



**THE
BRIDGE
CHURCH**

Who Is Really Blessed? *January 30th, 2022*

Good morning, Bridge family. How are you today? So good to see you. Very special welcome if you're joining us online, we see you. We love you guys. We're so glad that you're here. Today begins a ten week series on the Sermon on the Mount.

So if you want to turn to Matthew 5, we're going to be in that section of Scripture for quite an amount of time. With that, let me pray for us and then we'll get started. Let's dive in. God, thank you for the gift of right now, of breath in our lungs. God, thank you for the different stories and experiences that are gathered together.

We ask God, though, that we wouldn't simply sing songs or hear words. We ask that your Holy Spirit, God, would do something in us and through us that only You can do. Whether we come with expectations as high as a mountain or we feel like we're in the pit of the valley, God, would you meet us wherever we're at today. God, we thank you and we love you, and we pray this in the name of Jesus and all God's people said "Amen."

I think it's safe to say that following Jesus has never actually been easy, but some argue that it's never been more difficult than right now. I mean, even before COVID, before the pandemic, fewer people in the west in particular identified as Christian. Fewer people attended church regularly. And the fastest religious group in the United States is something called the so-called Nones, not N-U-N, but N-O-N-E-S—those without any religious affiliation at all. That is the fastest religious group in the United States, those who say "none."

In fact, along with these changes, fewer people even see the Bible as a source for moral or spiritual wisdom. And I think so often we assume that Christians are marginalized because we take Jesus too seriously, that if we would just relax with this whole Jesus/Church/Bible thing, that we'd receive maybe greater acceptance in the culture at large. But what if we have it backwards? What if the underlying problem facing Christians is not that we take Jesus too seriously, but that we've actually failed to take Him seriously enough?

George Barnett makes this observation. He says, "Every day the Church is becoming more like the world it allegedly seeks to change." I realize that's not a real pick-me-up of an introduction, but

stick with me. There's a big difference between praising Jesus and actually following Him. There's a big difference between singing songs even to Him, and actually obeying him. It's not just simply being with Him, becoming like Him—it's for the sake of the world.

It's actually walking in the steps of our Rabbi. My experience is that our culture, our society is actually hungry for the kind of integrity, gentleness, kindness and love that Jesus reveals in His Sermon on the Mount. In fact, I would go a step further. Those of us who claim to be Christ followers, we hold the antidote to the division and anger that is poisoning our culture. And of all the sermons that have ever been preached, I don't think there's a single one that is more famous, more profound, or more convicting than the one that Jesus gives here on this mountain.

Now, my guess is you probably already know a lot of the Sermon on the Mount already. Whether you consider yourself a "church person" or not, I bet you a lot of it's kind of familiar. We've talked about the wise and foolish builders, like "built on the rock or built on the sand." Maybe some of you, you've seen a flannel graph of this, right? Does anyone know what a flannel graph is?

Am I dating myself? Great. Okay. Many of you know the song "Hide it under a bushel." No—what are you going to do with it? "I'm gonna let it shine."

I always had a sassy Sunday school teacher, like "Nuh-uh." If we could cut that from the video, I don't want that going out to the world again. Even if you didn't grow up in church whatsoever, you've probably heard the Lord's Prayer. Some of you may even have it memorized. All of that is here in this Sermon on the Mount.

In fact, even some of the vernacular has sort of permeated its way into our language. Maybe you've heard the phrase "salt of the Earth"—that comes from the Sermon on the Mount. So my challenge for us as we embark on this ten week journey is to see the sermon with fresh eyes. For some of you, that will be very easy. For others of you, you've maybe read it so many times, it's just sort of background noise.

But for the next ten weeks, let's together see this sermon with a fresh set of eyes, to see the sermon as a whole. And I don't think this is scandalous to say, but I don't believe that Jesus would offer a sermon haphazardly. I don't think He's just sort of, like randomly throwing out thoughts as He has them.

For me, I often sort of saw the Sermon on the Mount the way that we see singles on Spotify, right? Those of you under 25, did you know that we used to press music on something called a vinyl? It's true. And people—it's archaic, I know—but we would actually listen to an entire album from beginning to end the way that the artist intended.

Nowadays, we live in sort of this "single" reality. We just listen to whatever track we like at that moment. Unfortunately, we've often done that with scripture. We sort of pick and choose the thing that makes us feel good in this moment. And I'm not against any of that inspiration. If you have a needle stitch on a pillow, Lord, bless you.

I'm just saying it's easy to miss the profound power in the sermon when we only pick and choose the pieces that we're comfortable with. So I want us to see this as a complete message. And here are just a few of the themes here in Jesus's sermon—themes like blessedness, morality, righteousness, responsibility, anxiety, materialism, discernment, humility, judgmentalism, how to pray, who false prophets are (that'll be a fun week)...

What do we do when stuck in dead religion? What generosity looks like, what purity really is, how relationships work, what the golden rule of life is, and where the ultimate source of life can be found. Does that sound relevant to anyone right now? All of that, in 107 verses, we're going to unpack in the next ten weeks.

So we're going to view it as a deliberate structure. Jesus, like a good sermon, starts in one place, moves somewhere else, and concludes somewhere else. We're going to see it as a cohesive sermon, and it's critical that we place it in its context, not only in the book of Matthew, but also in the life and ministry of Jesus. Again, when we cherry-pick, it's easy to miss the context with which this sermon is placed, and context matters. So if you'll allow me, I'm really going to geek out for just a couple more minutes, and then we'll move on to something maybe more fun.

Okay. Authorship. The author of Matthew is a guy named Matthew. He's an Apostle. He was Levi, the tax collector. It was written around 55 to 60 AD, which means it's not long after the events themselves happens. That's really important to hold on to

The location. We call it Sermon on the Mount. It's actually much more likely like a little hill. Some of you picture, like, ESPN X Games. No one's doing snowboarding. This is likely like a little hill. So I want you to get in your mind, he's not like climbing a mountain, it's a hill.

And the unique angle for Matthew in particular is a Jewish audience. It's written to a Jewish audience for them to understand that Jesus is the foretold Messiah, that He is the one that they've been learning about, that they've been reading about, that they've been hearing about. He is the one that you have been told about.

In fact, we see this, the very first chapter in Matthew. Matthew 1:1, the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ—the son of David, the son of Abraham. Okay, so he says, Son of who? David, Israel's greatest King. Now, the phrase "Son of David" shows up repeatedly in Matthew and nowhere else. He wants his audience to understand that Jesus is the promised King who will sit on the throne of David. This is critical to understanding Matthew.

Matthew 2, we have the Christmas story. We have the flight to Egypt. We have Herod killing all the boys aged two and under, and then the return to Nazareth. In Matthew 3, we have one of my favorite characters, John the Baptist. You guys know about John the Baptist? He's like an ancient hipster, like he's wearing real weird clothes. He's eating locusts and honey.

But he uses the phrase over and over and over again: "the Kingdom of Heaven." The Kingdom of Heaven. It shows up six times in the Sermon on the Mount, 31 times throughout all of the Gospel of Matthew. It's a really important phrase that we'll come back to.

Matthew 4, we have the temptation of Jesus, right? Jesus being led out into the desert. We also then have the calling of the first disciples. And then, Matthew five begins the next three chapters of the King offering his manifesto about what the Kingdom is really like. Now, bear with me.

We're going to take just two verses at first, and then I promise we'll move on. But just the first two verses of Matthew 5, it says, "Now when Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to Him and He began to teach them."

Okay, so why were there crowds? If you start at Matthew 5, you don't really know. But if you actually go back to Matthew 4, we get a bit of a glimpse as to why. Matthew 4:23: "Jesus went through Galilee teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming good news of the Kingdom and healing every disease and sickness among the people. News about him spread all over Syria"—rightfully so, I would say—"and people brought to Him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon possessed, those having seizures and the paralyzed. And he healed them."

Okay, so why were the crowds gathering? Because of His teaching, maybe, but much more likely because of his signs and wonders. Jesus is doing these radical things that no one had ever seen before, and rightfully so, these crowds begin to gather. So Jesus, He sees these people closing in, and what does He do about it? He says, "Well, I better get up on a little mountain here. I better get up on a little hill."

Now, this is also really easy to miss. But who were the original hearers? What was His primary audience? His primary audience was not the crowds that gathered, although they're there to hear it.

His primary audience is the disciples. That's his primary audience, the people who have already been walking with Him. They're the ones who have left their net, and they are apprenticing this Rabbi Jesus. And here's a phrase that I want us to keep coming back to throughout this series that might rattle some of us. When we read Scripture, we have to remember that the Bible was written for us, but it was not written to us. Does that track?

It's written for us, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, illuminates in real time things right now. Many of you know that experience. You read a passage and you're like, "How did the Lord know this is what I needed right now?" The Bible is written for us. It was not written to us.

There's a context. There's a people group. There's a language and a space and a time and a location. So I'm sure the question that is burning in all of your hearts is, why did Jesus sit down? Right? Some of you are like, "Uh, He was tired, right?"

That's a legitimate answer. The language here is actually very specific. Remember, Matthew wants his readers, his hearers, to understand Jesus as King. If you want to do some more homework, you can read Psalm 80 or Hebrews 1. But have you ever studied the Tabernacle before?

The Tabernacle, the Ark of the Covenant, is where God's presence dwelled. And there's one piece of furniture in the Tabernacle designed for sitting. It's called the mercy seat.

There's one piece in the whole arrangement that's designed for sitting. When we see Jesus go up on a mountain and sit down, He is being portrayed for us as the King who is taking His seat to deliver His manifesto about the Kingdom. This would have been blatantly obvious to a first-century Jewish audience, but for us, it's very easy to miss.

So why is Jesus on a mountainside? I don't think it was just for the view. I don't think he really is into Thomas Kinkade paintings, like, "Oh, it would be pretty if I sat up there." Matthew actually has a thing for mountains. If you read the Gospel of Matthew, you'll see this theme of mountains show up again and again. What's going on here?

Well, to understand what Matthew was getting at here, you need to go all the way back to Exodus 20. Many of us know Exodus 20, right? It's when God gave the Ten Commandments to Charlton Heston. Do you guys remember? You guys remember that scene, right?

Is that a dated reference? Raise your hand if you don't know who Charlton Heston is. All right! I did better than I thought. Okay. By the way, this is the exact face my toddler makes whenever I try to ask him for some of his food. This is anyone with toddlers.

He was an actor from like 600 years ago or something like that. Anyway, many of us are familiar with that scene, even if you don't know anything about Church or scripture. And the scene was actually pretty terrifying. Here's what we read in Exodus 20. It says, "When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear and they stayed at a distance."

Do you know why I think that's significant for us? You might be thinking, why is he going on this weird Ten Commandments rabbit trail? The last time that God spoke to his people from a mountain, it was terrifying. It was thunder and smoke and trumpets. They were terrified and they backed away. But in Matthew 5, we see something dramatically different.

In Exodus 20, the people cower and they back up. But in Matthew 5, the people draw nearer. This is the beauty and the truth of God. With us, we see this prophecy from Isaiah 2 coming true. The Sermon on the Mount is good news for each of us.

And for these next ten weeks, I want us to keep in mind the treasure that it is that we can draw near to God because he draws near to us. May we never become bored with that truth, with that reality. He's being portrayed as King on this mountain. And yet rather than cower and back away, what do people do? They draw near. They come close.

Okay, so the next question I want us to grapple with... I realized there were only a couple of verses, and I promise I'll move faster for the second half. If the primary audience is the disciples, what were

they thinking? What were they thinking when Jesus, the Rabbi, sits down to teach them? What did they know of the Messiah?

As best I can tell, here are at least three things the disciples knew or thought about the Messiah. One, that this Messiah would free them from Roman oppression. That's what the Messiah would come to do. Two, that He would be a King in a literal sense. And three, that He would restore Israel to its prior greatness.

The assumption of the disciples was that whoever the Messiah was was going to be this great military leader that was going to restore their nation to its former glory by overthrowing the government, taking the throne, and then ruling with an iron fist. That was their assumption. So imagine you're a disciple. You're the in-crowd. You get called to this teaching from Jesus, that's your idea of what the Messiah is going to be... They had to have been looking at each other, thinking, "We're going to be rock stars. We're in. We're the upper echelon."

And Jesus begins to untangle for them their misinterpretation of scripture, which I have to at least ask, is that possibly true for any of us? That maybe we've believed things that aren't actually true? We've got tangled up in our own lives and our own heart, in our own head, things that aren't actually true? Jesus sits down to teach His disciples, and then He utters nine statements, a Kingdom ethic that turned everything upside down.

So we're only going to unpack half of the Beatitudes today. But I'm going to read all of them right now. And what I would love for you to do is, as I read them, note the one in your head the one you disagree with the most. As we come to it, I want you to pay attention to the one that you go, "That one doesn't sound right. That doesn't seem true."

Here's what he says. He says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the Earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

I want you to imagine how upside down that list must have sounded to these disciples who had in their mind a picture of what the Messiah was supposed to look like. And then He utters these statements about who is really blessed.

Now before we dive into them, a brief caution. I think it's easy to look at the Beatitudes as like a set of achievements. Like, "These are things I'm supposed to chase after in order to be blessed." To be clear, these are not instructions on how to be blessed. Jesus is saying the divine benediction rests on people like this. It's good news, not to-dos.

Does that make sense? He's not saying now strive to be more like these things. Theologian Stanley Hauerwas speaks to this. He says, "Too often those characteristics of the Beatitudes are turned into ideals we strive to attain. As ideals, they can become formulas for power rather than descriptions of the kinds of people characteristic of the new age brought by Christ," which, by the way, we can do with all of Scripture.

Like, I'm inclined to do that as much as anybody. But he goes on, speaking of the Sermon on the Mount, "Jesus does not tell us that we should try to become poor in spirit, or meek, or peacemakers. He simply says that many who are called into the Kingdom will find themselves so constituted." Saying, if we're following in the ways of this Rabbi in the ways of his Kingdom, we will find ourselves in the Beatitudes. We don't strive for them, but because we are living differently, we're becoming them. That's part of what it means to be with and become like Jesus.

Theologian NT Wright says this. He says, "These blessings, this wonderful news that he's announcing, are not saying 'try hard to live like this.' They are saying that people who are already like that are in good shape. They should be happy and celebrate." It's so easy for us to think, "Well, okay, I will be blessed if I do these things."

But really, what He's saying is the divine blessing rests on this kind of person. He's saying the Kingdom is available to all, but the people closest to it might surprise you. This is why it was so scandalous when little kids were coming to Jesus and they tried to shoo them away and he said, "No. In fact, unless you become like them, you won't enter." Jesus is regularly inverting the whole thing.

People that the culture of the time thought, "Well, they're certainly the closest," Jesus said, "Let me actually tell you who's closer to the Kingdom than them." The Kingdom is available to everybody.

But those who are closest might surprise you. The Beatitudes are not a list of doing, but a list of being. So let's unpack just four of them.

First, verse three. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven." So Jesus doesn't ease in, does he? He doesn't get the water warm. He just pulls the pin on the grenade and chucks it in, right?

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven." I mean, think about this: who does the world see is "#blessed." It's always the rich, the wealthy, the successful, the confident. Jesus says, "Actually, no, that's actually not the case." Just for a moment, I want you to picture in your mind the worst poverty that you've ever seen. Really go there for a second.

What was it like emotionally to see that or to be in that kind of space? What did it look like? What did it sound like? What did it smell like? And the question that I want to ask is: that picture that you're picturing mentally, does that picture of poverty reflect the way that you see yourself in relation to God?

Essentially, poverty means one who has insufficient resources to help themselves, one who cannot get themselves out of their current circumstance. This is someone who is destitute—not someone who can't afford Express so they shop at Target, okay? Which, by the way, I shop at Target. Clearly, this is all Target, just so that we're clear.

But that's not what he's talking about here. It's someone completely unable to help themselves. In fact, we see a scene that sort of unpacks us a little bit in Luke 18, where a Pharisee and a tax collector are both in the temple. The Pharisee says, "Thank you, God, that I am not like this tax collector."

And the tax collector says, "Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner." That's poor in spirit. Poor in spirit recognizes, "How dumb would it be for me to brag to God about how Holy I've been this week?" A Pharisee would never admit that they were spiritually poor because they were certain that they were racking up points in the Kingdom.

Jesus says, "Let me tell you who's actually blessed." The divine benediction rests on those who recognize their lack of spiritual resources to save themselves. Blessed is that person.

There's an image that I saw that I actually think helps convey this a little bit. There's a point of conversion, but you've heard me say I don't think conversion is just simply about praying some prayer so I go to heaven when I die. I think it's about surrender and trust. It's about allegiance to the way of Jesus. But let's just say that is like our point where we recognize those things.

I think two things happen. One, there's a growing awareness of God's Holiness. The best mentors and leaders and pastors I know are the ones who are saying, "I've only begun to scratch the surface, and I'm 90. Like, I'm just now really starting to get a taste for God's Holiness, His goodness, His love and affection."

But at the same time, I believe there's a growing awareness of my sinfulness. Some of us, especially if you grew up in the church, maybe we prayed a prayer, we were baptized, but in our head we're like, "God should be pretty glad to have me on his team. I bring a lot of pretty killer skills to the table. Right? Like, "Yeah, I maybe stole a muffin or told a white lie, but I'm pretty decent." I think the longer that we walk with Jesus, the more we realize the depths of how much we couldn't save ourselves.

And they happen simultaneously. It's a beautiful thing. Secondly, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

Now, I think that there are two aspects of this. I think one, if you've ever experienced real grief or sorrow or pain, I think there's something beautiful that happens in that moment when we're truly comforted, when we feel seen and known. And I think that we experience the divine when that happens. But I think what Jesus is getting at is actually even deeper than that. I think this is a mourning over sin. It's a mourning over our state and the world state apart from Christ.

I think one of the best examples is the Book of Nehemiah. As they're rebuilding, they discovered the Book of the Law. And from morning to night, they read the law to the people, and their response was weeping. They read the Book of the Law morning and night, and they wept. Why?

Because when they understood what an offense their actions had been to God, their hearts are broken and together they grieve. Honestly, when it comes to our own sin, I think most of us fit into three categories. One is just full-blown denial. You have an addiction that you're not cognizant of all, regardless of how many people have told you, you have a sin pattern, a toxic behavior... Just full-blown denial.

Second is, like, curious. Like, "Yeah, you know what? There might be something in here that's actually not all good and right and true." And then third is brokenness. It's saying, "Honestly, you'll get no argument from me that I'm pretty jacked up, that I've been cracked in half," which can lead us either to despair or hope in God. It can either lead us to like, "Well, I'll never be good enough, smart enough, successful enough, righteous enough on my own," or hope found in the grace of Jesus Christ.

Jesus says, "Those of you who are broken, you're blessed." Why? Because you've come face to face with something others haven't. Most every time that I meet with someone who has dealt with some sort of serious addiction, it's really interesting because they almost always speak of their rock bottom moment with some kind of affection. Not because it was like a fun season for them, but because when they hit rock bottom—I've heard this said over and over and over again—they say, "It's when I got to stop hiding. I got to stop pretending. Looking this in the face and realizing all the devastation it was causing—that grief, that mourning is when I actually began to heal."

There's an English Bible teacher named Arthur Pink. He says it this way: "Thousands acknowledge they are sinners who have never mourned over the fact."

It's one thing to acknowledge intellectually "I'm a sinner. I'm a little less perfect than God, I suppose." Right? Acknowledging it is one thing. Mourning over it is something else. Jesus is saying, without that grief, there isn't real comfort. "Blessed are those who mourn."

Verse 5: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the Earth." Now, the word meek is the word "praus." Let me hear you say "praus." Again, I have no idea if that's the correct pronunciation. It's spelled right in my notes.

Meek is not a synonym for weak, by the way. It's someone who sets aside their will for someone else. It's power under control. And yet we often say the opposite, right? We don't say the meek will inherit the Earth. It's always the powerful. It's those who assert themselves. It's those who dominate.

But Jesus says, "No, no, it's those who set aside their will that will inherit the Earth." When we say, when we pray, "Lord, Your will be done, not mine," we're modeling meekness. It's a way of recognizing that everything is a gift. Do we know that, by the way, this morning? Everything this side of hell is a gift. Everything. That breath that we all just took is a gift. We're not owed any of that.

So when we pray, "Your will be done, not mine", it's not just simply a nice thing to pray at the end of a gathering or before we eat a meal. It's setting aside my will for God and His Kingdom and His ways, recognizing it's all a gift in the first place.

And then lastly, verse 6. We'll wrap up with this one. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied." Notice He doesn't say, "Blessed are those who are full. Blessed are those who have everything they need." You get the picture of how all of us felt, I'm sure, after Thanksgiving dinner, like, "I could barely roll myself out of this chair." He didn't say, "Blessed is that person." He said, "Blessed is the one who hungers and thirsts for righteousness," who looks at the world and says, "I'm not okay with this brokenness. I'm not okay with this exploitation. I'm not okay with harm being done, especially in the name of Jesus. I'm not okay with that. I hunger and thirst for things to be made right." And if we don't hunger and thirst for righteousness, we might just be full of ourselves.

What do we hunger for? He says blessed is the one who looks at the world and feels an ache, a longing, and says, "This isn't how it should be. This isn't what God intended." Now, when we speak of righteousness, I think there's maybe no better passage in, arguably, all of scripture than 2 Corinthians 5. Paul writes to the Church in Corinth. He says, "For our sake, He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God."

That's really good news. God made Him who knew no sin to be sin, so that in Him, in Christ we might become the righteousness of God. I've often heard people depict the crucifixion in really graphic, grueling ways, and rightfully so. But I don't think the physical pain of the crucifixion could hold a candle to the weight of the sins of the world being placed on Him. He became sin, not as an object lesson, not to prove a point... So that in Him, in Christ, we might become the righteousness of God.

Where does our righteousness come from? Not in some moral code, not in how well we check boxes or how well we behave in culture. It comes from Christ Himself. He is our righteousness. Jesus is saying, "That should create a hunger in you, for that righteousness to reach every corner of the Earth."

It makes me think of the Prodigal Son. The story of the Prodigal Son, the Son basically says to his father, "I wish you were dead. Give me my inheritance." He goes off and he squanders it. There's this passage in Luke 15 where it just simply says, "He began to be in need."

I think that's such a profound awareness. He began to be in need. He began to look at his circumstance and think, "What am I doing here? What is this?" So he gets himself together and he plans to make a case to his father, like, "Please, just let me be a servant in your household. I'm happy to be just like way down here." And while he was a long way off, the Father runs after him. He almost interrupts him. The son tries to make some sort of explanation for why he's been gone and beg for forgiveness. The father says, "Nonsense," and he throws a cloak over him and he throws a party for him.

Mercy gave him forgiveness, but grace threw him a feast. He didn't just say, "All right, I guess I'll let you squeak back in, but I hope you learned your lesson." Mercy gave him forgiveness but grace threw him a feast. That's what it means to be in the Kingdom, not just to pray a prayer and like squeak into heaven 80, 90 years from now when we die. He throws him a feast.

I'll end with this. There's a book by Philip Yancey called "What Good Is God?" And in it he tells the story of the 2004 Ukraine election in which the reformer Viktor Yushchenko challenged the entrenched party and nearly died for it. That was a big no-no. On Election Day, the exit polls showed you Yushchenko with a comfortable lead. But through outright fraud, the government had reversed those results.

So there was a news broadcast. It was a state-run television show that reported, "Ladies and gentlemen, we announce the challenger, Victor Yushchenko, has been decisively defeated." But the authorities forgot one very important piece. They'd not take into account one important feature of Ukrainian television, and that's the translation it provided for the hearing impaired. On the small screen insert in the lower right-hand corner of the television screen, a brave woman gave a different message in sign language.

This is what she said. "I'm addressing all of the deaf citizens of Ukraine. Don't believe what they say. They're lying. They are lying. And I'm ashamed to translate the lies. Yushchenko is our President."

No one in the studio knew what was happening. They didn't know sign language. They had no clue. And inspired by that courageous translator, the deaf community led what became known as the Orange Revolution. In fact, news got out. People started texting each other about what had actually happened. And soon other journalists took courage and likewise refused to broadcast the party line.

Over the next few weeks, something like a million people wearing orange flooded the capital city to demand new elections. The government finally buckled beneath the pressure. They consented new elections, and Yushchenko emerged as the undisputed winner.

Here's how Yancey ties that together. He writes this: "Our society is hardly unique. Like the sign language translator in the lower right hand corner of the screen, along comes a person named Jesus who says, in effect, 'Don't believe the big screen. They're lying. Don't believe the narrative. It's wrong. It's the poor who are blessed, not the rich. It's mourners who are blessed, too, as well as those who hunger and thirst and are persecuted. Those who go through life thinking they're on top will actually end up at the bottom. And those who go through life feeling like they're at the very bottom will end up on top. After all, what does it profit a person to gain the whole world yet lose his soul?'"

What if we began, together, to ask the question, "Did Jesus really mean that? Is that actually true? Is this upside-down way of the Kingdom actually what we're invited into?" And I would answer with a resounding yes, and it's far more beautiful and more profound than any of us could dream or imagine.

May we not just simply be people of intellectual assent, but people who proclaim and usher in the upside-down Kingdom of God here and now, wherever he has us. Would you pray with me?

God, I know in my own life that there have been a lot of times I've struggled to actually, truly believe those words. God, forgive me for the times that I've tried to excuse it away or make it about something else. God, we're not satisfied with some sort of intellectual assent that doesn't actually affect the lives that we live out. God, of those of us who feel burdened, overwhelmed, crushed, weighed down like they are the ones who are mourning and grieving, God, would you be with them even in this moment and remind them of their blessedness, that there is a God who sees them, and knows them, and comforts them, comes alongside them, God. May we be a people of the Kingdom of God, wherever you have us. God, we thank you and we love you and we pray all this in the beautiful name of Jesus, and all God's people said, "Amen."