**Doors to Blessedness 1: What is Blessedness?**

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**Matthew 5:1-12, Luke 6:20-26**

Are you happy?

This is a question we asked ourselves all the time, I think. It might come in other forms, though, especially negative questions. Such as:

* Why am I so unhappy?
* Why is my life so meaningless?
* Why do I have all this pain?

I remember asking my mother something, probably about what I would do someday for a living. It might have been about how she felt about my going to church, since she didn’t go. She said, “It doesn’t matter; I just want you to be happy.” I really do think this was the most important thing to her.

But she never asked me if I were happy, and I never asked her. “Are you happy?” is a question we almost never ask one another. It’s so, *personal.*

I think we could reel off a list of things that might make us happy: a loving companion, a good job, a nice vacation. I remember my mom saying that she never could afford a nice coat, because she had to spend most of her money on us five boys, and that that would make her happy, a nice coat.

And what is happiness, anyway? What would it mean to even *be* happy?

I remember reading Douglas Adams’s fantasy detective novel, *The Long Dark Tea-Time of the Soul*. One of the things that happens in it concerns Odin, the Norse god, who decides that the best thing in life is a bed with well-tucked in, fresh linen sheets. He was willing to trade all his power and might for a a well-made bed. And sleep.

If you’re a parent with small children, or live an over-busy life, or have thoughts racing through your mind at night, you might be willing to trade a lot for a good night’s sleep in a well-made bed, with or without the Irish linen.

At the same time, I think we are aware that the boyfriend or girlfriend, the good job, the nice house are not enough to guarantee our happiness. Even if we get a good night’s sleep, we’re going to have to get up sometime and face our reality.

What is happiness, anyway? This thing we are so afraid of asking each other about, so afraid of missing?

Let me suggest that one way to understand *happiness* is to understand another word: *blessed*. This isn’t a word that is used much except in non-religious situations. Well, that’s not actually true; it’s often used ironically. People say they’re “hashtag blessed” a lot when they are kind of making fun of some small piece of good luck they’ve had (like having a precalc exam postponed), or for some reason I don’t really understand, when people are doing well in sports.

But *blessed* really is a religious word. As a religious word, it belongs to the world of God, of the spiritual realm. Religious people use the word *blessed* because we understand that it’s not enough just to be happy (sorry, Mom) but to be *blessed*, to be happy in ways that are somehow connected to God. In the sense that he talked about God and our connection to God a lot, Jesus was a very religious person. In what is perhaps Jesus’s most important teaching, Jesus starts by describing people he thinks of as blessed.