

**“Blessedness vs. Happiness ~
A Reflection”**

Matthew 5: 1-12

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Reflection, Sacraments Sunday/Annual Meeting

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The Declaration of Independence states: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

Certainly, we are all in that pursuit, seeking that happiness that would make us complete. We make decisions along the way with that objective and often we are disappointed.

But happiness and blessing are two different things.

In the church and in Christian life, we can be very confused about happiness. Will joining a church make me happy? Will following Jesus make me happy? What if I join a church and follow Jesus, but I’m still not happy?

In these opening verses of Matthew 5, Jesus teaches about “blessedness.” The “blessed” are not the “happy” in the sense used in consumer culture to describe pleasure.

Happiness and blessedness may overlap, but they are not identical. Indeed, as Jesus describes those who are “blessed,” it’s hard to see “happiness” written on any of these lives. So, what is Jesus talking about?

Jesus begins this teaching, not with promises of happiness, but with promises of blessedness; even, and perhaps most, in hard human experiences of mourning, meekness, peacemaking, persecution, and poverty of spirit. Jesus’ form of “blessedness” only makes sense in light of the kingdom of God. Jesus’ teaching

here begins and ends with the kingdom of God (verses 3 and 10). Jesus had already preached that “the kingdom of heaven has come near” (4:17). The kingdom sets a new frame of reference for “blessedness.”

So, as we participate in our annual meeting today, let us go recognizing our blessedness. We may not always be happy, but we are certainly blessed -- not because we deserve it. Not because we are so special. But because it is simply a gift from God.

May the God of blessing, help us acknowledge our blessedness as we walk this journey together. Amen.