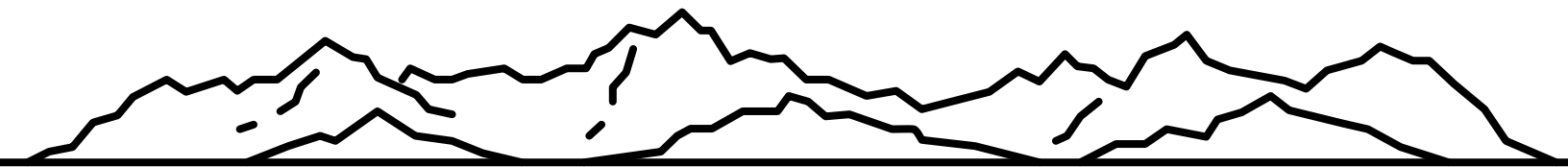


our TUESDAY

A WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY FOR YOU, FOR HER, FOR US.

JUNE 2017

the beatitudes



introduction

Hey you!

You made it to summer- we all made it to summer! I know I am thankful for lazier evenings, the sunshine and hopefully a nap or two. Summer brings about a new sort of rhythm for our lives; especially if you are school-calendar focused. It also leaves more time for reading. I'd like to consider myself an avid reader although I can easily get distracted by a Netflix marathon with the best of them. (British house shows, anyone?) Lately, one of the books on my nightstand is Louie Giglio's new book entitled 'Goliath Must Fall'. I recommend it along with the sermon series under the same name from Passion City Church.

Here's the thing about books and messages like this- I honestly don't know if they are relevant to everyone but they have hit me right where I am to the point of tears every single time. A couple of weeks ago, during one of the sermons I was literally ugly crying. Shoulders shaking, black mascara rolling down my cheeks and there was nothing I could have done to stop it even if I'd wanted to. I sorta did want to stop the ugly cry part but not the part where the Lord was speaking to me about my all-encompassing fear. The poor kid next to me kept scooting over as if my tears were contagious.

The past few weeks have been tough for me. Maybe for you, too? Our family has some big things on the horizon, Goliaths if you will. And those things are taunting me day in and day out just like Goliath did to the valley of soldiers. Similar to the story of David in the Old Testament, the Beatitudes make me want to tilt my head to the side and ask the Lord to repeat what he just said and make it a little slower this time. Surely I didn't understand him when he said 'Blessed are the meek' or 'Blessed are the mourners', right? That doesn't feel very comforting to me. I don't want to be meek by the world's definition....I want to be strong, wise and a boss. It's so bad that my pride even sneaks up when I'm trying to mourn- who wants to be told how to mourn!?! Goodness, I'm a piece of work.

Here's my point before I ramble on, the word Beatitude actually means 'supreme blessedness'. So if you read through Matthew 5:1-12 and it makes your skin bristle with indignation then you're not alone. Use that emotion to guide you to study and continue reading for the sake of finding out why it offends you. Let's realign our

hearts and our minds to be like Christ understanding that his methods might seem backward but they are eternity focused. Not just Monday focused. Or situationally focused. There is purpose for everything He allows, sister, whether we understand it or not.

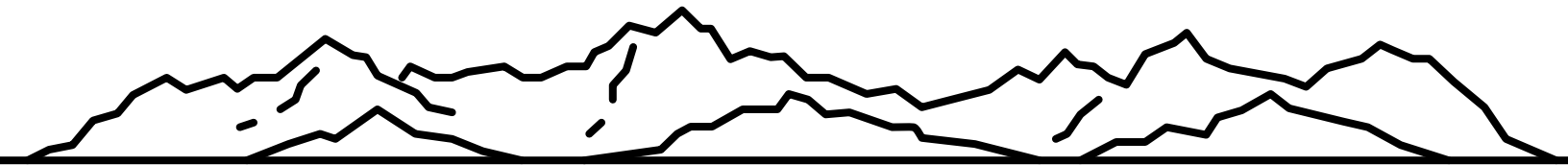
I'm praying with you as we study this beautiful passage in the Sermon on the Mount. I believe that Jesus lead with the Beatitudes for a reason. He was setting the stage and affirming that he hears our concerns yet there will be a resolution to them. If not now, then in eternity. Let's keep our eyes focused on Jesus even when our vision gets blurry from all that mascara. He is our prize and our joy.

I'm in it with you,

LB

NO. 1

poor in spirit



| POOR IN SPIRIT |

Well, good morning! Or happy evening! Or happy 10 minutes in the middle of nap time or lunch at your desk! Whatever time of day it is, I'm so glad that you've chosen to open God's word and sit with him, even if it's just for a few moments. There's a solace in our time with the Father. A salve for an open wound. It's supernatural and can be exactly what we need when we need it. Or it can feel like exactly what we need even if we don't want to need it. Can I get an Amen?

Whatever you're bringing to these pages today, I ask this of you: Bring your whole self. Not just the pretty parts, but the other stuff, too. Bring it all with you because, in the midst of all the day-to-day and the emotions of this hard life, the true you is in there. And God meets the true you. The humble you. The honest you. The need to be loved even when you act unlovable, you. This is the God that we serve. This is the God we will learn about over the next 8 lessons in Matthew 5. A God that makes no mistakes and absolutely had a plan, from the beginning of time, to prepare a sacrifice to make a way for each and every one of us to have a relationship with Him.

This preparation of sacrifice is what we will focus on. The Beatitudes are a fundamental text in our Bibles that have been often discussed, yet rarely explained for how they relate to the rest of scripture and how they affect our everyday lives. They were tradition shattering then but now they feel so foreign to us that it's almost as if Jesus were talking in code. It can feel as though he was trying to give the go-around so that he would sound a certain way in ancient Galilee. Turns out he wasn't speaking in code or stirring the pot per se, he was simply talking about really grand concepts that are still, 2,000 years later, hard for us to wrap our minds around. And we live on this side of knowledge. And the interwebs. So imagine sitting on that mountain all those years ago listening to a charismatic Jewish carpenter talk about the coming kingdom of Christ. WEIRD.

Do any thoughts come to your mind when you think about the Beatitudes? Any preconceived notions?

First things, first. The section of text known as the Beatitudes is the beginning of what's called the Sermon on the Mount. It's the longest message that Jesus gave, in one sitting, in his entire ministry. It's a big deal. He covers the Lord's prayer, salt and light, adultery, divorce, fasting and treasures in heaven, just to name a few. No small task.

When chapter 5 begins, Jesus is recently coming out of the desert from being tempted by Satan himself- which he resisted. And He's been throughout the city of Galilee healing the sick.

Please take a minute to Read Matthew 4 so that you'll understand the setting and events previous to the start of the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 5:1-3 'Now when he saw the crowds, he went up to the mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him and he began to teach them, saying: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'

At the end of Chapter 4, Jesus is gaining crowd momentum. He is healing as he travels through the countryside and people are taking notice, stopping their day labor to literally follow him. On foot. Wherever he goes. In today's world, 'follow' means pushing a button on a phone screen; back then, not so much. Here's the thing to remember, too: Jesus was incredibly likable and an excellent communicator. People who didn't like him enjoyed listening to him. He drew crowds for a reason. Even the Pharisees and Sadducees couldn't help but listen to him. He was so revolutionary and attention grabbing that they couldn't help themselves.

So, as this crowd of people are following Jesus through the city, he realizes what's going on and he seizes the moment. He doesn't pass

over it and think that it's just a coincidence that people are following him. He knows, being fully God and fully man, that this crowd not only needs but also wants something from him. Goodness, don't we all have days like that, too?

Jesus notices the crowd, takes hold of the moment and climbs up to the mountainside and sits down to teach. He was confident enough in his message that he didn't even have to stand. But there was more to his method than confidence. Jesus taught as a Rabbi and sitting was an extremely Rabbinical act. They were lifestyle teachers, as their students practically lived with them during their years of lessons. Sitting was visually important but also figuratively important. It's as if he knew they'd be there awhile so he wanted to make everyone feel more comfortable. This simple act was against the culture, as well. Jesus was nothing if not counter-cultural- a lesson all of us would be wise to heed.

As Jesus starts this litany of blessings, or beatitudes, the crowd must have been wondering if he had a little too much wine the night before. His cadence was different than his normal conversational style while his point seemed to be muddled by this need to speak backward almost. The thing about the Beatitudes is that they follow a simple pattern: Jesus names a group of people normally thought to be unfortunate and pronounces them blessed. That's it. That's the entire formula. Through these 8 verses we will learn how the kingdom of God may seem upside down to us, yet Jesus was teaching a very important premise: what happens in this world is not the way it will be one day. My Father sees all that happens. The Sermon on the Mount was contextually a message aimed at educating all people - believers and non believers - that a new King is coming and things are going to look different.

Before we go any further together today, please read though Matthew 5:1-12 asking for fresh eyes to see a revelation from the Lord.

'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'
Matt. 5:3

Colin Smith says, 'According to Jesus, the greatest blessings aren't found where we normally look but in places we aren't inclined to explore.' I'd say that 'poor in spirit' is not a place I'm inclined to explore. You? In this verse, when referencing 'poor', Jesus isn't talking about your economic standing. It's not that he doesn't care, it's just not financial poverty he is most concerned with in that moment. He's more concerned with the condition of your spirit. He's painting a picture of someone who is humble in spirit. Someone who acknowledges their own helplessness and relies on God's omnipotence (all power). This person senses their spiritual need and finds it supplied in the Lord.

God sees those who are poor in spirit as the people who don't seek to self-fulfill. In the kingdom of heaven, self-sufficiency is of no virtue and self-exaltation is considered a vice. They understand that they cannot and will not be able to satisfy the longing inside their hearts. Only our Father can. The people who look to be fulfilled by God are the ones who will inherit the Kingdom of God. Believers. This verse isn't a salvation issue. In fact, none of the Beatitudes are terms for salvation- let's clarify that. They are simply conditions/resolutions for faithful believers and the coming kingdom of Christ at the end of time.

Read Isaiah 61:1 and write it here.

Matthew 5:3 is the fulfillment of Is. 61:1. Isn't that wild? The prophet Isaiah would write and speak that the Messiah would bring good news to the poor. And here Jesus, the prophesied Messiah is teaching about how the poor are blessed. Things aren't always the way they seem are they?

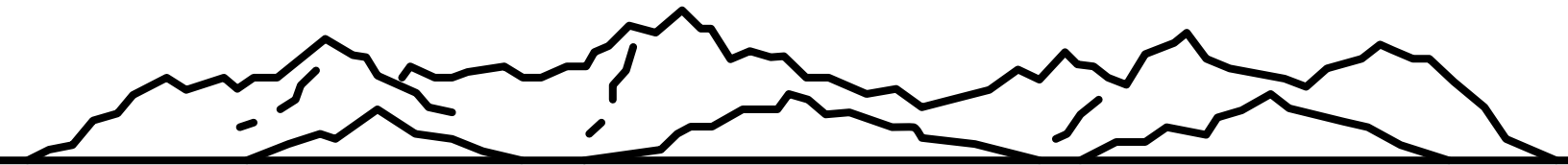
Here's the oddest thing about the Beatitudes: it translates to 'Supreme Blessedness'. If simply reading that the Lord calls those who are poor in spirit makes your skin bristle, I think you're in the right place. We've got a lot to learn about this upside down Kingdom of God. I'm excited to learn about it right next to you.

***My eyes are ever on the Lord, for only he will
release my feet from the snare.***

Psalm 25:15

NO. 2

mourners



| MOURNERS |

Before we start our time together today, please read though Matthew 5:1-12, asking for fresh eyes to see a revelation from the Lord. Each day I'm going to ask you to read the entire passage before starting. There is value in remembering that these verses, while singled out for study purposes, are parts of a whole.

'Blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted.' Matt. 5:4

Mourning sounds much more intense than grieving for some reason. Perhaps it's that our culture and time period is much more comfortable with having someone grieve because we equate it with sadness or possibly depression. Neither of those words are completely interchangeable but we see the root concept. Grieving feels quiet and somewhat passive and mourning feels verbal, outward and active. A common practice in mourning would be to wear black for a period of time. As recent as 100 years ago, women who had lost their spouse or child would wear all black for up to a year. It was a picture of outward solidarity reminding everyone- I'm not over it yet. I like that. It feels committed and external to me.

Sometimes I wish I could carry a sign around that would warn people about what I'm feeling, simply so I could avoid the small talk and polite smiles. As if putting my feelings out there on my own terms would allow me to feel more in control than if someone were to discover the emotions boiling under the surface because there was a momentary breach in the security system of my tear ducts. Clearly I have some control issues, but I hope that you can relate just a little? It's not easy dealing with hard things in this life and let me assure you, there are some hard things happening around us and even within the Our Tuesday group of women. Please know that we are with you. And more importantly, God is with you in those panicky moments of wondering if it's always going to feel this way.

Is there something that you are going through that could use mourning and/or grieving?

He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.
Revelation 21:4

This passage is oddly not about the changes that happen in this world that do grieve our hearts. Death, sickness, change of life stage, etc. This mourning that Jesus refers to is that which one experiences because of fellowship with the Lord. Essentially, those who mourn with the Lord because he is grieved over the happenings in the world. It is an active way of sharing the world's hurt and sin with Jesus. McDonald says, 'It includes not only sorrow for one's own sin, but also sorrow because of the world's appalling condition and its rejection of the Savior.'

How does that definition make you feel? Comforted or isolated?

Let's be clear, Jesus is not calling those blessed who sit around and talk negatively about everything happening in the world. Those people probably need to have a fire lit under them with the Good News of Jesus Christ. What we are talking about is one who cries and mourns when yet another bombing takes place. When another school shooting happens. We cry and do our best to leverage our money and influence for poverty, trafficking and Syria. These people- they are blessed because one day they will be comforted knowing the Lord was present all along and they were emotionally in-sync with their Father in heaven. Acknowledging what's happening in the world around us and doing what we can to help yet remaining focused on the one who heals and comforts through it all. Our eyes are on you, Jesus!

Please read Revelation 21:2-6 and write down any imagery that stands out to you.

I need you to go somewhere with me. This life is hard, as you already know. As believers we are promised communion with the Father for eternal life in heaven. However, the other side to that is hell. This is why the issue of the gospel is so urgent. It's our responsibility to carry this message of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth but we can start at the end of our street! Revelation tells us about the New Jerusalem- essentially the coming kingdom of God. We know

that believers will do all of their mourning in this life while those set apart from God in eternal life will mourn for eternity. Christ is our comfort in this life on earth and Christ is our comfort in heaven. However, this gospel message is vital to share with the world....apart from Christ there is no reprieve from mourning. There is no salve to place on wounds. In having the right perspective of heaven, hell, sin and forgiveness we are able to comfort those who mourn in Christ and apart from Christ.

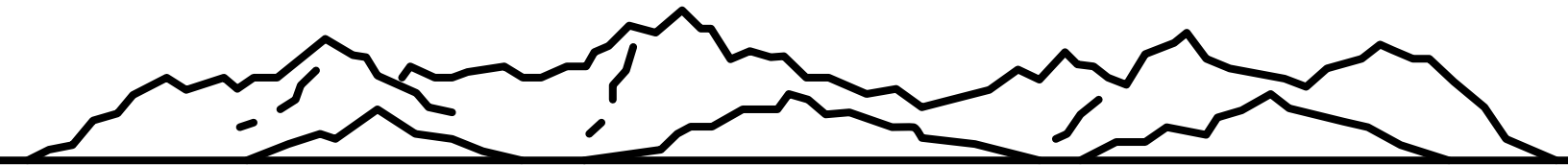
Can you give an example of how someone could mourn with Christ over the state of our world today? What would that look like in the physical?

The comfort comes when we are finally with Christ in heaven. That's the most simplistic answer I can offer. This world is tough to live in. He knows that. It's in the final coming of Christ and the resolution of all earthly things to the God that created everything that we will be comforted once and for all. That comfort and that silenced dissonance will be gone in the blink of an eye when Christ comes again to rescue his people from the enemy of this earth.

***May Christ come and reign,
With scepter and with gain.
His word tells of the kingdom to come
and all of his believers will be changed.***

NO. 3

meek



You know how to start today's lesson off....hint: flip back to Day 2!

Well, I don't know about you but when I woke up this morning, the first thought on my mind was that I wanted to be meek today- said no one probably ever.

Meek sounds so, well, weak. In fact, it sounds so antithetical to what the world tells us to be that even as a believer who loves the Lord and wants to serve him, it sort of makes my skin bristle. I bet no one marched in the Women's March with a sign that said Matthew 5:5: *'Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.'* To all the strong personalities and people that pledge allegiance to being a 'Boss', let's chat for a minute about what this verse is really communicating before you write me off into oblivion for suggesting that you be anything but strong and productive.

For the record, I think you should be both of those things. But we know that while Jesus was teaching this Sermon on the Mount, he spoke in a rhythmic 'condition vs. response' refrain. The 'condition' here is meekness and the response is 'inheritance of the earth.' The meek people Jesus is talking about had much to do about their heart alignment and less to do about their introverted/extroverted personality. 'Meek' means 'easy or mild'. We should be strong enough to be in control of the circumstances in our lives under the guidance of God while being mild tempered with those around us.

McDonald writes, 'By nature these people might be volatile, temperamental and gruff. But, by Christ's spirit on them, they become meek or gentle. Meekness implies acceptance of one's lowly position. The meek person is gentle and mild in his own cause, though he may be a lion in God's cause or in defending others'.

I personally adore the definition McDonald gives. Oh, that we might be gentle in our own causes (our selfish motives) but that we might rise up like lions to defend others and to fight for God's people! I

think it also paints a picture of someone who is well rounded in their life. There are things that we could all stand to just calm down about, yet there are real issues at hand that we need to get on our feet over. We need to stand up and shout from the rooftops for the purpose of waking people up! Knowing when to stand and when to sit are signs of spiritual maturity.

Would you consider Jesus to be meek? Explain your answer?

**Come to me,
all you who
are weary and
burdened, and
I will give you
rest.**

Matthew 11:28

Here's the beauty of this concept- it's all about understanding our place with the Father. This meekness comes when we know that God loves us, we understand why he calls us his children and not his subjects and we live in light of that truth.

Read and summarize Matthew 11:28-30 here:

This kingdom of God is so counterintuitive. We talk about the cost of discipleship and the need for daily sanctification, yet Jesus teaches about how light his yoke is and that he carries our burdens for us. We don't serve a God who throws things at us to carry through life so that he can point and laugh. Or even so that he can make things worse to make himself appear better. This is no illusionist's trick that we've all fallen for because we aren't quick enough to see the slight of hand. Jesus himself says he is 'gentle and humble in heart' and that in him we will 'find rest for our souls'.

Sister, this is not a self-help book. There are not 8 steps here. There's one. Jesus. Jesus is the step. The first and last. The beginning and the end. Once we make that one solid step we can talk about other pathways to travel down. Let's not make this more difficult than it should be.

I love the idea that we might be like 'a lion' defending others or for the causes of God. My hunch is that most of us fall into two camps. First camp: they have the gentle part down and how they act in pub-

lic and in church probably appears humble, yet there's usually pride deep down. These campers have a hard time standing for anything because they don't want to make anyone mad. Second camp: very high energy and emotionally driven people. They have all the best intentions, yet sometimes the cart gets in front of the horse and, instead of relying on truth grounded in scripture, they let their emotions lead the way. Someone, at some point in their lives, told them not to cause a scene (literally or figuratively) so they've lived their lives determined to not be put in a corner.

In my opinion, they both have right characteristics when disciplined. We just need a little reminder about why we do what we do. Some of us could stand to be reminded when we are supposed to stand up as believers and fight for the cause of Christ. To raise our voice in the appropriate way at the appropriate time. Others of us could be gently reminded that what we have to say is important. We want to hear it. But, if there are so many other opinions and secondary issues that we choose to fight for, we weaken our voice.

We have one voice. And it can be a powerful one. However, if we choose to waste our voice on things that don't matter, people will stop listening to us. One of our most precious resources as a believer is the one that can cause the most damage when used flippantly. Let's read what James had to say about this issue.

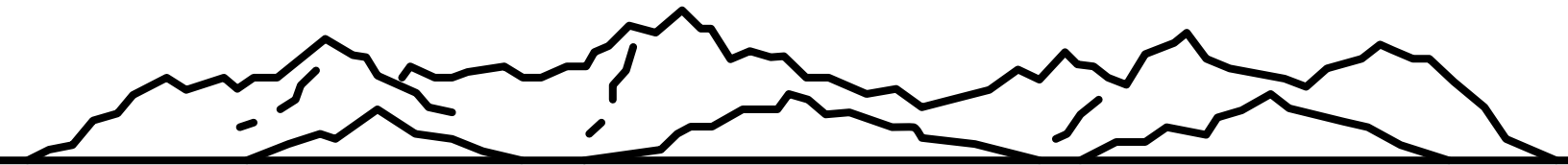
Read James 3:2-6, 9-10. Write down anything that sticks out to you.

This meek- concept is a new way of thinking for many of us. I challenge you to sit with it before the Lord. See what areas of your life could use a revamp with the goal of meekness. Understanding who God is first and then forming our personal view of who we are, based on our relationship with him.

We are weak but he is strong and mighty to save.

NO. 4

hungry & thirsty



| HUNGRY & THIRSTY |

Friendly reminder to read all of Matthew 5:1-12

*'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.'* Matt. 5:6

Day 4- here we go, sister! Proud of you for jumping back into what could seem like a monotonous stroll through the Beatitudes. (Albeit because your writer is learning right beside you!)

Righteousness has gotten a bad rap because, in reference to scripture, it has a different definition than in worldly applications. Self-righteousness, we have that down pat. Or, I do at least. In fact, I almost missed a chance to meet my husband because he invited me to come to a college ministry event and I 'didn't want to go to church for a boy.' Self-righteous. Thankfully, I did and the rest is history. Well, except for the part where he forgot my name three times in one night- I just can't let him forget that one. It's too good!

John Piper writes, 'Righteousness is showing mercy to other people; and righteousness is being pure in heart before God who alone can see the heart; and righteousness is the effort to make peace.' Being pure in heart. Showing mercy to others. The effort to make peace. All of these things together are attributes of righteousness but none of these are possible without Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

Quick reminder: The Beatitudes were written for believers. They were spoken to be present examples of the future kingdom of heaven.

Jesus is teaching us that we should hunger and thirst for righteousness on earth, yet we won't be satisfied or 'filled' until the Kingdom of God comes again.

The infamous C.S. Lewis quote is as follows: "If we find ourselves with a desire that nothing in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that we were made for another world."

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

Matthew 5:6

Good news/bad news. There are some things that satisfy in this world. Really, unbelievable, beautiful moments and sweet treasures of memories. The good news is that, as sweet as those moments are, they are only a shadow of what's to come. More beauty, love and perfection than our minds can even comprehend in this life. The bad news is that we simply may not see all that we hope to see happen on this earth. Sickness, death, suffering and hardship could possibly not be fully resolved in this life. But we hold out hope for Christ. We pine for his return, understanding the simple complexity of the issues we are facing, while keeping our eye on the prize.

Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, will be filled fully in the kingdom of heaven. Until then we will embrace this life to the fullest, knowing it's our only earthly life and that as hard or easy as it may be, one day we will see the face of God our Father and live forever in peace with him.

Is there a situation in your life today for which you hope you will see a resolution?

People who have a passion for righteousness seek it in their own lives first and then in the lives of others. They long to see honesty, integrity and justice in society and they look for practical holiness in the church. The dam of corruption that inhibits righteousness from flowing freely will eventually give way, allowing that blessed righteousness to flow freely and wholly.

In my mind I see this picture of sin in relationships, against our own bodies and against others. It starts out as one brick lying in front of us. It sort of gets in our way, but we know how to avoid it, so it's not a huge issue. Then another brick (read: sin) reveals itself and so now the place we avoid gains a little more surface area. Then another brick and another until the bricks start to stack on top of one another and row upon row begins to form. As the bricks grow they require stabilization, so figurative mortar is required to secure the wall. There are ways to avoid the wall in front of us, yet as it grows higher and wider and stronger the effort to avoid it becomes greater until we eventually retreat. The wall of sin has beaten us and stolen intimacy, honesty and integrity from us and from our loved ones.

Brick walls require maintenance so we tend to the wall to make sure our appearances still maintain favorably and no one sees the cracks and the shifts.

If we stay focused on this goal of righteousness while we hunger and thirst for it, we stand a much better chance of warding off the brick-layer. In beautiful testimonies of salvation, the Lord himself comes and knocks down our walls and our self-protective sin. While we may feel exposed in the process, it's a stunning picture of how the Lord fights for us and doesn't want us to live victim of our own flesh. He wants us to live with as few bricks on our wall as possible so that we can live whole and full lives with those around us. When we are too busy tending to our wall we have no margin for anything or anyone else: It's just us and the wall.

Does this imagery resonate with you? If so, give an example.

How does this verse apply to our everyday lives? Considering the social justice, honesty and integrity definitions- what are some tangible applications?

Building a wall around ourselves can be like self-protection, even if it's built through sin. We self-sabotage because it comes down to the fact that deep down we know we are not righteous in our own right. We know that we can do nothing to win the favor of the Lord on our own merit. By his grace and his grace alone do we live full lives in light of the cross. So we build walls. Walls satiate our hunger and thirst for a time. We forget that the walls were forged with poor choices and ill will. It's been so long since we thought about the makeup of the wall that we forget the contents of how it got there in the first place. All we know are the maneuvers it takes to get around it on a daily basis. Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness don't just

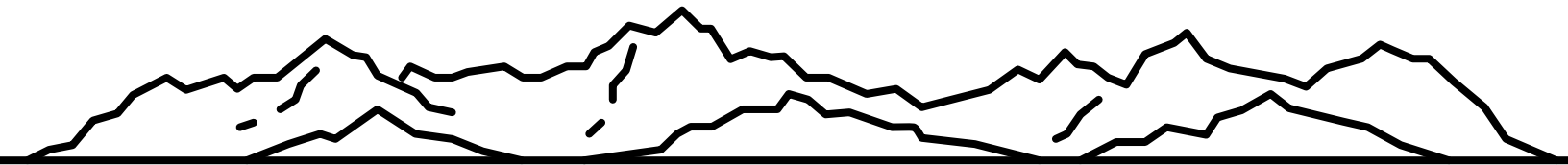
work around the wall- they have blown their walls to smithereens because their desire for right standing with God is so strong.

May we be as Jesus spoke of- those who hunger, thirst and pine for the goodness of the Lord in our own lives first and then in others. We cannot start with others and be effective ministers if we, personally, have a wall built up around us. Bust through the wall. We have people and souls to tend to- not brick walls. Rise up to the task, sister. You are strong and mighty in the name of the Lord. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise.

Lord, give us the strength to demolish walls and strongholds around us for the sake of living lives that truly hunger and thirst for your righteousness- not our own self-preservation. May we be filled with your spiritual strength as we walk this out in our own worlds today. We love you and desire for your will to be done.

NO. 5

merciful



| MERCIFUL |

Think of me as that lovely noise your car makes when you forget to fasten your seatbelt! Ding, ding! Read Matthew 5:1-12...ding!

'Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.' Matt. 5:7

Goodness gracious, land sake's alive...these Beatitudes are meaty, aren't they? Whew. When we started writing this study, I was a little concerned because our structure would differ so vastly from the previous two months. We've had chunks of scripture per day to sort of pick through and digest. For this month, since we are focusing on one verse, we have time and space to understand the many aspects of each word in the phrase.

We know that the whole of the Beatitudes are a pattern or a recipe, if you will. So in using merciful as an adjective and mercy as a noun, verse 7 is the only time the adjective and the noun in the pattern are the same. Of the eight phrases, the other seven reference an attribute that a believer has (or should have) and how that plays into the coming Kingdom of God. But verse 7 really shows us another aspect to how the Lord views our actions.

Please read and summarize the following verses:

- Luke 6:31-36

- Matthew 6:12

- Hosea 6:6

Hosea is a prophet to Israel (the breakaway Northern Kingdom from Judah) just before 750 B.C. Hosea knew a thing or two about mercy because the Lord told him to take an "adulteress wife and children of unfaithfulness." (Hos. 1:2) Hosea's marriage to a harlot

would be an important part of his ministry, as it would symbolize the nation's relationship with the Lord. In showing his wife and children mercy, he was acting out the new kingdom that Jesus brought about on the cross. Hosea is an example of a prophet who listened to and feared the Lord.

To be merciful means to be 'actively compassionate'. In one sense, it means to withhold punishment from offenders who deserve it. In a wider sense, it means to help others in need who cannot help themselves. The concept that blows me away in Matthew 5:7 is the fact that it's not our sacrifice that allows us to see the mercy of God. It was Jesus' own sacrifice that provided the mercy we so desperately need.

In this instance, Jesus is not referring to the mercy of salvation which God gives to a believing sinner; that mercy is not dependent on a person being merciful- it's a free, unconditional gift. Comparatively, Jesus is speaking of the daily mercy needed for Christian living and the mercy he will show us one day when we will have to account for how we spent our days on earth. Believers will be in heaven with Christ however, we will still be called to answer how we stewarded the gifts and resources God entrusted us with on earth. How did we help the powerless? How did we engage with our communities? In what ways did we serve our families? Did we focus our marriages in the best way through love and service? All daily mercies. All important. All have eternal significance.

Is there a 'daily mercy' that needs your immediate attention? If so, what is it?

How does mercy relate to Matthew 6:12 when Jesus is teaching his disciples how to pray?

Matt. 6:12 contains a well known verse from the Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:9-13). The fascinating part about this correlation is the concept of debt vs. mercy and how the two intersect to teach us the same idea. If being merciful will help establish daily mercies with our Lord, then

**Forget the
former things;
do not dwell
on the past.
*Isaiah 43:18***

forgiving our debtors is a way to portray Christ to those whom are indebted to us. This could be in a monetary sense or perhaps an emotional situation.

This we know- those who understand mercy, freely give it to others. Forgiven people forgive others. It's when we don't fully grasp that we have done nothing to deserve the favor of Christ nothing- that we begin to believe that we are the mercy keepers. We hold the key and we hang our forgiveness over other people's heads like a carrot in front of a horse. Whew. That's a scary place to be and I think you know that, too. The merciful know their standing in the presence of the Lord. They don't doubt for one minute where they find their wells of living water (Isaiah 43:18-19).

The concept that the merciful are shown mercy is something that makes a lump rise up in my throat. Merciful people can be seen as weak in our culture. Yet, Jesus is proclaiming them blessed and affirming that they will be shown the same grace that they extend to others. It's hard to extend mercy to others if you allow selfish desires to go before you. This is our old friend pride who likes to pay us a visit at the most inopportune times and when we think we've finally put him in his place. Pride stands up slowly, as not to cause a ruckus. Pride is clever, maniacal, diabolical and most of all: patient. It waits until we almost understand the freedom of forgiveness placed in front of us- our prize in Christ- only to snatch it away and we blame ourselves for the loss. Pride is not your friend, no matter how alluring. Mercy. Mercy is on your side. Christ is on your side. Christ sits in the mercy seat at the right hand of our Father in heaven (Num. 7:89).

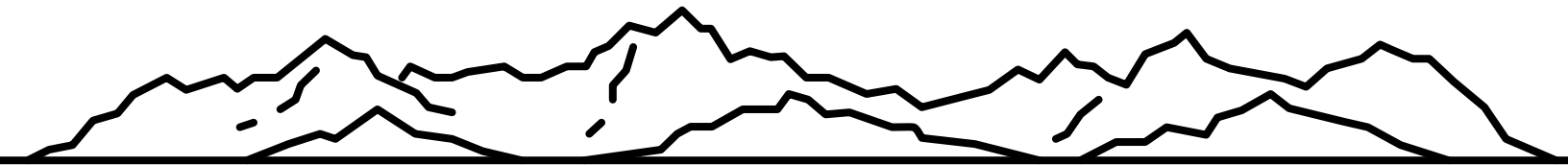
We can also extend mercy and sit under our Father's leadership. That's our gift. May we be merciful to those around us even when they don't deserve it because goodness knows we didn't deserve it either.

***Teach me your way, O Lord and I will walk in your truth;
give me an undivided heart that I may fear your name.***

Psalm 86:11

NO. 6

pure in heart



Ding, ding! You know where to start!

'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.' Matt. 5:8

Purity, by today's standards, would have much to do with abstaining from an activity and less about the actual deed. We want pure things though. Pure Spring Water. Clean or pure eating. We want our food to be pure and free of harmful chemicals or GMO's. Our laundry detergent and cleaning supplies should all be 'pure'.

I remember once I was at a demonstration for popular cleaning products. The products only used water because of some kind of special fairy dust or something in the sponge. The host kept reminding us, 'Clean doesn't have a smell.' Since we were all used to Clorox and bleach/ ammonia smells telling us that a product is working, the idea of smelling, well, nothing was foreign to us.

In a spiritual sense, people have been trying to convince others for hundreds of thousands of years that the stronger the smell, the better the clean. In other words, the more you do to become pure, the more filtered and clean you become. Bonus points if it alerts you to your desires and endeavors to be pure of heart because then you'll gain the admiration of others as well as that clean heart. If that made you squirm in your seat and want to put down this book, first hear me out. I know you know this, but that's not exactly how it works. There's no way to purify our hearts for the sake of those watching. For a show. If you have ever lived your days like this then I beg of you to stop. Please. There is another way. No doubt, looking spiritual for the sake of others is exhausting. It's all flesh and no spirit. It can be a bit like a circus act; contorting this way and that hoping to get a rise out of the crowd. The applause is the only fuel and I can assure you that the applause always dies out eventually. It's not a sustainable resource by which to power your life. Someone will dislike you. It's only a matter of time.

Read and summarize Matthew 23:25-26.

Jesus felt pretty strongly about the cleanliness of the outside vs. the inside. The Pharisees would falsely teach that, if you cleaned up your life then you'd be welcomed into the kingdom of heaven. In addition to teaching from polar opposite ends of the spectrum, Jesus warned the Pharisees that false teaching was worse than no teaching. To have an audience and knowingly lead them to believe that there is anything we can do outside of God's grace to secure our place with the Father is wrong and a sin.

Please read and write Isaiah 29:13 here:

Whew, does that make the hair on your neck stand up, or is that just me? The issue of the heart is almost always the root. There are so many by-products and emotional issues from having a sin-heavy heart, or a distracted heart, or even a genuine heart but with no discipline to call it into line. At the core of who we are as humans, I believe that we want to be heard and seen and feel loved by God. So many thoughts, mistakes and choices can be traced back to those simplistic desires. What can happen though, is that our hearts start to be pulled and devoted to various other things and people. We lose our pathway back to the Lord when we've been gone for so long. It's muscle memory. And in the begging stages of realigning our hearts with God's, it feels weird. It can feel that way for me when I've simply been out of my normal routine for a week of vacation- much less when we've stepped away from our church or spiritual disciplines for a long stretch of time.

Jesus referenced the same Isaiah passage when he was speaking with the Pharisees in Matthew 15:8-9.

Here's the good news today- there's a way home. There's a path to a pure heart and it starts by being honest with him. Not by being honest with me and not your best friend. You and the Lord, in a quiet moment. It doesn't have to be eloquent or even make sense to anyone outside of the room. If you can simply start with an 'I don't know what to say or how to say it but I want to feel close to you again...' that's a really great start.

These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules.

Matthew 15: 8-9

If I'm being honest, I've had to pray this same prayer even this week. Things are happening all around me and they have left me a bit numb. Probably out of self defense, and my lack of brain processing power, but I just have felt farther away from Him than I normally do. And I'm trying to write a Bible study- so, you know, fun times, right?! This is why I can tell you, it's not a recipe. Or a formula. It's a genuine heart asking to see the Lord in the most simple way possible. In your living room or at your kitchen table. In the SUV on the way to the last end-of- school party. Mine happens in front of my fireplace in my family room.

To have a pure heart is one of the most admirable qualities in a person. The Lord thinks so, too. To have a pure heart means we have genuine motives for all of our relationships. If there are not genuine motives in our worldly relationships then how can we have genuine motives with our Father in Heaven? We can't. It doesn't work like that. The Lord is committed to bringing our true selves and our promotional selves closer and closer together.

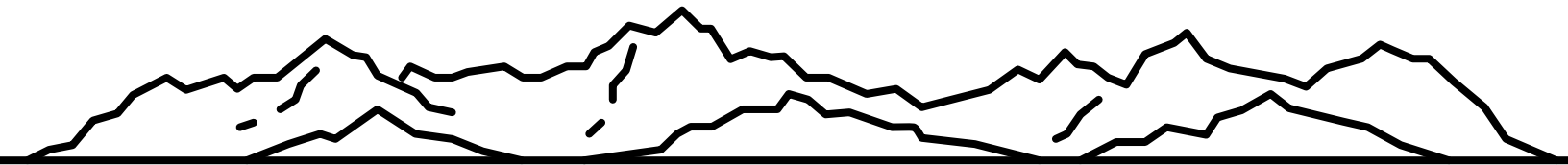
Pure hearts.
Open hands.
Ears to hear.
Intentional eyes.
Lives that align.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Now through fellowship in the Word and Spirit, or perhaps through a vision or supernatural appearance. Soon, they shall see God in the person of Jesus when he comes again. And lastly, the pure in heart will see God in eternity.

I pray that wherever you are today, that you'll take a moment to realign your heart with all that the Lord has for your life so that in recalibrating, you might be able to focus more clearly on what's right in front of you.

NO. 7

peacemakers



| PEACEMAKERS |

I won't even say it...ok, just once...ding!

'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.' Matt 5:9

Happy day to you! This is our next to last day and if I can say one thing about the Beatitudes is that they are not winding down. They are building up! It's so exciting to see God's word unfold through study. Such beautiful and precious gems await those who earnestly seek him. You are one of those people!

What image comes to mind when you think about peace? Is it the two fingers in a V-shape that originated in WW2 to mean victory, yet now is used by every celebrity to express....oh, who knows really? Maybe they are trying to let us know that they studied world history and understand the Western Allies? Yep, I'm sure that's it. See, and you thought pop-culture was a waste of time!

Peace can mean many things depending on who is speaking. It's also interesting that some of the people who scream and yell and protest are seeking peace, yet appear to be nothing of the sort. Hold onto that irony today as we walk through because, believe it or not, Jesus gave a similar message. Not one of anger and hate but one of being present and at peace with tension that produces a desired outcome.

I had a counselor in college that walked me through the difference between peacekeepers and peacemakers and it has stuck with me for years. In it's most basic form, peacekeeping involves just that. Keeping everyone happy so that everything appears to be peaceful. In a peacekeeping situation, there is no cost too high for remaining outwardly in control; including inner turmoil. Massive emotional and sometimes physical issues are figuratively 'swept under the rug' for fear of being seen as not in control. Marriages fall apart behind closed doors and resentment brews between parents and children of all ages for the sake of looking a certain way to a certain group of people that we probably don't really like anyway. Sound familiar or at least relatable?

Peacemakers have a different view on life. Peacemakers make peacekeepers very uncomfortable. Sometimes unconsciously or sometimes very intentionally. A peacemaker allows for that tension between what is and what should be. Think of Jesus when he dealt with the adulterous woman dragged out of her own bedroom in her nightie for crying out-loud.

Read John 8:1-11.

What did Jesus do while the tension was so thick you could have cut it with a knife?

Was he a peacemaker or peacekeeper in this situation?

Jesus bent down and drew in the dirt while really important people werestanding around to ‘make a point’ and ‘teach that woman a lesson’. I feel awkward just reading the story, if you want to know the truth. Jesus obviously had sympathy for the poor woman and man because they were absolutely in the wrong. Yet, he also didn’t coddle them and assure them it was going to be fine. He allowed it to be uncomfortable and intense for the sake of a greater outcome. While he could have intervened and personally changed the two people’s lives involved in the act, he instead chose to use the opportunity to teach a greater lesson that, in fact, benefitted the two even more. The Lord is always teaching us things- personally and through other people. Sometimes he permits people to witness things, depending on the hearts involved.

The short story is that, as believers, we are called to be like Christ, so that means having a peacemaking outlook on life. Everything will go through seasons of hardship. Relationships, jobs, family, friends, etc. We would forever be sweeping with a broom in our hand while looking for a rug if we were to live on the defensive all the time. Through Christ, we have the power to speak into lives around us and to allow tension for the sake of resolution.

**Yet to all who
did receive
him, to those
who believed
in his name,
he gave the
right to be-
come children
of God.**

John 1:12

The second part of this verse is that in peacemaking, we will be called sons of God. This is obviously a generic pronoun. Jesus is referencing all peoples, men and women, who are peacemakers, will bear the designation of 'child of God'. One thing that we must clarify: Peacemakers are called sons of God but this is not how they become sons of God- that can only happen by receiving Jesus Christ as Savior (John 1:12). Very important distinction.

McDonald writes, 'By making peace, believers manifest themselves as sons of God and God will one day acknowledge them as people who bear the family likeness.' Don't you just love that? The thought that we can change our thinking and the direction of our hearts to align with that of the Lord Jesus Christ and in doing so 'bear the family likeness'?

I'm in. Where do we sign up? That is so stirring and energizing to me. You?

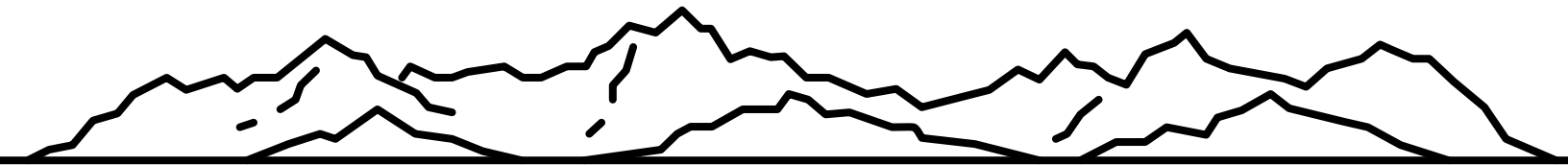
Does referencing family-likeness in a concept like this make you excited or fill you with uneasiness?

Whether you come from a near-perfect family or one that you'd rather not think about, we can all feel a part of the family of God. Don't blow this off as childish either. There are mentors, peers and younger women that need you and want you to fill a hole in their lives that a family member left. Please don't blow off your significance as a peacemaker in someone else's life.

***Lord, please show me those around me today who
need me in their lives and give me the grace to fill that role.
I want to be a thriving part of your family and in doing so
bear your family likeness. I love you, Lord.***

NO. 8

persecuted



| PERSECUTED |

Come on now girl, don't forget to fasten that seatbelt. *wink*

*'Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'* Matt. 5:10

Whew, all right then. Last day! You did it! I feel like I should reward you with a prize for completing this study on our beloved Beatitudes. (Spoiler alert: No prize except maybe a high five at the next Our Tuesday!) Hopefully you do feel like you've learned a great deal over these last seven lessons. I know I have. The thing that you must know is that I'm learning as we go along together as well. I'm researching and Googling and trying to wrap my brain around these seemingly simple yet frustratingly complex phrases. I'm in it with you. My eyes have a few extra bags under them and my caffeine intake is through the roof, but other than that I write to you today relatively unscathed yet changed for the better by this beautiful passage of scripture.

Pop quiz: Who can tell me what other verse ends in the same result as Matt 5:10? Answer? Matt 5:3 *'Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'*

There is a pattern to these verses and it begins with the fact that they are sandwiched together by this concept of inheriting the kingdom of heaven. It's hard for us to imagine the full pattern of what Jesus was communicating on the mountainside that day because most of us don't speak Greek. Let's also remember that while the Old Testament was first written in Hebrew, the New Testament was written in Greek because it was the most widely used language at that time. I think we can divide the above verse into three parts:

#1- Blessed are the persecuted

#2- Blessed are the persecuted because of righteousness

**#3- Blessed are the persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

In this particular verse Jesus is making it very clear that it's not persecution for persecution sake, rather it's persecution for the sake of righteousness that the Lord rewards. These days if you post opinionated comments on Facebook and someone disagrees with you, people holler 'Persecution!' as if there were a fire in the house. Pretty sure that's not what Jesus is referring to here.

In Matt. 5:6 we talked through the concept of those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. These people have an intense desire for rightness in their own lives and because of that, they desire to see honesty, integrity and social justice played out in a myriad of ways in our current culture. This particular group of people long for righteousness to permeate every government, church, home and social group. They are on the front lines doing the hard work of hands-on ministry for people groups that some parts of modern society would rather forget exist. Tragedies, that some pretend are not really happening, so that they can move on with their day a little easier. These warriors for righteousness are exactly who Jesus was so fond of, so much so, he promised that 'theirs would be the kingdom of heaven', yet he also knew what was to come for them.

Persecution for doing the hard and necessary work. It's not an 'if' but a 'when' situation. Authenticity and a passion to see justice served in the world around us is like a magnet for the enemy. Satan does not take a threat to the darkness lying down, I can promise you that. The integrity of the righteous condemns the ungodly and brings out hostility without even trying. People hate a righteous life because it exposes their own unrighteousness and makes them angry at themselves. Albeit, unbeknownst to them, because the anger is usually personally directed at the righteous seeker. We all love to have a scapegoat. Someone to take the weight of our past issues that we, dare I say, enjoy ripping apart.

Admittedly, I've been guilty of this before. There have been times when I've been in an unhealthy place and I looked at others who seemingly have it all together and it made me angry. So I would burn in my heart at their 'simplemindedness' and their 'obnoxious happiness'. I'd say things like, 'They have no idea what it's like to go through.' Or, 'If only they knew my story, they'd take back that thing

they just said.’ Everything became ‘me’ focused. Everything was selfish and if anyone looked at me cross-ways or made a generic enough comment I’d take it as a personal attack on everything I stood for.

In case you’re wondering, I was just really sad. And unhappy. And not spending time with the Lord. Bad combo. It took a long time to not feel like a victim in my own life, with the enemy being whoever chose to disagree with me. Or even in my direction. Not my most shining moments. Slowly, the Lord started healing my heart. And bringing my emotions back to the center of the scale. He could have, and I believe would have, done a singular work but I wouldn’t let him. To allow that would have meant I needed to own up to everything and I wasn’t at an emotional place to even process what that could look like, much less submit to it. In my own way I was persecuting those doing the hard work of the gospel. It’s embarrassing to say that aloud but I need you to know that no matter how you’ve acted in the past to people, there’s always forgiveness waiting both from the Lord and a way to forgive yourself.

Have you ever been persecuted for your religious beliefs? If so, how did you handle the situation?

Persecution can feel very extreme. Look no further than news of ISIS and the Voice of the Martyrs to find story after story of those who have lost or are losing their lives through execution and or imprisonment for the sake of the cause of Christ. We are thankful for soldiers that fight and have fought for your freedom of speech and for mine. We know them by name and rank, and some of us call them our husbands, our wives, our mothers and our fathers. We live in a wonderful country. We are wise to not forget that persecution happens every single day all over our world to the magnitude which I’m not sure any of us truly understand.

That persecution is the condition Jesus speaks about and the resolution is the Kingdom of heaven. That’s how it’s healed. That’s how we all are healed. Persecuted or not. This new Kingdom that Jesus teaches will reward, heal and complete all of us in the truest way. It is the concept of Kingdom Come! All will be made right. Once and

for all. Praise the matchless name of Jesus, who was and is and is to come! We bless you with our lives, Father!

The poor in spirit are heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven

The mourning are eternally comforted

The meek are heirs of the new earth

The hungry and thirsty are filled and satisfied

The merciful are shown the mercy they deserve

The pure in heart shall see God in full form

The peacemakers are called sons and daughters of God

The persecuted are heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven

I pray you've found yourself in these verses. I pray you've found your Father in these verses. I pray you've found comfort beyond what this world can offer. He sees you, sister. He's made a way for you and desires you to be all of the above no matter where you find yourself today. His new Kingdom is coming and we will be blessed to live with him.

