

# How Fortunate are the Unfortunate

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Date: 03 February 2019

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, welcome everybody. My name is Kevin, if you don't know, and we're going to have a time of praying now. We pray every week for our city and our church, and this morning we're going to do something a little bit differently.

I just came back last night from Singapore. I was there with Jeremy and Julie. There should be a photo. And a bunch of other pastors and church leaders from around Asia. There were some of us from people from Singapore, from Tokyo, from Nagoya in Japan, from Thailand, from Australia. And we're getting together for three days to talk about what would it look like for churches in Asia to strengthen each other, encourage each other, and work together. And so there's a whole bunch of us that were in Singapore this week.

And so what I want us to do is every Sunday when we have our pastoral prayer, we normally pray for one other church in Hong Kong. Whether it's community church, or Ireland, or DBICC, or whatever it is.

This morning I want us to pray for this guy on the second from the back. Okay, here's another photo. His name is Ryuta, and there's his wife Paddy and their two daughters. That's an old photo. Their daughters have grown up. And Ryuta Kumira is from Tokyo, and they planted Double O Cross Church.

[ 1 : 13 ] That's how you spell the church, Double O Cross. And so we're going to pray for them this morning. And so as we pray, why don't you join me as we pray for Ryuta, their church they planted five years ago.

And they're doing a great job in Tokyo City. And so just to let you know why we're going to be praying for them. Okay, we're going to pray for our friends in Tokyo. So let's pray as a church together. Now remember, we're all praying together.

This isn't just me. This is us praying. And so will you join me as we pray together? Heavenly Father, this morning as a church family, we've gathered to meet with you, the living God, to pour out our praises and our worship to you, to declare that you are the one true God, you are heaven and earth's true king.

And God, even though your kingdom has come in a small way on earth, we've come to sing about and to proclaim and to declare that we believe you are the true king, that your kingdom will come in finality one day.

And we long for that day, God. We've come to say that you are God and you alone are good. You alone are worthy of our worship and our devotion. So often, Father, we get seduced by ideas and thoughts and the worldview of our city and our culture.

[ 2 : 24 ] Father, this morning, God, won't you rightly align our hearts to truth? Won't you shape our hearts with the gospel, Lord? Won't you remind us of who you are and your ways, Lord God?

God, let your kingdom come. Let your will be done in our hearts and in Hong Kong, we pray, God. Father, thank you for this financial worship and the tide that has been given. We really do thank you, Father, for the resources you've given each one of us.

We acknowledge that all of our resources come from you. And, God, we want to steward them for your glory. And so help us as a church and individually to do so.

Give us this day our daily bread, we pray, God. Father, this morning, we want to pray for Ryuta and Paddy and all at Double O Cross Church in Tokyo. Thank you, Father, for their love for the gospel, their passion to see many Japanese men and women in Tokyo coming to experience the life and the power and the freedom found in Jesus.

Father, thank you that Double O Cross is such a healthy church, such a wonderful church, which loves your word and loves Jesus and loves the gospel and loves the city of Tokyo.

[ 3 : 32 ] Father, we pray that they will continue to make disciples and disciple them in the gospel. Fathers, they look for a venue. Won't you provide a great venue for them?

They look to start an afternoon congregation. Won't you give them leaders? Father, we pray. God, won't you bless their labors? Anoint them. Won't you give them fruit? Father, we stand with our brothers and sisters across the waters and say, God, won't you bless that church?

We pray, God. Lead them as to where to go and when to start. And won't you give them leaders for this new meeting? We pray, God. Fathers of church, we ask you to send us a youth pastor at Watermark as we look for someone to lead and disciple our teenagers.

God, we bring this before you and we ask you for this, Lord. We really do long, God, that our youth and our teenagers will be disciplined in the gospel and will come to know you, Lord, and love you and be rock solid in the midst of a changing culture and a culture that's telling them to be anything and do anything.

God, that they will know the truth and they'll build their lives upon you. And so we ask you, God, won't you provide for us as a church in this regard? God, we pray all these things in your wonderful name.

[ 4 : 44 ] Amen. Amen. Let's listen to the reading of God's word as Arlene is going to come and read for us. The scripture reading comes from Matthew chapters 4 and 5.

Please follow along in your bulletins or on the screen. And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people.

So his fame spread throughout all Syria. And they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, those having seizures and paralytics. And he held them. And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis and from Jerusalem and Judea and from beyond the Jordan.

Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain. And when he sat down, his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

[ 6 : 05 ] Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven. For so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. This is the word of God.

Great. Thank you, Arlene. Okay. Well, if you are new to Watermark this morning, we are working our way through the book of Matthew, Matthew's Gospel.

[ 7 : 15 ] And Matthew's Gospel is all about Jesus, the fact that he is the king, and he's come to bring a new kingdom. But his kingdom is upside down. It's often very different to the way that we would expect and the kingdoms of this world.

And we're going to see this preeminently as we go through the Sermon on the Mount, which is where we find ourselves today. Now, before this, Chris preached last week and showed how Jesus, after his time of preparation in the wilderness, he launches his ministry with an announcement. And this is his announcement. Turn from your sin and turn to God, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. And what does that mean? Why is the kingdom of heaven at hand?

Well, it's at hand because the king has arrived, because King Jesus has come. And so Jesus then goes and immediately he calls some people to follow him, to give up their previous way of life and to follow him in whatever he says and where he calls him to.

And so right at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, we hear this call. It's the call of the gospel to turn from our sin and to follow Jesus. And then after that, we get to this most famous and wonderful passage of Scripture in the New Testament, the Sermon on the Mount.

[ 8 : 33 ] Now, in order to understand the Sermon on the Mount, let's just zoom back a little bit and understand the context of what's going on here. And so just before, look at chapter four with me at

verse 23.

It should be in your bulletins. Look at the last paragraph in your Bible before the Sermon on the Mount. And verse 23 says this. It says, He, that's Jesus, went throughout all Galilee and doing three things, or two things.

Teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every affliction amongst the people. Okay, you see that? Jesus went throughout doing these things.

Preaching, teaching, and healing people of their diseases. When we jump a few chapters later in Matthew chapter nine and verse 35, there's almost the exact same description, almost word for word.

Look at what it says. Jesus went throughout all the cities and the villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and affliction.

[ 9 : 37 ] You see that? So here in these, chapter four, we've got this description of Jesus' ministry. In chapter nine, we've got this description. And there's two kind of main things that he did. He was preaching and teaching, proclaiming, explaining what does the kingdom of God look like, and doing miraculous works of power, demonstrating what does it look like when the kingdom of God breaks into your life.

It changes you. It comes with power. And in between chapter four and chapter nine, there are two bodies of teaching, or two sections. One is Matthew chapter five to seven, the Sermon on the Mount, which is a summary of everything that he taught and preached and proclaimed.

And chapters eight and nine, there's about eight or nine different stories of miraculous healings. Jesus casting out demons, healing people from sickness, raising the dead. And do you see what Matthew's doing here?

He's showing us these two bookends. Jesus' ministry consisted of preaching and teaching the kingdom, and miraculous signs and wonders. And in between these two bookends, he shows us what did that look like.

What did it look like? It looked like the Sermon on the Mount, and it looked like miraculous, powerful acts of demonstration of his kingdom. And so what is the Sermon on the Mount?

[ 10 : 49 ] Well, Jesus didn't just stand up on a mountainside and say, just listen to me, and for 45 minutes, you know, Matthew copied verbatim, word for word, what Jesus said. The Sermon on the Mount, in many ways, is a summary teaching of what Jesus said as he went throughout the villages and the cities of Galilee, proclaiming and teaching and preaching, the kingdom of God has come, and this is what life in the kingdom looks like.

Okay? And so in many ways, the Sermon on the Mount isn't just this phenomenal moral teaching about turning the other cheek or taking the log out of your eye or how to pray.

It's not just this one-hit wonder where Jesus, you know, the stars aligned, the lights were on him, and he just preached the best sermon of his life. In many ways, it's a collection of the things that Jesus taught as he went throughout the villages and the towns, teaching what life as he purposed it, life in the kingdom looks like.

But there's something else about the Sermon on the Mount. It's also more than that. In many ways, the Sermon on the Mount is an answer to one of humanity's greatest and deepest and oldest questions.

The question that human beings have asked for centuries is, how can I experience true human flourishing? What is happiness? What does it mean to live the blessed life?

[ 12 : 07 ] What is a good life anyway? How do I experience human flourishing and how do I keep it? How do I obtain it? So it's not just a once-off experience, but how do I experience a human flourishing ongoingly?

And in many ways, the Sermon on the Mount is an answer to that question. Now, let's think about this question for a bit. What is happiness? What is blessedness? What does the flourishing life look like?

I don't know what you would say, but in our culture, we've got many answers to that on a superficial level. For some of us, maybe a flourishing life means to be a person of great success, to achieve success in our chosen field or our career, to be at the top of our game, to be at the top of the class, top of the list, to achieve our goals in our vocations.

Maybe for some of us, a flourishing, successful life is to be well admired and well respected, to get to the end of our days and our family and our children and our grandchildren look up to us as somebody respectable, somebody who's lived a good life.

Maybe for some of us, it means no relational strife. Everybody likes you. Everybody gets on well with you. Everybody admires you and likes you and there's no relational tension.

[13:21] You get on with everybody around you. Maybe it means having your dreams fulfilled or maybe it just means living a contented and a comfortable life. It is no heartache and no difficulties.

Whatever shape or form it is, while there's many superficial forms, all of us long for this flourishing, this blessedness, this happy life, which in many ways involves having the difficulties and the obstacles to happiness removed from our lives and going through life without encountering too many difficulties.

It's what makes me happy and what advances my life. I get to do that. And this isn't just a modern thing. This is what we've believed throughout the ages. There's interesting, there's a Jewish rabbi and teacher by the name of Basira.

I think that's how you say it. Jesus Basira. And he lived 150 years before Jesus. He was one of the most respected and well-loved Jewish rabbis of his time. And Sarah came up with a list of blessings of what a flourishing life looks like.

This is one of his most famous poems. Look at what he says here. He says, There are nine that I would call blessed, a tenth that my tongue would proclaim. Blessed is the man who can rejoice with his children.

[14:39] Blessed is the man who lives to see the downfall of his foes. Blessed is the man who does not sin with his tongue. Blessed is the one who does not serve an inferior. Blessed is the man who finds a friend.

Blessed is the one who speaks to attentive listeners. Greatest is the one who finds wisdom. And none is superior to the one who fears the Lord. Now, when we read that, part of that feels like, yeah, that sounds like my life.

That's what I would like, right? Blessed is the man who can rejoice with his children. Blessed is the man that finds a friend. That sounds like the things that our culture would esteem. There's some things in here that even sound a little bit like Jesus, right?

Stuff like the man who does not sin with his tongue, or the one who finds wisdom or fears the Lord. Yeah, there's some good things in there. But then there's also a couple of lines that are a little bit interesting, right?

Things like the man who does not serve an inferior, or the man who lives to see the downfall of his enemies. Now, I think like Oscar was saying earlier, these are the kind of things that we shouldn't really say, right?

[15:46] It's not very politically correct to say, I hope at the end of my life to have seen the downfall of my enemies. I really got them under my foot, right? But just like the musician who had a good front and came to church and performed in front of many, and yet would go back to his hotel room at night, and the demons would come out.

If we're honest, there's a little bit of that inside each one of us. Each one of us, at times, thinks, yeah, I want to get to the top of the class. And maybe I might need to stamp on a couple of others along the way.

Sometimes we might think, this sounds just like the young people these days. So individualistic. ICF students. I mean, I can't believe how self-centered and individualistic they are, right?

Young people these days. They really don't make them like they're used to in the good old days, right? But here, but hang on. Here's a guy from 2,000 years ago. One of the most respected leaders in a society, in a culture.

And what's he saying? He's saying, blessed is one who doesn't serve an inferior. Blessed is one that can see the downfall of his enemies. Why? Because at a deepest heart level, that's exactly what we think.

[17:02] How do I experience human flourishing? Well, the answer that our culture says is, hey, find some friends. Rejoice with your children. Have a big growing family. Try not to sin too much.

And make sure that you get on top. Make sure that at the end of the day, you're on top of your enemies. You're on top of the class. You succeed in your career. Ray Ortlund is a pastor in Nashville, Tennessee.

And he wrote an amazing article about the Beatitudes. And he says that there's a modern version as well. He calls them the un-Beatitudes. Look at what he says. He says, This is the Beatitudes of our day and age.

Congratulations to the entitled. They will grab what they want. Congratulations to the carefree. They will be comfortable. Congratulations to the pushy.

They will win in the end. Congratulations to the greedy. They will climb to the top. Congratulations to the vengeful. For they will be feared. Congratulations to those who don't get caught.

[18:02] They will look good. Congratulations to the argumentative. They will get the last word. Congratulations to the popular. For this world lies at their feet.

Ray Ortlund asks this penetrating question at the end. He says, Have you ever met one person who believed and lived by the world's un-Beatitudes and came to the end of their life a satisfied, vibrant, radiant, wise human being?

Have you met even one? And friends, that leads to the problem of this worldview. It's a worldview. It's a system of beliefs which cannot deliver on its promises.

It will promise you the world. It will promise you satisfaction. But it cannot deliver that. It will promise you both power and purpose. And yet it cannot deliver. It will promise you peace and contentment. And yet you'll end up anxious and worried all the time. You might remember that famous commencement speech by David Foster Wallace a few years ago in the U.S. He said this.

[19:06] He says, If you worship beauty and good looks, you'll spend your whole life worrying that you're ugly and unattractive. If you think that human flourishing and peace are found in power and control, you'll always feel insecure in your positions of authority.

If you strive for money and possessions, if you think that's where human flourishing is found, you'll never feel like you have enough and always be anxious for more. Friends, have we found one person who believed and lived by the world's unbeatitudes and got to the end of their life a satisfied, radiant, wise human being?

Have you found even one? Jesus answers this question. How can we find human flourishing? How can I be a salient, satisfied, radiant, wise person?

And Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount gives a very simple and yet a very profound answer. And his answer is this. His answer is that it's not found in acquiring possessions.

A flourishing life is not found in accumulating many things. It's not found in positions of authority or influence. It's not even found in accessing opportunities and education.

[20:22] Jesus answers that true human flourishing, true human happiness, the blessed life is really found in knowing the God who made you through Jesus Christ who died on the cross to secure that knowledge, that relationship, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

And that this flourishing is only going to be experienced through faithful, heart deep, whole person following of Jesus as Christ the King in a community of his followers.

In other words, Jesus says, the way we get to experience true human flourishing is as we come to Christ the King, we get our hearts shaped by the gospel and then we live out our lives in the kingdom of God with the community of his followers.

And the Sermon on the Mount is his invitation to come and experience that. It's his invitation with a promise. It's an unusual promise, but it's his invitation to come and experience life in the kingdom as we follow Jesus the King with all of our lives.

But it starts off, Jesus tells us, with the most provocative description of the upside down nature of the kingdom. And so let's see what Jesus says. And so look at what he says here in Matthew chapter 5.

[21:31] He says this, Blessed are the poor in spirit. Now, when Jesus used the word blessed, he's not speaking a blessing. He's kind of saying, How blessed!

How fortunate! It's almost like he's saying, How lucky are those that are poor in spirit. How lucky, how fortunate are those that are humble and unassuming.

To be poor means you don't have much resources, right? Jesus is saying, How fortunate are those that don't have much spiritual capital? Right? When they come to the table, they aren't middle class with spiritual capital.

They don't have resources. They come empty-handed to God and say, Father, I've got nothing. Oh, how fortunate are those that are poor in spirit. For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Oh, how fortunate are those who mourn. Those who are disturbed or even broken by the state of their own hearts and the state of the world. How fortunate are those who mourn. For they will be comforted.

[ 22 : 31 ] Jesus says, How blessed! How fortunate are the meek. Those that have found a way or chosen to be gentle in their dealings with people around them.

They're not gentle by personality. They might even be quite strong with personality. But they've chosen a way of gentleness in their dealings with those around them. They're not pushy or self-asserting.

How fortunate are the meek, says Jesus. For they will inherit the earth. Oh, how blessed! How fortunate are those that hunger for righteousness. There's something in their hearts that is desperate for the world to be the way that Jesus designed it and made it.

And they long for things to be right again. They look at the world around them and they look at their own hearts and they say, There's something not right. And then they hunger, they long for the world to be according to the way that God designed it.

They will be satisfied, says Jesus. Oh, how blessed! How lucky! How fortunate are the merciful! Those that don't hold on to grudges. They're not vengeful, but they dispense mercy and grace to those that hurt them.

[ 23 : 37 ] They will receive mercy, says Jesus. Jesus says, How fortunate are the pure in heart! Those that are single-minded in their devotion to Jesus. They don't have a Sunday life and then the rest of their life is something else.

There's a single-mindedness. There's an integrity between their spiritual life and the rest of their life. How blessed is Jesus of those that are single-minded, pure in heart, for they will see God.

Oh, how fortunate are those that are peacemakers, those who love peace and don't like conflict and arguments. They deal with things properly so that there's no relational tension. For they will be called sons and daughters, children of God.

Fortunate are those who are persecuted for doing what's right, says Jesus. For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. And so what's Jesus saying in all of this? This list of beatitudes.

What's Jesus really saying? In many ways, he's saying, How fortunate are the unfortunate! Or how lucky are the unlucky! Right? How blessed are those that the world looks down upon as unfortunate and ill-fated.

[ 24 : 45 ] How lucky are those! Jesus is happy are those that exhibit the qualities that this world thinks is ridiculous and those that the world pities and carries in their heart the brokenness of this world.

Oh, how blessed and fortunate are they! In a sense, Jesus is almost saying this. He's almost saying, If you had a choice before you, am I going to get to the end of my life being well-esteemed, looked up to, well-regarded, and having conquered all the things that the world offers, or if I get to the end of my life being pitied, being thought of as somebody that didn't quite make it through life, not that successful, if you had to choose between two of these, think carefully because the answer's not as obvious as our world makes it out to be.

Jesus is almost saying, It might be better to get to the end of your life being pitied, poor, and powerless than having lots of possessions, power, and achieving all of the dreams that society tells you to achieve.

Provocative, right? Now, why does Jesus say that? Well, what's the reason behind this? Well, I want to give us three reasons why we should rather be people to be wise for us to say, God, I'd rather be poor in spirit, meek and mournful, and hungry for the things of God than satisfied, esteemed, and blessed in this world apart from you.

Three reasons why we should do this, okay? First thing, let's look at this. Because the king and the kingdom have come. When we look at the list of Beatitudes, Matthew has deliberately structured them to communicate what Jesus was communicating.

[ 26 : 30 ] So remember, Jesus didn't just list off this, rattle off this list of eight sayings and then kind of move on to the next section. Jesus, over a couple of days and months even, would have gone and he would have taught, hey, rather, blessed is this person, even though our world says this person is to be esteemed, rather choose this way.

And so Matthew summarized Jesus' teaching and he structured it so that we catch what Jesus is trying to communicate. And so how has Matthew structured it? Well, as we look at it, there's a

pattern here.

And so notice the pattern. The first Beatitude and the last Beatitude, in verse 3 and verse 10, have the identical promise. He says, blessed are the poor in spirit, verse 3, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

And then verse 10, he says, blessed are those that are persecuted, why? For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Do you see that? Okay. What's Matthew trying to tell us here? He's telling us that this list is not just a promise box of promises from Jesus that you can take out one at a time.

This is actually a summary description of what life in the kingdom looks like. Of those that have encountered Christ the king and live in the kingdom, this is what their life will look like. Let me give you an example, okay?

[ 27 : 46 ] Jesus is not saying that if you go through life and you encounter something difficult and you go through a time of mourning, well, don't worry, blessed are you because you go to the promise box and say, blessed are those that mourn for they will be comforted.

Or if you happen to go through life and somebody irritates you and riles you and you're tempted to get them back and you go to your promise box in the Bible and pull out and say, blessed are those that are merciful for they will be shown mercy.

And you remember, oh yes, I should be merciful. Okay, let me give you an example. In our family, sometimes my girls will come to me and say, dad, can we have a chocolate or a biscuit or a candy or something like that?

And I'll go and I'll bring out a box and say, sure, help yourself. Now, as I do that, I know what they're thinking. They're thinking, how many of these can I get away with? Right? And so what do I say? Before they even say anything, I first say, Sierra, just one. Okay, just one. Shiloh, just one. I don't want them to stuff their mouths. Right? Sometimes we can come to the Beatitudes and think that this is a box of chocolates of Jesus' promises.

[ 28 : 56 ] Right? Like we've got to choose. Should I inherit the earth or should I be called a son of God? Should I be, should I rather choose mercy or should I rather choose to be in the kingdom?

Right? But that's not what Jesus is saying at all. But by structuring it like this, Matthew is telling us this is a description of what life in the kingdom looks like.

Jesus is saying this. The way of the king is that, the way of the king is to mourn and be grieved by the brokenness of the world and what sin does in the world and in our own hearts.

And therefore, such is his people that they too will mourn for the brokenness of the world. But they'll be comforted because they'll know that Jesus came to dismantle sin. Jesus is saying the way of the king is to be meek, not pushing his agenda, not self-asserting, but to be humble and gracious.

And therefore, his followers are those who like him aren't pushing their agenda and trying to get to the top of the pile, but like Jesus are gentle and others serving, not self-seeking, not grasping or self-entitled.

[ 30 : 04 ] And they find themselves empty-handed, but yet full of the kingdom of God. Jesus says that the way of the king is to long for what is right and for justice in the world.

And as such, his followers will be those that because we've got his heart, we will be broken by the injustice and the unrighteousness in the world and we too will hunger and thirst for righteousness, for what is just and right in the world.

And because we know that Christ has come to turn around the world and to end all injustice and wickedness, we will be satisfied when Christ returns. Jesus is saying that this is the way of the kingdom.

But notice secondly, there's something else to notice. These two at the top and the bottom are the only two that are in present tense. All the others are in future tense. Blessed are those that are poor and spread for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

But then it goes on to say, those that mourn they shall be comforted. Those that are meek they shall, what does it say? Inherit the earth. Those that are hungry will be satisfied.

[ 31 : 07 ] So what's Matthew telling us here? He's telling us that the kingdom of God isn't just one day in the future like hold out and suffer in this world and I know it's terrible and I know that you've just got to suffer because one day when you get to heaven you'll experience the kingdom.

What's he saying? Blessed are those that are poor in spirit. Blessed are those that persecute for theirs is the kingdom of God. Today, this week, as you go to work this week and you're tempted to trample on somebody else to get in head of the pile, the kingdom of God has come to your life today

and as you say I will be meek, I will follow the way of my king, today the kingdom of God has come into your life and you get to experience what King Jesus is doing in your heart and your life. This afternoon as I go home and I feel completely empty and I feel like I've got zero spiritual credentials and I come to God and I say God, I've got no spiritual capital. I've got nothing to commend myself to you. I'm done. Today, not just in eternity, the kingdom of God comes to me. Theirs is the kingdom of heaven. You see, being a Christian is not just a matter of doing good things or observing Jesus teaching in the hope that one day we'll get to paradise or one day we'll get to experience Nirvana. No, that's something else. [ 32 : 23 ] That's religion. Jesus says, I've come to bring you the kingdom of God today. That right now as you go to work tomorrow and as you go and visit your family over Chinese New Year and as your kids are sick and as marriage is hard and as finances are tight, as you follow the king, you experience the kingdom of heaven.

Theirs is the kingdom of heaven today. Friends, the day you become a Christian, you may not understand a whole lot. You may not know your Bible at all. You may have a lot of questions. You may still have some doubts. But the day you say, Jesus, take my life. Jesus, I want to follow you. Jesus, I'm all in. That day you get to experience the kingdom of heaven breaking into your life and changing you forever.

That's the day you get to experience human flourishing. Irrespective of your circumstances, irrespective of what's going on in your life, the kingdom of heaven comes. Jesus is saying that human flourishing, what it means to be a human being is not found in happy circumstances, but it's found by participating in the kingdom of God by being in relationship with him through what Jesus did on the cross.

Does that make sense? Okay, that's the first thing because the king and the kingdom is here. The second reason, why does Jesus tell us if you had to choose the way of power, prestige, and honor or the way of mourning, meekness, and powerlessness, choose this way?

[ 33 : 58 ] Why does he tell us to do that? Well, the second reason is this, because every other kingdom is going to steal your joy. Steal your joy. Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, throws us a challenge and he asks us a question.

He says, where are you going to find your joy and what is going to be the source of your human flourishing? What's going to be the source of your flourishing? Where are you going to find your joy? As we read through the Gospels, one of the things we see again and again and again is that Jesus constantly is ignoring, sometimes even outright rejecting the rich and the powerful and the leaders of society and he's always welcoming into his midst those that have got no spiritual capital, those that aren't going to bring anything and contribute towards his kingdom, right?

Remember Matthew in Luke, I think it's around chapter 16 or so, some children come running to Jesus and the disciples are trying to push them away and say, Jesus doesn't have time for you and Jesus says, bring the children, bring the children to such belongs the kingdom of heaven and then, straight after the children come to him, in fact, while the children are with him, a very rich, very powerful, young, influential leader of society comes to Jesus and he says, Jesus, I want to join your party.

You can do good for me and I can do good for you. Let's talk. How do I get to heaven? How do I get to be part of what you're doing here? And Jesus says, he gives them a whole lot of obstacles and he rejects him and eventually, Jesus says, listen, if you really want to join my kingdom, do this. Sell all your possessions, get rid of all your wealth, give it to the poor and then come and follow me just as you are and this wealthy, influential, powerful man walks away saddened.

[ 35 : 56 ] Why does Jesus welcome the children that are going to contribute nothing to his campaign and yet rejects this influential, powerful person? Why is Jesus constantly shunning those that have got influence and welcoming the poor and the marginalized?

Friends, the reason why he does it is that to me sorry, I don't know what I'm doing. Okay, let's just try that.

I think this will be right. Why is Jesus doing this? Why is he constantly inverting and doing the opposite of what we'd expect? The reason why he constantly comes into conflict with the establishment is not because having money is morally wrong, not because being influential is wrong, not because having power is wrong, but it's because it has the ability to blind us to what truly gives life and where true joy lies.

The reason Jesus constantly is warning us against finding a joy in the things of the world is because while they promise the world, they actually steal our joy. Remember the unbeatitudes?

Congratulations to the entitled. They grab what they want. Congratulations to the pushy. They will win in the end. Congratulations to those who don't get caught. They will look good.

[ 37 : 14 ] Ray Orton asks this question. He says, well he actually says this, he says, either way we must live by faith. Both the promises of Jesus and the promise of this world promise a successful and flourishing life.

Promise a good life. But you have to choose which one. Which one are you going to follow? Either way we have to live by faith. And who are we going to trust? Whose invitation are we going to accept?

Friends, here is a king who offers us an invitation with a promise. He says, if you invest your life and your hopes and your dreams in me, if you hand over all of your life to me, it will cost you no doubt. You may not be esteemed, you may not be loved, you may not be adored. Following him will cost you everything. But if you trust him, if you let your life shaped by the gospel, you will discover a kind of human flourishing that nothing and no one can take away from you.

It's a kind of human flourishing which both deeply satisfies and will never get taken away from you. In Luke chapter 7, there's a similar account to the Beatitudes.

[ 38 : 24 ] Jesus says, blessed are these people and not these people. One of the old commentators in Luke chapter 7 writing on this, he's got this little line where he says, the writings on the wall, see Daniel chapter 5.

In the book of Daniel in chapter 5, what's happening is there's a king called Belshazzar and he's the king of Babylon. But the Assyrian army, I mean not the Assyrian, the Persian army is at the gates and they're about to come and overthrow the Babylonian empire.

And so, he knows it's kind of the end. And so, he throws this epic party. He decides he's going to go out in a blaze of glory. And so, he throws this massive party for thousands of people.

There's wine, there's beer, everything's happening. And he brings in all their wives, he brings in their concubines and it's just this massive hedonistic festival. And at this party, what happens is in the middle of the party, there's this handwriting that starts to write on the wall.

And essentially, what the handwriting is saying, it's in the strange language and no one can understand it. And eventually, Daniel comes in and he interprets it. And what he says is this, Belshazzar, your time is up.

[ 39 : 35 ] And essentially, the handwriting on the wall is saying, you've been king, you've been doing your own thing, you've been living for your own glory, self-esteem, you're at the top of the pile, but your time is up.

Friends, that's what Jesus is saying here with the Sermon on the Mount. He's saying, the handwriting's on the wall. The time is up. Yeah, sure, you can pursue a kingdom. You can get to the top of the pile, you can advance, you can get what you want, you can be well-loved, you will win in the end, you grab what you want, be entitled and self-seeking, sure, but the handwriting's on the wall.

That kingdom will steal your joy and it will never, ever satisfy. But if you want to experience true human flourishing, if you want to get to the end of your life and maybe your name won't be in lights, maybe nobody will remember you, you want to get to the end of your days a wise, radiant, satisfied person.

If you want to experience true human flourishing, there's a path to take and it's not the most popular path. It's not the path that's going to make you rich and famous. It may even be the path that society mocks you for and laughs at you and thinks you're ridiculous.

Choose that path. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those that mourn, for they will be comforted, both in this life and the next.

[ 40 : 55 ] Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth, both in this life and in the next.

Blessed are those that are hungry, they are desperate for the world to be made right again, in their hearts and in this lifetime too.

And while it seems like it's never coming, they will be satisfied. They will come a day where every longing of their heart will be satisfied. Friends, Jesus is blessed with the pure in heart, those that are single-minded and devoted to his cause and his purposes.

For they will see God. Friends, human flourishing is found in the fact that everything in this, if human flourishing is found and the fact that everything in this life fits perfectly together and you never grieve or mourn, it's just a matter of time before some tragedy strikes and your whole world comes to an end and your whole kingdom comes crashing down.

Jesus is those that have followed him because they have entrusted their life to him. They will discover a contentment, they will discover a blessedness that transcends even these moments of grief.

To be modest, to grieve, to be regarded as a disappointment and unfortunate is better than being prosperous, powerful, and well-esteemed in the eyes of the world.

[ 42 : 12 ] And the third and final reason is this, because of who this king is. Friends, this morning, Jesus offers us an invitation and it's an invitation with a promise that life and happiness are not found in having all your problems taken away.

They're found in a person. They're found in the one who is both king, the one who all the world will one day bow before, but the king who ended up on the cross. And the invitation is not to get your life sorted out so that you can come into his kingdom.

The invitation is not to do a bunch of religious things that Jesus will say, okay, you've done enough, come to my kingdom. The invitation is not to try and be extra religious or to do certain things that you can be qualified for this kingdom.

It's an invitation to come to the kingdom, the king, just as you are. And why should he accept you? Why should he receive you with all your brokenness, as Oscar said, with all your conflicting and darkness in your heart?

Why should he accept you? Because of who this king is. Because he's Jesus. This week, I was texting a friend of mine and I said, hey bud, why don't you come to church on Sunday?

[ 43 : 18 ] We'd love to see you. And his response was, he said, I want to come to church, but I want to have a good spiritual image before I come to church. I want to have my ducks in a row.

And I replied and I said, that's the very opposite. You should come to church as you are. But as I thought about it, I thought, I'm just like him. I love to come to church with a good spiritual image. I love to come here with all my ducks in a row, having had perfect quiet times in the week, coming having never missed a beat, having me and Jesus just tight like this, having come and feel so good about myself.

But friends, this king, Jesus, he says, come as you are. I won't leave you as you are, he says, I'll change you, I'll break into your life, I'll align your heart more like my life, but come as you are. Come as your brokenness. Come in your sin. Come and surrender. Come and follow the king. Friends, you may say, but I haven't done enough. I don't deserve his kindness.

[ 44 : 24 ] Of course you don't deserve his kindness. That's the whole point. Only when you understand, begin to understand that you don't deserve his kindness, can you begin to come to him. Come to him nevertheless. Come as you are.

Come and he will truly satisfy you. You may say, but I don't know enough. I don't know the Bible. Will he accept me as I am? Friends, come to the one who rejected the rich young ruler and welcome children.

Come to him as you are. You may not know the Bible, you may not understand all the spiritual laws, come just as you are and he will teach you. You may say, but I've sinned this week. Well, come and bring your sin to his cross.

Bring it and leave it at the foot of the cross. Don't focus on your sin. Bring it, but don't focus on it. Lift your eyes above the sin and look to Jesus, the one who nailed your sin to the cross, the one who went to the cross that your sin doesn't need to be held against you.

Come to him this morning. You may say, but it will cost you too much. I don't want to mourn. I don't want to be poor in spirit. I don't want to be merciful. Friends, of course it will cost you.

[ 45 : 23 ] It will cost you everything, but it will cost you nothing compared to what he's going to give you. It's like holding on to a \$10 note when he's offering you a million dollars and saying, I don't want to let go of this.

Let go of it. It will cost you, but it's nothing compared to what he's going to give you as he gives you the kingdom of heaven. Friends, you may say, I don't feel worthy. Friends, come to Jesus, the one who welcomes sinners, the one who welcomes the poor in spirit, the one who welcomes those that have no spiritual capital.

