

“Blessed Are You In All You Do!”
Matthew 5:1-12; January 26, 2020; 10:00 am
Congregational UCC, Buena Vista, CO
Rev. Rebecca K. Poos

PRAYER

God of wisdom and insight,
May the words that I speak, and the ways
they are received by each of our hearts
and minds, help us continue to grow into
the people, and the church, that you
have dreamed us to be. Amen.

You're Blessed

5 ¹⁻²When Jesus saw his ministry drawing huge crowds, he climbed a hillside. Those who were apprenticed to him, the committed, climbed with him. Arriving at a quiet place, he sat down and taught his climbing companions. This is what he said:

³“You're blessed when you're at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule.

⁴“You're blessed when you feel you've lost what is most dear to you. Only then can you be embraced by the One most dear to you.

⁵“You're blessed when you're content with just who you are—no more, no less. That's the moment you find yourselves proud owners of everything that can't be bought.

⁶“You're blessed when you've worked up a good appetite for God. He's food and drink in the best meal you'll ever eat.

⁷“You're blessed when you care. At the moment of being 'care-full,' you find yourselves cared for.

⁸“You're blessed when you get your inside world—your mind and heart—put right. Then you can see God in the outside world.

⁹“You're blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That's when you discover who you really are, and your place in God's family.

¹⁰“You're blessed when your commitment to God provokes persecution. The persecution drives you even deeper into God's kingdom.

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¹⁻¹²“Not only that—count yourselves blessed every time people put you down or throw you out or speak lies about you to discredit me. What it means is that the truth is too close for comfort and they are uncomfortable. You can be glad when that happens—give a cheer, even!—for though they don't like it, *I* do! And all heaven applauds. And know that you are in good company. My prophets and witnesses have always gotten into this kind of trouble.

LIFE IS PRECIOUS

We came upon an accident yesterday on Trout Creek Pass. We were heading to

Fairplay to see what we could do about our forever-stuck-in-the-cement-snow manure trailer and visit a friend who is having a rough time in life right now. Her husband is a war vet with dementia and Parkinson's, and is not the man she's loved and lived with for many years. Life has taken a sharp turn into unknown territory, and it is tough, to say the least.

Things sure can change in a split second.

We could have easily been IN this accident, on the curve, right there above the old train depot. But, I'd remembered at the last minute that we needed a water bottle for the dogs, and had gone back in the house for a couple minutes, and that delayed us.

A young man, with a small sedan car full of stuff like maybe he was living in it, came around a curve with double yellow and swerved over the line—just for a moment. We don't know if drugs or alcohol or texting were involved. Maybe he was just sleepy on a Saturday morning.

Clarke went to offer help and a first aid kit. He did not smell alcohol and could not tell the extent of the young man's injuries, but did learn EMS had been called and there was a doctor on the scene.

It seems in that brief moment when the sedan swerved across the line, he hit a pick up truck, causing another man and truck to roll down the hillside. As Clarke watched, that guy came up the hill and went to the passenger window of the destroyed car on the highway and chewed the young guy out for almost killing him.

It didn't do any good! That young guy is sitting there, pinned in the car, dazed and bleeding and barely conscious. It was all so ugly. It was hard to sleep last night, remembering the scene, the blood and damage and the inhumanity and rage one person was choosing to show to another in response.

Another guy tried to calm the yelling guy down and almost got into a fist fight with him. Everyone else was trying to help.

The things that can happen in a split second.

JESUS CALLS US BLESSED

We make choices in a split second that can make a lasting difference in this world.

Jesus knew this when he climbed up on a hillside and began to teach his disciples and the crowd that had gathered. They were hungry for a message of hope and inspiration. Life was extremely difficult for

this peasant, impoverished crowd, living under unbelievable oppression and discrimination.

They wondered every day if they would have food to fill their aching bellies, or enough to get by the next day. Jesus knew their suffering, and he was not telling them to “buck up, get a job, and pull themselves up by their bootstraps.” He knew that they were doing the best they could in an unjust system that kept them down and unable to climb out of poverty.

“Blessed are you,” he said. “In spite of everything bad that continues to happen to you. Blessed are you because you have a hope and an identity that is of God and not of this world. Blessed are you, beloved children of God. Cling to that truth—I’m telling you who and Whose you are, as you fight the good fight and keep resisting evil and injustice.

“I declare you are not who others say you are, and without hope, but who God has made you to be. Beloved! Blessed. Whole. Healthy in body, spirit and relationship.” You get to write your own story. Name your truth. Be who you are called to be. You don’t have to accept the labels others would try to put on you. You have a choice to be blessed and be a blessing.”

BLESSED ARE YOU – CUCC

Jesus says the same to us. Not sitting on a

hillside in Galilee, but here in a sanctuary, in a beloved congregation in Bewnie.

Blessed are you—

**When you work all year long on a Bazaar that blesses yourselves in the doing and fellowship that it brings. But it doesn’t stay here—IN the church. The whole congregation, community, country and world are blessed!*

**When you reach out in every way to your community—individuals in need, hosting community groups, rehearsals and educational events of all kinds. When you feed hungry children every single week!*

**When yummy meals and soup (even gluten free and dietarily complex meals!) are taken with love, along with cards and calls and gifts to our folks in need. When you as the “priesthood of all believers” help the pastor make pastoral calls and offer care—embracing the ministry cheerfully that is all of ours to share. Compassion and care of one another, and many in the wider circle of our church family and beyond is a holy thing.*

**Blessed are we when we share music! In worship, in practice, in our lives together. Even when snow threatens and icy, dangerous parking lots glare at us!*

***Choir, MSG, ensembles, piano, organ,
directing—all!***

****When you keep faithfully making beautiful music for worship and even writing fun songs for every occasion! When we support and empower music and the arts in our midst.***

****Blessed are we when we embrace all ages with love—participating in worship and sharing the faith together.***

****Blessed are you who plan, coordinate and teach Children’s Church. Nurturing and guiding our beloved children in the faith and learning from them as well.***

****Blessed is our Food! All the food and fellowship ministries of this church family, which are many and take many hands and hours. Blessed are our celebrations! Birthdays and anniversaries and births and celebrations of life. All the times we share life together.***

****Blessed are all who contribute to the communications ministry of this church and community. For knowing what’s going on—in our lives and in the life of the church—is truly the lifeblood of our journey together.***

****Blessed are you when you live as a congregation in deep gratitude and generosity***

—not afraid to talk about money in church—citing Jesus are your example, and knowin where your treasure is, that is surely where your heart beats and thrives.

****When you embrace newcomers from many walks of life, background experiences and faith traditions. Welcoming them into the membership and full participation in the life of the church and its leadership. When you open your minds and hearts to new ideas, traditions, spiritual explorations and practices.***

****When you find the courage to try new structures, revise the Bylaws, experiment with new ways of governance.***

****When you step up, step in, and step forward, saying YES to serving in these new structures and being part of the Teams.***

****As you serve in a collaborative spirit on those Teams and in other places—not seeking your own way only, but working toward a unified vision and plan together. (No my way or the highway here!)***

****When you travel a lot and have many commitments in many places—you put your faith into action all over the place—but you work on your Teams and Council and in leadership positions in the church***

wholeheartedly as well! Presence in ministry is not limited geographically!

****As you remember you are not alone. That you are part of a Covenant Community and family. That we are all in this together, with the Rocky Mountain Conference, the Southeastern Association and the national United Church of Christ.***

****As you remember we are in mutual support together and give gifts to OCWM as we receive gifts of support, counsel, and guidance through our celebrations and challenges.***

****When you are willing to consider new ways of looking at Being the Church. At new visions and understandings of stewardship, generosity, leadership.***

****When we have the courage to see beyond ourselves and how our future might be much bigger and more embracing of a bigger purpose than what we've imagined so far.***

****When we remember, together, who we are and Whose we are—everyday. As a person beloved by God and as a church, called by the Holy Spirit.***

****Blessed are we, when we are tempted to think we can do no great things, with our small and aging congregation. But then, we remember***

***the wise words of Mother Theresa:
“We can do no great things; only small things with great Love!”***

****When we walk arm in arm through conflict, not getting derailed from who we are. When we seek daily to bear, build up, and belove. To inform and educate, converse and clarify rather than argue and kibbutz. When we clothes ourselves in mercy and kindness, humility, meekness, and prayer.***

BLESSED CHOICE TO BE COMMUNITY

In a split second, life can change. In a split second, we choose to bless or be a blessing. To accept the truth that our Maker bestows upon us—Beloved, Blessed child of God, born to bless others—or another identity that the world gives us.

A choice to respond in concern and care for our fellow human beings or something other, like we witnessed yesterday on the highway that broke our hearts.

John Pavlovitz reminds us that choosing to live in community changes our lives:

“Community is catalytic for a number of reasons, not least of which is that it fills in the holes we have, placing us alongside people whose gifts, passions and personalities become our counterpoint.

We're able to see ourselves as part of something much greater than our isolated story. You're undoubtedly really good at some things, and perhaps less spectacular elsewhere.

Living and working and dreaming in community means you'll find people who shore up the things that are shaky in you. Sometimes the greatest thing about true community is having people close to you who can see the things in you that you can't see, who can nudge you past a place of stuckness, who (depending on what you need in the moment) give you a hug around the neck or a kick in the behind.

"Whether we find belonging in the context of houses of faith, in our neighborhoods, in political groups, or in online communities, we are wired for meaningful relationships, and these relationships help us have profound impact on the world. Our lives are designed for collaboration.

"Find your people, cultivate your tribe, assemble your team, and save the world together." (John Pavlovitz, "Hope and Other Superpowers" p. 204)

How blessed are we to have one another. This church family—serving and loving together in Christ's name. Serving not only ourselves, but

for the good and uplifting spirit of the whole community and beyond!

Blessed are we when, at the end of the day, we can lie down on our beds, knowing we have chosen blessing. Knowing deep down, that this town, this valley and this world would not be the same place whatsoever if this church did not exist. For 140 years, and going strong for many, many more! Amen.