a very prideful, very religious, very spiritualized way, not realizing that they are still so far from their savior and they're clueless about it because they're so prideful about it. And we can look back and we go, "Well, those Pharisees, and they're acting like a Pharisee." But the same applies to the church today, to anybody who thinks, Christian, non-Christian alike, that the job is complete. You are not living in your perfect spiritual form, and you are not living in your perfect glorified body. You are living in this in-between time when you are a human being that is possessed by the very sphere of God. And as I wrote about this week, when you look at what we are taught, you have choices to make every single day of your life with everything that you do. And is it honoring God? Is it honoring His creation? Jesus begins the teaching, even of the Beatitudes, with God knows those who are in the best condition to receive His power and His blessing are those who know that they are spiritually depraved, who know they have no shot at being in a relationship with the Holy God if He does not make it so. So whether you're Christian today or non-Christian today, the only way that you can say that maybe you're ahead of the boat or ahead of the game as a Christian today, as opposed to those who are not a Christian today, is that you know this reality to be true. And the non-Christian has yet to discover it. That's the only difference. You know this reality to be true. And that any time I can make a very immoral decision to do something that is morally, ethically, spiritually wrong, but I don't because I don't want to do that. Why do I not want to do that? Because I've submitted my life to Christ. And to spit in His face now. The fundamental aspects of Christians and non-Christians alike are that we understand our desperate need of a Savior. And one of the things that we should convey, and I said we are biblically literate in this church and I'm very, very proud of that. I'm allowed to be proud. I'm very proud of the way that we read and we delve into Scripture and we know these things and we keep on digging. Is we don't approach conversations with non-Christians or even Christians within the church with all of this amazing head knowledge that we have. And let me tell you about the theological construct that leads to the authentic history of humankind. That's not helping anybody. Repent. Let me tell you how much you are in need of a Savior and how glorious and amazing it is when He enters your life and you begin to realize who you actually are and who you actually were created to be. Let me tell you. Can you break through your pride and say, "Yes, Lord. I am a sinner. I am broken. I am cast out of the kingdom of God right now, but I don't want to be Lord. I repent of my sin. I turn to You." That sets up everything else. That sets up everything else. I remember, and I just preached the Beatitudes at your daughter's wedding, and we talked about the same sorts of concepts, if you will, and that's what I mean about it being so nuanced and so layered. Couples take a look at the Beatitudes in your own life. Take a look at the Beatitudes in your own relationship. They relate to your relationship with Christ. They relate to your relationship with each other. They relate to your relationship as a Christian with the world. They relate to what Christ is trying to teach the world, church and non-church alike. There's a lot here, but the fundamental thing is understanding that none of it is possible. None of it is even understandable. I'm making up all kinds of words today. You can have a whole new lexicon of words after I've done with you today. Understandable without the power of God. That's what he tries to get through from the very first words of his ministry, and that's where we're lacking today as one Christian compares themselves to another Christian, and one church compares itself to another church, and so on and so forth. And we are forgetting that every day we wake up, our first words should be, "Thank you, Lord. I am Yours. Do with me what You will today." And our first words, whenever we have that immoral or angry or nasty thought, or we say that nasty thing or we do that thing, our first words should be, "Lord, I'm sorry. I repent of that behavior. Even as Your child, please. I don't want to be that person anymore." It does not mean that you won't lead you into those situations. Remember the old comment about praying for patience, right? And then your washer breaks down, and then your car breaks down, and then your electricity goes out, and

you're like, "Lord, what's going on?" And he's like, "I'm afraid for patience." Right? So, every opportunity in your life is an opportunity to submit yourself to the Lord. So, let's move on. Now, we have the foundation. I won't dwell on each one of these, but I do want to show you inside the church, outside of the church, how they are going to relate to these fundamental statements of Jesus Christ. And I hope that you walk away today. I hope that the rest of this preaching and teaching is wonderful, but I hope that you walk away today with the understanding that way before Jesus, the understanding that David had when he said, "The Lord hears His people when they call for help. He rescues them from all their troubles. The Lord is close to the brokenhearted. He rescues those whose spirits are crushed." That's the same message. That's the same message that God was teaching David. He rescues them from their troubles. He's close to the brokenhearted. He rescues those whose spirits are crushed. That's Jesus speaking. And this is Jesus speaking. If we may use the word "rescues." God rescues those who are poor in spirit and realize their need for Him. Same word, same Bible, same message. Same basic understanding when you look in the mirror and realize your need for a Savior. God considers the human being to be in the best position to receive His blessing when they mourn for they will be comforted by God. God considers those blessed who are humble for they will inherit the 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. Every one of these statements is the gift, a gift, part of the gift that the Christian receives in this life as we get a taste and a glimpse of these things in this life. Goodness, kindness, mercy, justice, the only real useful versions of any of those things in our churches or any of our societal institutions are those versions of those things that are empowered by God. Human beings take those things and woo hoo, look what's happening. The only shot and this is why we sing God bless America. We look back on the foundations of America and God knew what He was doing in creating a nation under these principles with first the individual liberty to understand how desperately you are in need of the merciful justice of God. The humility that it takes to walk in that. Imagine on this Veterans Day the power of the soldier, the gear kitted up as they say, ready to enter battle the power that that one person possesses, yet the humility that they must have in their hearts to submit their lives to Christ and follow His will. That's the difference. You are considered blessed when your heart is pure for you will see God. You are considered blessed when you work for peace for they will be called the children of God. Verse number 8, see verse number 3. Verse number 7, see verse number 3. Verse number 9, see verse number 3. None of this is a taste, taste and seeeth that the Lord is good. A taste of this is not possible in this life without first looking in the mirror and understanding how desperately you mean your Savior. And again, I tell you, and those so many people can testify with me today what a power it is. Oh what a Savior He is. Oh what a difference in your life. Oh what an amazing it is when your eyes are open and right and wrong actually look like right and wrong and good and evil you can recognize. And the power of your prayers affect other people's lives and affect your life as well and your humility whether you are a surgeon or an electrician or a soldier your humility allows you to walk with your Savior daily. Understanding the fundamental need that we as a church have to stay submitted to Christ and His will, collectively looking in the mirror and understanding that no, no, no. This is not a human construct. We work to have a tribe basement and we work to have a legal constitution and we work to have all of those things all in the name of Christ by the power of Christ. We remind as intentional leaders, we remind ourselves of that all the time. Not us, Him. Where do we want to go? Well, let's ask Him. And we want to find Him in everything from the Restoration to the Constitution to our testimonies in church every Sunday morning. God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right for the kingdom of heaven is theirs. God blesses you when people mock you persecute you, lie about you, say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers. Be happy about it. Be very glad for a great reward awaits you in heaven and remember the ancient prophets were persecuted in the same way Satan has no interest in a dead soul. He's already got that one. When you feel that enemy coming against you, when you hear the lies, when you hear your friends calling you the names, when you have to walk away from toxic situations because enemy is coming against you when the darkness seems to drive you into a corner and you

don't think that you have anything left, guess what? You don't. He does. You will never be empty because God's Holy Spirit dwells within you. Be glad. Be glad when the crazy satanic world comes against you because Satan has no interest in a dead person. Be glad as a church when the world comes against us because Satan has no interest in a dead church. He's already got that one. But a church that is on its knees seeking his will whether it's large or small or in a city or on a farm it doesn't matter. Christ will use it for his purposes where they are, however he can and however they are willing. So be glad Scripture says rejoice because you know you're doing something right when hell is coming down on you. That's when you're doing it right. And you can say, I hate this you can say this is not what I signed up for. You can say, okay, you can say all of those things but I'm telling you right now and I've never in 13 years told anybody any different way. That is exactly what you sign up for. There's good and there is evil. You're submitting yourself to the only good that is in the universe the Lord Jesus Christ our Tri-New God, creator, redeemer and sustainer. And God will consider you to be in the best position to receive the blessing of his Spirit when you first humble yourself and acknowledge that you are in desperate need of exactly that. Amen? Amen.