

Happy

Matthew 5:1-12

January 30, 2011

I'm happy. I am very happy.

Why shouldn't I be happy? I have every reason to be happy! I live in Iowa!
Really!

Really. I have every reason to be happy.

I am married to a remarkable woman: loyal, hardworking, fun, always thinking about ways to do things for other people -- for members of her family, for members of her church family, for her UNI colleagues, and for me.

I have two beautiful grandkids right close by and I can spend time with them any time I want!

I love my job. It is interesting, varied, challenging, and rewarding. I am privileged to share with you some of the most meaningful moments of your lives and to talk with you about deep and important matters.

I get to work with people like Greg and Maggie and Miah and Teri and Wayne, people who care, people who make excellence their aim and who understand well that they serve God as well as you.

I have friends, good friends, and I have a dog who loves me, who is always so excited to see me.

I am happy, very happy. I have every good reason to be happy.

But I would still be happy, very happy, if none of this were true. I would be happy because of what Jesus said:

*Happy are those who know they are spiritually poor;
the Kingdom of heaven belongs to them!*

Happy are those who mourn;

God will comfort them!

Happy are those who are humble;

they will receive what God has promised!

Happy are those whose greatest desire

is to do what God requires;

God will satisfy them fully!

*Happy are those who are merciful to others;
God will be merciful to them!
Happy are the pure in heart;
they will see God!
Happy are those who work for peace;
God will call them his children!
Happy are those who are persecuted
because they do what God requires;
the Kingdom of heaven belongs to them!*

I'm in there! I'm one of those people! Jesus was talking to me! And I am almost certain that Jesus was talking to you, too, every one of you. Because you don't have to be all these things -- spiritually poor and in mourning and humble and merciful and pure in heart -- you just have to be one of them! If just one of these things is true about you, then you are happy, too.

Happy are those who know they are spiritually poor. People who know they stand empty and needy in the presence of the holy God. People who know that all they are and all they have comes as God's gift. People who know that without God's grace and mercy, they would be nothing.

Is that you? If it is, then you are happy! You are full! You are rich! The kingdom of heaven itself belongs to you!

Happy are those who mourn. People who mourn for the dead, and people who mourn for this world. People who grieve injustice and greed and hateful speech and careless actions.

Is that you? If it is, then you are happy, because God will bring you comfort!

Happy are those who are humble. People who know what they are and know what they're not. People who know what they have to offer to God, but know too what they need from God and from other people, too, to be whole.

Is that you? If it is, then you are happy! You will receive great honor! You will receive everything, all the best, of what God has promised!

Happy are those whose greatest desire is to do what God requires. People who may not always succeed, but want to do the right thing. People who care about pleasing God. People who care above all else about trying to doing what God wants.

Is that you? If it is, then you are happy! You will get what you want! God will give you the desire of your heart!

Happy are those who are merciful to others. People who pay attention to those who are weak and needful and lonely. People who do not have to get even, who do not have to take their own revenge. People who know how to forgive.

Is that you? If it is, then you are happy! God will be just as attentive, just as kind, just as forgiving to you!

Happy are the pure in heart. People who don't want many things, but want just one thing. People who want to know God.

Is that you? If it is, then you are happy! You will know God! You will see God!

Happy are those who work for peace. People who do more than wish for peace, but do something, anything, to heal the wounds of war and injustice. People who do something, anything, to mend broken relationships, to try to bring people together. People who make peace in their own families, and people who make peace in this world.

Is that you? If it is, then you are happy, because God knows that you belong to him! God will call you his own child!

Happy are those who are persecuted because they do what God requires. People who pay a price for doing the right thing, but do it anyway.

Is that you? If it is, then you are happy! You are full! You are rich! You are blessed! The kingdom of heaven belongs to you!

Did you find yourself among any of these people Jesus describes? Is Jesus talking to you? Then, praise God, you're happy! You are happy, too ...