

## **Sermon**

### ***What Makes ~~YOU~~ US Happy?***

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Why is it that people who try to live by the values of God's kingdom so often find themselves pushed aside, misunderstood, or even mocked? Why is empathy dismissed as weakness, and why are the meek—the very ones Jesus blesses—treated as if they don't belong in the “real world”? You would think we'd want leaders, neighbors, and friends whose first instinct is compassion. Yet here we are.

Most mornings, I hesitate before opening the news. Maybe you do too. It feels like stepping into a storm—headlines swirling with conflict, outrage, and uncertainty. And still, we look, because we want to understand the world we're called to love. We want to stay awake to what's happening around us.

And in the middle of all that noise, Jesus' words from the hillside come back to us. The Kingdom of God isn't some far-off dream or a someday escape. Jesus planted it right here—among us, within us, between us. Whether we recognize it or not, that kingdom is already breaking in through ordinary people who dare to live differently. People

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Inspired by [Presbyterian Outlook](#) commentary on Matthew 5:1-12 by Rev. Rae Watson.

who hunger for righteousness, who choose mercy, who make peace, who refuse to let the world harden their hearts.

The Beatitudes aren't just blessings; they're a map. A way of life. A reminder that God's kingdom grows in places the world rarely celebrates. The last couple of weeks we have had to contend with many snowy days, terribly cold temperatures leaving many of us hibernating, as we should, in our comfortable, cozy spaces. Last night, as I drove to venture out with my daughter, we passed a group of municipal workers digging in the Earth to repair a broken water main. We agreed that would be an awful job on such a cold night yet there they were, on a Saturday night, digging in the Earth in freezing temperatures, snow falling, to restore what was broken.

These workers didn't have to do that job – there are easier jobs to do that pay more money but thankfully for us who like to turn our faucet on and have clean water come out at our command, they do this job even when it's 10 degrees, even on a Saturday night when most of us are cuddled up watching Netflix.

Jesus' sermon on the Mount, spoken clearly, powerfully, poignant, not to change us but to remind us what is already true. His words are not all spoken in the future tense.

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Blessed are those, blessed are those...You see already are blessed – this the life we live. And listen again to the last sentence – **“Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”** Theirs IS the Kingdom.

What we hope for, what we long for – peace, kindness, compassion, love thy neighbor – what speak to and live into each and every week, IS the kingdom. Jesus did not come to show us what will be for us – He showed what is already for us – in us, through us and around us.

The Universe if filled with mystery and incredible beauty. And so is our world. If you have not yet watched the documentary “Pole to Pole” with Will Smith – it’s on Disney I believe – you need to. It is excellent. Incredible. What I loved about it was how he navigated literally from the South Pole to the North Pole elevating work and study of scientist and behavioral specialists who are not trying to change the planet into something different but discover how incredible it is already and how much we don’t know about it. They are making significant discoveries in medicine, environmental studies and all of them have so much hope and

know that this kingdom we live in offers so much promise for a long and prosperous future.

Sometimes we get stuck in the weeds and its easy to do right now. So what I want us to do right now is put on new glasses, produce a new optic for ourselves, our children and grandchildren and our world.

Let's reread our Micah scripture...Let's do it together. So open your bulletins and I'll read the first part and I'll tell you when I want you to add your voice to our words:

### **Micah 6:1-8**

6 Hear what the Lord says:

Rise, plead your case before the mountains,  
and let the hills hear your voice.

<sup>2</sup>Hear, you mountains, the case of the Lord,  
and you enduring foundations of the earth,  
for the Lord has a case against his people,  
and he will contend with Israel.

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<sup>3</sup>“O my people, what have I done to you?

In what have I wearied you? Answer me!

<sup>4</sup>For I brought you up from the land of Egypt

and redeemed you from the house of slavery,

and I sent before you Moses,

Aaron, and Miriam.

<sup>5</sup>O my people, remember now what King Balak of Moab devised,

what Balaam son of Beor answered him,

and what happened from Shittim to Gilgal,

that you may know the saving acts of the Lord.”

**All will say....**

<sup>6</sup>**“With what shall I come before the Lord**

**and bow myself before God on high?**

**Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,**

**with calves a year old?**

<sup>7</sup>**Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,**

**with ten thousand of rivers of oil?**

**Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,**

**the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”**

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**<sup>8</sup>He has told you, O mortal, what is good,  
and what does the Lord require of you  
but to do justice and to love kindness  
and to walk humbly with your God?**

Micah's words land with such clarity, don't they? In a world that pulls us in a thousand directions, that tells us we need to prove ourselves, fix everything, or carry more than we were meant to carry, God's call is surprisingly simple. Not easy—but simple.

Do justice. Not just when it's convenient or when the crowd agrees, but as a steady posture of the heart. Justice is not a moment; it's a way of being. Jesus embodied it so completely that the symbol we wear around our necks still whispers the reminder: this mattered to him. It still matters to us.

Love kindness. Not the polite kind of kindness that stays on the surface, but the kind that notices people, lifts them up, and brings light into rooms that feel dim. The kind that says, "I see you," especially to those who feel invisible. People are hurting right now—deeply. Many are confused, especially our young people who are trying to make sense of a world that

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feels unsteady. What they need from us is not sharper opinions but softer hearts. Not judgment, but gentleness. Not distance, but presence.

And walk humbly with your God. Not ahead of God, not behind God—*with* God. Humility isn't shrinking back; it's living with a quiet confidence that we don't need to grasp for more. We don't need to hoard or compare or covet. Humble contentment is a kind of superpower in a world that tells us we're never enough. When we take only what we need, we make space for someone else to flourish. When we give generously, we discover that God has already prepared the provisions we'll need next. What we release was never meant to anchor us anyway.

This is how the kingdom grows—not through grand gestures, but through daily choices to trust, to love, to act with courage and compassion. When we loosen our grip on fear and lean into faith, we find ourselves doing things we never imagined we could. We become part of God's quiet, steady transformation of the world.

Let's talk about happiness for a moment. What makes you happy? Are you happy? Most of us can point to pieces of our lives that bring us joy or fulfillment. And I'll tell you honestly—I feel a deep sense of happiness simply being here with you today. But the deeper question

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Jesus invites us to consider is not just *what makes me happy*, but *what makes us happy*.

Because the Beatitudes aren't addressed to individuals alone. They speak to a community—a people shaped by mercy, justice, humility, and peace. Jesus knows that when any part of the community is oppressed, excluded, or left behind, the whole body suffers. Happiness cannot thrive where some are diminished. History shows us this again and again: the communities that flourish are the ones where everyone is cared for, where no one is forgotten, where resources—no matter how small—are shared, and responsibilities are carried together. In those places, joy becomes something communal, something woven between people rather than hoarded by a few.

So what makes *us* happy? I don't have a simple answer, but I believe the question itself is holy. I invite you to pray on it this week. Hold it gently. And when we gather again next Sunday, come with a renewed awareness of how precious this community is—how much we belong to one another, and how much our shared life matters.

And as we carry these questions into the days ahead, let Micah's words be our compass. Seek justice—not just in grand gestures, but in

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the small, faithful choices that honor the dignity of every person. Love kindness—let it shape your tone, your presence, your daily interactions. And walk humbly with your God—trusting that you don't walk alone, that God's steady grace meets you step by step. When we live this way together, we become a community where happiness is not a fleeting feeling but a shared way of life—rooted in God's kingdom, growing among us even now.