

## RADICAL GRATITUDE!

Scripture used: Matthew 5:1-12 (NIV)

### OVERVIEW

This week's sermon offers us a different understanding of gratitude based on Jesus' radical message in The Beatitudes. Typically, we think of gratitude as linked to positive outcomes and fulfilled dreams. But Radical gratitude is an everpresent part of our lives no matter the circumstances. Jesus wanted us to understand adversity as something that draws us closer to God.

To reinforce this point, we heard the inspiring story of Dwight & Maria Powery, who lost their youngest daughter Christiana at the age of 10. The couple shared their story of moving from grief to gratitude. They learned to surrender their anger and pain to avoid letting a wedge form between each other, or with God. They also made sure to worship Him however it came to them, including: reading scripture, journal writing, and morning prayer. Their reaction to the illness ended up bringing many to Christ, and also led to important medical advances that saved the lives of other children. In all of this time, the two of them and their surviving daughters slowly came to know again God's peace (Phil. 4:7) -- and found this tragedy even leading each of them to meaningful careers in the social sector. You can learn more about Christiana's remarkable life by visiting <http://www.alsotouch.com/>

### KEY POINTS

- **Typical gratitude is fine, but cannot sustain us.** Of course, we should be grateful when things go well. But this type of gratitude will always be tied to the fulfillment of our expectations and hopes. It will never last. Our fear of loss will eventually destroy this kind of gratitude. It's not just about "count your blessings!"
- **Jesus offers us a different notion of gratitude and blessings in The Beatitudes, especially to:**
  - **Those who are poor in spirit.** We fear poverty because it will make us completely dependent on others. But, as Christians, we must be able to lean on God in all situations.
  - **Those who are mourning.** We desperately try to avoid death all our lives, and each of us will ultimately fail. We cannot escape death. We can only turn confidently to God for the comfort of eternal life that He has promised us.
  - **Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.** The world is full of wronged people. They desperately seek justice for themselves and others. And even though these efforts sometimes don't appear to bear fruit, God has promised us justice in His kingdom.
- **Jesus offered us The Beatitudes not just as a teacher, but as the Son of God!** He was empowering us to be more than conquerors in this world. We will not be destroyed by adversity. That is the reality we experience as subjects in His kingdom.
- **We need to open up our hearts to radical gratitude by following three steps:**
  - **Grieve well.** Be honest with God about how you are feeling, even if the emotions are negative. This honesty lays the foundation for the healing you will experience.
  - **Forgive well.** Make peace with everyone you blame for the situation, including God. Our grief is known to Him, since His own Son died on the cross. We can trust Him with our sadness.
  - **Worship well.** See God as He truly is, a divine comforter (see 2 Cor 1:3-5, which Dwight referenced). He never promised to protect us from the broken world, but He did promise to transform the world through our faithfulness.

### DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - Most of us naturally feel gratitude when things turn out right. But what about those situations that devastate us and our families? Am I close enough with God to bring Him my anger, fear, and pain?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - Jesus described a variety of "blessed" people in The Beatitudes, including the poor, mourning, and persecuted. Do I believe that someone can truly be blessed in any of these situations?
- 3) **DO** - Write down, "In all things, help me to be grateful" and pray over that message each day this week. Identify one area in your life where the situation did not turn out as you wanted. Use this as an opportunity to express gratitude to God, and look for the blessings that Jesus promised.