

## **Sermon: We are all blessed**

“Blessed.” Jesus says that word nine times in today’s gospel. We often talk about ourselves or others as being blessed. “I’m blessed.” “She’s blessed.” “We’re really blessed.” You’ve said and heard those things, right? But here’s what I wonder: what does that truly mean?

What does it mean to be blessed? When you tell another that you are blessed what do you mean by that? And when you hear someone else say, “I’m really blessed,” how do you understand that?

I ask those questions because I think what we mean when we talk about being blessed is often not what Jesus means when he talks about our being blessed.

Take a moment and think of one thing that points to or indicates your blessedness. You got it, know what it is? Now keep that in your mind. What did you name, or what might you think that others named? What’s the mark or indicator of your blessedness?

When I hear others talk about being blessed they often describe things like good health, healing from a sickness, well-being, wealth, some good fortune, success, getting through a difficult time, family, love or friendship, receiving support from another, getting something they wanted, things going their way. That’s often how I’ve thought about it too. They’re certainly good things and I want them for you and myself but is that really what it means to be blessed? It just might be better than that.

How many of you, when I asked you to name something that points to or indicates your blessedness, named one of the beatitudes in today’s gospel?

Nobody? Amazing isn’t it, as I just read it five minutes ago. I’m not surprised though. They’re not at the top of my list either. I didn’t ask that question as a test, criticism, or judgment but as a wondering that maybe we don’t really get what it means to be blessed.

I suspect most of us think of blessedness as some sort of reward or favoritism from God.

We're lucky or fortunate in contrast to someone who is not. We've received a particular benefit. Maybe our prayer was answered like we wanted. Maybe we even think we did things right as opposed to someone who did them wrong, or times when we did things wrong. Maybe we think that to be blessed means we've been chosen, picked, favored, or benefitted.

What if that's not at all what it means to be blessed? What if blessedness is broader and bigger than that? What if we don't acquire or get blessedness? What if it's a given?

What if it's not unique or particular to certain individuals? What if there are no prerequisites or qualifications to be blessed? What if blessedness isn't exclusive to some but inclusive of all?

Imagine that one day you come to me and say, Carol, I've been counting my blessings and I've got a lot. I feel that I am really blessed." And I say, "Really? That is wonderful but I thought that every single person regardless of who they are, are blessed. Every single person regardless of what he or she believes or doesn't believe is blessed. Every single person regardless of what he or she has done and left undone, is blessed. Would it make you feel that you are not that special, because we are all blessed?

What would you think? How would you feel? Would that kind of mess with your understanding of blessedness? Would you celebrate that all are blessed? Or would you feel as if I had taken something from you and that you're not as unique, important, or special as you thought you were or want to be?

I think that's often how we see our blessedness. I am unique, important, and special. I've benefited. God has seen me and done something for me. And that is wonderful, we want to feel blessed, but I wonder if we make blessedness too small, too individualistic, or too circumstantial.

Here's the thing. We're all already blessed. It's not something you get, earn, acquire, or receive. It's something you are. It's something you and I already are. We are already blessed. It was given us by the creator at our creation. And there's nothing you can do to be more blessed, and nothing you can do to lose your blessedness.

The distinction isn't between those who are blessed and those who are not blessed.

The only distinction is between those who know they are blessed and those who have not yet recognized their blessedness. It's not a question of blessedness but a question of recognition.

Take being poor in spirit, for example. Being poor in spirit is not the blessing and it's not the prerequisite to receive a blessing. It's a manifestation or expression of one who recognizes her or his blessedness. It's the way we live when we already know and trust that we are blessed. And so it is with all the beatitudes.

When we know that we are blessed we live in a particular way and when we don't know or trust our blessedness we live in a different way. When I trust and live from my blessedness I am hopeful that I am able to respond to you in a different way, a better way, a deeper way, a more loving way. But when I forget, turn away from, deny, or don't recognize my blessedness, more often than not I betray myself and that usually means I will hurt you.

Are the beatitudes finding expression in your life today? I'm not asking that as a way telling you to go out and do those things. I'm really just asking if you see that you are already blessed. Because when we recognize and live from our blessedness the beatitudes follow naturally. We don't have to go out and do them. We can't help but do them. It's who we are at our best, at our deepest, and when we are most truly ourselves.

And if you're not seeing the beatitudes in your life, why not? What's getting in the way? What's keeping you from seeing your blessedness? And if you aren't seeing it that doesn't mean you are not blessed. You are.

It's the invitation to rediscover and reconnect with your blessedness. We've all been blessed. And some days we know it and trust it more than other days. What does it mean and look like for you today to reconnect to your blessedness?

When I know myself to be blessed I'm more fully myself. I'm more aware of and connected to others. My world is larger. My life seems to flow and feel more natural. And I don't have to prove myself, live up to another's expectations, or gain somebody's approval. I don't have to compare myself to or compete with others. It's enough to just be Blessed Carol and to express that blessedness in the truest most authentic way I can in that moment.

And you know where I learned that? I learn that every day when I am assured that Jesus is shining his light for me on my journey through this earthly life. Through the happiness, pain, sorrow, grief, excitement, and comfort of being a part of someone else's journey, makes me so aware of how blessed I am to be a part of this earthly life.

I have been blessed. I am a blessed child of God. You are all blessed children of God, and together we share those blessings every day.

I'd like to close by asking the question once more: Do you feel that you are blessed? Rather than tallying up your "good fortune" and weighing it against the bad, base your answer on what Jesus said in the Beatitudes.

You are blessed when you're at the end of your rope. With less of you, there is more of God and his rule.

You are blessed when you feel you've lost what is most dear to you. Only then can you be embraced by the One who is most dear to you.

You are blessed when you are content with just who you are—no more, no less. That is the moment you find yourselves proud owners of everything that can't be bought. Don't ever forget just how much we are all truly blessed. Amen