



You say I am blessed when I am poor in spirit.
You say I have comfort even when I mourn.
You say I am strong when I think I am meek.
And you say I'll be satisfied when I hunger for righteousness.
And I believe, oh, I believe!

You Say I Am Blessed

Matthew 5:1-11

Sunday, February 1, 2026, Aledo UMC

Rev. Dr. David R. Schultz

Brown Bag Story, Matthew 5:1-11

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. ² And he began to speak and taught them, saying:

Let's stop right there. In 1534, the Catholic Church in England broke ties with Rome and King Henry VIII became the Supreme Head of the Church of England. Those who remained true to the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church were subject to persecution. So for the next three centuries, those who refused to join the state church developed creative ways to teach children their beliefs. One popular method was to use lyrics and songs. And I'll bet you can guess one of the songs they came up with.

Here's a hint: the song mentions a partridge, and the partridge was known as a valiant bird, willing to fight to the death in order to defend its young. The bird's readiness to die for its young made it an ancient symbol of Jesus Christ. And the pear tree represents the cross.

Can you guess the song?

Here's another hint: the Bible tells us that when Jesus was 40 days old, Mary and Joseph took him to the temple in Jerusalem as was required by the law. And they brought a sacrifice of two turtledoves, which was the sacrifice of a poor family. The two turtledoves also remind us of the two parts of the Bible, the Old Testament and the New Testament. In the song, two turtledoves were coded language to teach something about Jesus and the Bible.

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Now can you guess the song? Here's one last hint: this song mentions three French hens. In the 1500s, French hens were valuable poultry; only the rich could afford them. These costly birds symbolized three valuable gifts brought to Jesus by wise men. They were code for gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And those would be valuable gifts when Mary and Joseph had to flee Bethlehem and find safety in Egypt.

The song, of course, is The Twelve Days of Christmas, and each day's crazy, exotic gift was meant as a secret code to an important Christian teaching.

For example, when the persecuted Catholics of England came to the first sermon of Jesus in Matthew 5, they found eight teachings that seemed as basic to Christian growth as milk that nourishes a child. So they sang, "On the eighth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me **eight maids a-milking**." The eight milking maidens represented eight unique teachings of Jesus known as the Beatitudes.¹

³ "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴ "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

⁵ "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

⁶ "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

⁷ "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

⁸ "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

⁹ "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

¹⁰ "Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Let us pray...

Sermon, "You Say I Am Blessed"

The other day I happened to come across Lauren Daigle's 2018 hit song, "You Say." The song reached number one on the Hot Christian Songs chart and stayed there for over two years. But it was a crossover hit, reaching number 29 on Billboard's Hot 100 and getting significant airplay on mainstream pop radio. "You Say" went on to be certified platinum six times over and win both a Dove award and a Grammy in 2019.

"You Say" imagines a conversation between God and an ordinary believer, namely, Lauren Daigle. But that ordinary believer is filled with self-doubt, perhaps even some hints of self-loathing. Lauren sings:

- "I keep fighting voices in my mind that say I'm not enough."
- "Every single lie that tells me I will never measure up."²

¹ Helen Haidle, *The Real 12 Days of Christmas*, Multnomah, 1997.

² Songwriters: Bebo Norman / Jason Ingram / Mike Donehey / Lauren Ashley Daigle / Paul Brendon Mabury. You Say lyrics © Appstreet Music, Centricsongs, So Essential Tunes, See You At The Pub. Accessed January 26, 2026 at [genius.com](https://www.genius.com)

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She sings about feeling numb and weak and falling short. But then she sings, “The only thing that matters now is everything you think of me.” And I was struck by the similarity of those feelings and what we find in the Beatitudes of Jesus in Matthew 5, especially in the first four beatitudes which connect with those who are poor in spirit, those who mourn, those who are meek, and those who hunger and thirst after righteousness.

In verse 3, to be poor in spirit is to feel inadequate, that you don’t have what it takes to be the person you want to be. You keep hearing those voices in your head that tell you you’re not enough; you’re not up to the challenge; you will never measure up.

Being poor in spirit is feeling empty inside, it is to acknowledge one’s spiritual bankruptcy. To be poor in spirit is to confess one’s unworthiness before God. And poverty of spirit is contrary to the belief of the Pharisees and Sadducees who believed they had an “in” with God simply because of their race. It is also contrary to the belief of the wealthy who believed that the very fact that they had much meant they were blessed of God. To those arrogant assumptions, Jesus declares, “Blessed are the poor in spirit.”

I love the story of Gideon. God called him to lead his people in victory over the Midianites who were oppressing him.

¹⁵ “But Lord,” Gideon replied, “how can I rescue Israel? My clan is the weakest in the whole tribe of Manasseh, and I am the least in my entire family!” (Judges 6:15).

Gideon was “poor in spirit” with a poor self-image. But that was exactly the kind of person that God was looking for to lead God’s people into victory. *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

Lauren Daigle put it this way:

“You say I am strong when I think I am weak
And you say I am held when I am falling short
And when I don’t belong, you say I am yours

In verse 3, Jesus declares that those who mourn are blessed. To mourn is to grieve over loss—the loss of a loved one; the loss of a relationship; the loss of stability; the loss of justice. Jesus spoke these words to a people who were living under the rule of Rome: they had lost their independence, their freedom, and even the promise of God. They mourned the humiliation of Israel, understanding that their humiliation came from personal as well as corporate sin.³

These first two beatitudes call to mind the messianic promise of Isaiah 61, a passage which Jesus elsewhere applied to himself:

¹ The spirit of the Lord God is upon me because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the

³ D.A. Carson, *Expositor’s Bible Commentary Volume 8*, pg. 131ff. I use this source throughout this sermon.

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captives and release to the prisoners,² to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn,³ to provide for those who mourn in Zion—to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. (Isaiah 61:1-3).

In verse 5, Jesus declares that the meek are blessed. To be meek is to be willing to turn the other cheek, but that gets so old, to always be the one to give in; to always be the one who has to compromise. To be meek is to be gentle and to exercise self-control as a result. It's freedom from malice and a vengeful spirit.

In Jesus' day, the Greeks considered meekness a vice because they failed to distinguish it from servanthood.⁴

Meekness also turns the corner from how one views self to how one responds to others. It flies in the face of the notion that only the strong survive. Someone once said, "We live in the real world...that is governed by strength, that is governed by force, that is governed by power. These are the iron laws of the world since the beginning of time."⁵ Nothing could be more contrary to the words of Jesus than that statement.

In verse 6, Jesus says those who hunger and thirst after righteousness are blessed. To hunger and thirst after righteousness is to feel depleted, parched. It is a longing for replenishment, and no doubt in Jesus' day, it was a longing for justice.

This past week in our Tuesday morning Bible study, author James Harnish referenced the lynching Robert Johnson in Tampa, Florida, 92 years ago this past Friday. His lynching was one of 4,400 which occurred in our nation over a 73-year period between 1877 and 1950.

In the case of Robert Johnson, some 30 white residents went out into the woods in the middle of the night to witness his murder themselves. Robert Johnson wasn't murdered because of a crime he had committed; he had been acquitted of assaulting a white woman, which, in itself, is quite remarkable. No, Robert Johnson was murdered as a warning to other Tampa Blacks, for lynching "was a device designed to warn blacks to stay in their 'place.' After the murder, and despite calls from the governor, no one was ever arrested for the crime."⁶

I have no question that in the wake of such violence, there was much "hungering and thirsty for righteousness" at places like the Allen Temple A.M.E. Church on East Scott Street in Tampa.

⁴ Ibid., pg. 133.

⁵ <https://www.cnn.com/2026/01/06/politics/trump-greenland-venezuela-colombia-miller-analysis>. Accessed January 28, 2026.

⁶ <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1154&context=tampabayhistory#:~:text=THE%201934%20LYNCHING%20OF%20ROBERT%20JOHNSON,-by%20Walter%20Howard&text=to%20mob%20murder%20in%20Tampa.&text=The%20series%20of%20events%20leading,in%20the%20Belmont%20Heights%20area>. Accessed January 29, 2026.

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One need not look hard or far to find injustice yet today. And when injustice is found, we hunger and thirst for righteousness.

Verse 7, “blessed are the merciful.” Mercy is what we extend to others after receiving mercy ourselves. And mercy is connected to meekness, for “to be meek is to acknowledge to others that we are sinners; to be merciful is to have compassion on others, for they are sinners too.”⁷

Verse 8, “blessed are the pure in heart.” If we are meek; if we are merciful, it should follow then that we will also be pure in heart. This verse affirms the sincerity of the believer and challenges the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. In our day, it challenges those who claim to be followers of Christ while clinging to “might makes right” and the like.

Verse 9, “blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.” Jesus’ concern in this beatitude is not with simply being peaceful, but with the act of making peace. It’s a rather broad beatitude, including both the peace that is to be made between God and mortal and the peace that is to be made between two people. As to the first, this beatitude calls to mind the words of the prophet Isaiah:

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.” (Isaiah 52:7).

Notice how peace and salvation are linked together.

As to the second, peace between people, Psalm 133 comes to mind:

¹ How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity! ² It is like the precious oil on the head, running down upon the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down over the collar of his robes. ³ It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion. For there the Lord ordained his blessing, life forevermore. (Psalm 133:1-3).

Finally, in verse 10, Jesus declares that those who are persecuted are blessed. This is no accident, for the world enjoys its cherished hates and prejudices so much that the peacemaker is not always welcome. Opposition is a normal mark of being a follower of Jesus Christ.⁸ Plus, Jesus wants to affirm for us that just because we are suffering for our faith, it does not mean that God has withdrawn his favor from us.

And if we would take these attitudes and actions to heart, Jesus tells us that we will inherit the kingdom of heaven; we will be comforted; we will inherit the earth; we will be sated with righteousness and will receive mercy. We will see God and be adopted as the children of God.

Lauren Daigle might put it this way:

You say I am blessed when I am poor in spirit.
You say I have comfort even when I mourn.

⁷ Carson, pg. 134.

⁸ Ibid., pg. 135.

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You say I am strong when I think I am meek.
And you say I'll be satisfied when I hunger for righteousness.
And I believe, oh, I believe.
And when I long for mercy, sincerity, and peace,
You say I am blessed.
And when the world turns against me,
You say I am still your child.
And I believe, oh, I believe!⁹

⁹ Original "lyrics" by DRS.