

Happy or Blessed?

The word *beatitude* comes from the Latin, *beatus*- which simple means “blessed.” The Greek word in “the Beatitudes” of Matt.5:3-10 and Luke 6:20-26 for “blessed” is **makarios** (mak-ar-ee-os). It is difficult to adequately translate this word in a way that gives its full meaning.

Some versions translate it as “happy,” which seems to miss the mark of being spiritually “blessed.” Jesus is not describing and prescribing characteristics and traits that simply make us “happy”!

Human happiness is usually contingent upon circumstances. Most could not be “happy” under the conditions described in 1Tim.6:10 of merely “*having food and covering*,” let alone being “*with these ... content*.” *Content* with just *food and covering*? Not likely for most of us, and probably not “happy” either!

Happiness is an **emotional** state contingent upon pleasing circumstances. But in and with the Beatitudes, Jesus is talking about a **spiritual** state of *blessedness* based upon a right relationship with God, Psalm 33:12, “*Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people whom He has chosen for His own inheritance*.” A New Testament parallel can be found in 1Pet.2:9-10,11-19. In this passage, the Christian (vv.9-10) is called upon “*as aliens and strangers*” to: “*abstain from fleshly lusts*,” v.11; “*Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles*” even while “*they slander you as evildoers*,” v.12; “*Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human institution*,” vv.13-15; “*Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but as bondslaves for God*,” v.16; “*Honor all men; love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king*,” v.17; and as, “*Servants, (to) be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable*,” v.18. Now, does that sound like a recipe for “happiness” to you? Probably not, but it is the way to “*find favor*” with God, v.19. Thus, this “*favor*” of God is what being “blessed” is all about, rather than merely being “happy” based on pleasing physical circumstances.

So, these *beatitudes* of Matt.5 and Luke 6, though each certainly contains a specified *spiritual* benefit, are not given to make us “happy” in life, **but to make us fit subjects in and of the kingdom**. In fact, following the beatitudes does not guarantee “smooth sailing” in life- the same “*rains descended and floods came*” upon the wise (those who became *blessed*) and the foolish (those who didn’t), Matt.7:24-27. However, the “house” which remained standing or fell was the soul!

What should we learn from all of this, apart from noting and more fully comprehending the specified spiritual blessing attached to each beatitude? For our purposes here, just this: **When the characteristics, dispositions, and activities described and prescribed in “the Beatitudes” are incorporated in our inner and outer selves, we can thrive and prosper *spiritually*- even in peaceful contentment, though our present physical circumstances may be dire**. Please note Matt.5:10-12 in this connection. Though *persecuted* and *reviled*, the Christian who possesses and practices the Beatitudes, is told to “*Rejoice, and be glad*,” v.12a. Jesus is not suggesting that we should be “happy” about being *reviled* and *persecuted*, but rather that “*your reward in heaven is great*,” v.12b! Such is the state of *blessedness* that comes from eternal security regardless of physical circumstance(s).

So, are you seeking to be “happy” based on *physical* but temporal circumstances and pleasures? Or, are you seeking to be eternally “blessed” by God based on doing His will and thereby being pleasing to Him? As always, the choice is yours: *Happy or Blessed?* Choose wisely. (Philip C. Strong; Southport Church of Christ; 7202 Madison Ave, Indianapolis, IN 46227; online at southportcofc.org)