

Resurrected to Rescue the Rejected

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at Oak Grove Baptist Church, Paducah, Ky.
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Matthew 5:1-20

And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. 2 Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying: 3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4 Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted. 5 Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth. 6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled. 7 Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy. 8 Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God. 9 Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God. 10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. 12 Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. 13 You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. 14 You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. 16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. 17 Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. 18 For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. 19 Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.”

My text is not a usual Easter Sunday text. I do intend to discuss with you the resurrection of our Lord Jesus even though this text says nothing about it. My aim is to put the resurrection of our Lord in the necessary context. In other words, I want you to see it less as a religious holiday and see it more for what it was meant to be—the sure proof of the availability of God’s kingdom. The resurrection is sure evidence that God’s kingdom is available to all of you.

The Apostle Paul said the resurrection was about our justification, our vindication that we are right with God. If you’re honest, you know that at some point and time in your life you became aware that you were not right with God because you did what all of us have done—you followed your own nature and sinned. We sin because we are sinners. I know that’s an unpopular word, I know it’s not politically correct to use the word *sinner* so let me use it for myself. I am a sinner who has been forgiven and now I am a saint who still sins. But I know that in my goodness I would

flunk God's test of righteousness. Therefore, the resurrection, according to the Apostle Paul, is God's way of vindicating or justifying me or declaring that after all my sin I am right in His eyes. It is the proof that we are acceptable to God and that He has declared us righteous. We normally think of justification being provided not through the resurrection but by the death of Christ. Surely, the Bible credits our justification to His substitutionary death, but in Romans 4:25 Paul says that the resurrection is also essential to God's granting us justification. He says, "who [Jesus Christ] was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification." He was raised from the dead so you can be declared righteous before God.

How is the resurrection of Jesus connected with our being declared right or justified by God? It is by Jesus' identification with you. The resurrection is about you being forgiven, your guilt removed, and your standing be perfect before God. Jesus came to be considered you. Jesus came to be Chandra before God. To be Gary before God. To be Amanda. To be Stan. To be Michael before God. He identified with you, to say, "I've come to be Ty before God." He identified with you. "Alan, I identify with you."

Jesus came to be so identified with you that what was true about you would be true about Him and what's true about me, what's true about you? We're no good. Let's be honest. You may not like my honesty but it's still the truth, isn't it? I'm no good. As far as God's concerned, I draw a blank. I am a fat zero in the eyes of God as far as being like Him. I fail before I even get started. But Jesus came and said, "I'm going to step into your shoes. I'm going to represent you so that what's true about Me will be true about you." Just the opposite.

It's that identification that is our hope. He was the substitute in every sense of the word. His life of obedience was lived as our life. Every good thing He did, resisting temptation, obeying His Father, every miracle, everything He did He did as living your life before God. That means that He fulfilled everything required of you and me and therefore His death is also our death. His death for sin was our death for our sins so that when He died He was being considered by God guilty with our sins upon His head. That is why you can say Jesus died in your place.

Therefore, when God raised Jesus from the dead, the effect was not only that Jesus was vindicated or justified by God as being a perfect Son of perfect obedience, but you were also vindicated before God as being perfect just like His Son. That's why I'm excited this morning about this day. We too, because Jesus completely identified with us, are just before God and acceptable as much as He accepts Jesus.

The resurrection is our guarantee, your guarantee that you have been accepted in the Beloved (Ephesians 1:6). You're accepted. Hear me—you're accepted today! If you're not identified with Christ, by faith trusting Him, clinging to Him, depending upon Him, let me tell you good news: the doors of heaven have not been closed to you! There's still time to be identified with Jesus. The kingdom of God is opened to we who were once rejected from its borders and were considered its enemy. For most of us in the kingdom of God we are still rejected by the kingdoms of men and considered unfit for many reasons. We are the base, the vile, the weak, and the unwanted. If

it were not for God wanting us, most of us would not be wanted by the elite and powerful of our culture.

That is why our text and the entirety of the Sermon of the Mount is important and serves as a key element in our understanding the significance of the Lord's resurrection. By His resurrection He's opened up the kingdom to you! I've been preaching and talking a lot about the kingdom lately because God is doing a revival of my understanding of the kingdom. When you think of the kingdom of God, where God rule and His influence as King is known, you must come to the Sermon on the Mount because it's all about the kingdom. The most famous message Jesus ever preached is the Sermon on the Mount, but what is this sermon all about?

I. THE SERMON'S THEME

I think it's important that we first see what it isn't because there's a great deal of misunderstanding about the Sermon on the Mount. I'm here to do a mea culpa, to confess to you that I've gotten it wrong in some places on this Sermon on the Mount. These are the things that are exciting me as I'm studying more in depth about the kingdom of God. Let me tell you quickly what this message is not about.

A. What It Isn't.

The sermon is not a new law replacing the Law of Moses. That's a common interpretation of these verses and this whole sermon. Some say all Jesus is doing is setting Himself up as the new law giver, replacing Moses. Even the scene, certain scholars point out, is purposefully done on a mountain to replicate Moses receiving the law of God on Mount Sinai. But that's not what Jesus is doing. He says it clearly in His own words:

“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. ¹⁸ For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. ¹⁹ Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 5:17-19)

At this point there are still things from the Old Testament that haven't been fulfilled yet. Jesus is clearly not saying He is the new Moses, the new lawgiver. It was Jesus who gave Moses the law.

Second, the sermon is not a message on how to get into the kingdom. This is crucial because, for me, I've had some problems in this area. To me, you read this sermon and it's like Jesus is saying this is what you need if you want to be in His kingdom. That's not what Jesus is doing and I'm thankful.

If He were replacing Moses and giving us a new law, I think I would rather have the Law of Moses. I mean, stop and think about it. At least under the Law of Moses I could lop off the head of an

enemy. David did a lot of severing of heads in the name of God, did he not? And God was with him. *An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.* This loving your enemy stuff is a whole lot more difficult, let's be frank. To be merciful to those who aren't merciful to you is a great deal more difficult.

Jesus was not here to replace the Old Testament law. If He were, then becoming poor in spirit, mourning for sins, learning to be meek and merciful, cultivating spiritual hunger, mediating disputes, and being pure and persecuted would become the new gate to the kingdom. In other words, you would get into the kingdom by doing these things. Jesus is not telling you this is how you get into the kingdom. You've got to be poor in spirit, you've got to be meek, you've got to be hungry for righteousness, you've got to be merciful, you've got to be persecuted, and if you are all those things, then blessed you are and you're going to be in the kingdom of God. I'm thankful that's not what Jesus is doing here. Yet, haven't we read these beatitudes this way in the past? *I need to be poor in spirit so I can be in the kingdom.* That is completely missing what Jesus is saying.

For example, being poor in spirit is not a good thing. It means you have no good of which God can see that would qualify you to be blessed by Him. Being spiritually poor is not a good thing. It's to be void of anything good and that is *not good*.

Since being spiritually poor is not good, we come up with another way to turn the sermon into a list of things we can do in order to get into God's favor or blessedness. We say being spiritually poor is not good, but knowing that we are poor spiritually is good. So we interpret Jesus saying if we know we are poor in spirit and we mourn over the fact that we are in such a state, then we are blessed.

I have said that to you and I apologize. I now see that's not what Jesus is doing here. I see it now. Jesus did not say anything about knowing our spiritual poverty He just simply said those who are. In fact, Luke's recording of this sermon says it this way, "Blessed are the poor for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." He doesn't add the words *in spirit*. He just says if you've got a problem with your bankroll blessed are you. Heaven's yours if you're financially poor; you're in. How many of us would be happy about that if that was what Jesus was saying? *I'm in because I don't have much!* However, that's not what Jesus is saying either.

He's not giving you a new set of laws that if you just do these things you can be blessed by God. If that's all He was doing, then what need do we have of Him? Why was His death necessary? Why was the resurrection necessary? If we're not careful, we'll turn the Sermon on the Mount into a new system of requirements so we can scratch the itch of our flesh to please God in our own power. That's what we end up doing with this marvelous message. If merely knowledge of our spiritual bankruptcy was enough to make us blessed by God, He would have said that very thing.

Simply knowing you're spiritually empty and grieving over it and being humbled by it is not the way you get into the kingdom of God. To achieve spiritual attainment is not as simple as acknowledging you don't have much spiritual attainment. I've met many a man and woman who told me, "I know I'm going to die and go to hell because I'm a sinner." They acknowledged their spiritual poverty but they did not acknowledge Jesus. They were not in the kingdom.

So what is this sermon about?

B. What the Theme of the Sermon Is.

The theme is to confront false religion. This is real to us. Before we say, "Thatta boy, get 'em Jesus. Get those self-righteous religious people!" I want you to realize that maybe He could be talking about us. He says in verse 20, which I believe is the key verse for the whole sermon.

"For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:20)

Put yourself back in the days of Jesus. There was only one acceptable religion in all of Judea and that was Judaism. Those who practiced it and preached it were the ministers of the religious system of that day, the scribes and the Pharisees. Jesus said to His audience that if their righteousness was not better than their ordained clergy they were not getting into the kingdom of God. Thus Jesus exposed the insufficiency and error of the religious system of His day. I believe with all of my heart that if Jesus were walking on this earth right now He would walk into many evangelical churches and say the exact same thing. You can make a false religion out of the Christian tenants and doctrines as well as the scribes and lawyers made a false system out the Old Testament.

The second focus for the Sermon on the Mount is Jesus wanted to show us who was in the kingdom.

The beatitudes come from a word that means *blessed*. "Blessed are the peacemakers," "blessed are they that mourn" etc. The word *blessed* is sometimes translated *happy* and some of your Bibles may have it that way but that's a weak translation. It can mean happy but the idea is best translated, *favored*. Who does God like and bless? That's what the word means. Notice there are no commands in the beatitudes. They are simply statements of facts about those already in the kingdom.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:3)

This is present tense.

NET—*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to them.*

This leads me to the most important reason and the purpose of this sermon and that is to proclaim the availability of the kingdom to those rejected and shut out by the religious.

The whole point of the Sermon on the Mount was to turn the religious world upside down. He did that by proclaiming the kingdom was open to the very ones the religious system had excluded. That's the purpose of this message, to tell people who thought they had no chance with God. These people who thought they had a snowball chance in hell with God, God now shows them that's not true. He tells them He's come and the kingdom has come with Him because He's the King and He's opened the doors to people who are the religious rejects. That's what this sermon is all about.

It was the rich and privileged that were believed to be the blessed by God in Jesus' day. Again, you have to understand the culture. Judaism had evolved in Jesus' day to believe that if you were wealthy or privileged you had a good life, a blessed life, a successful life, a comfortable life, then that meant God was blessing you and you had His favor. You were considered right with God. That's why the disciples reacted so strangely to the dialogue Jesus had with the young rich ruler in Matthew. Do you remember the story?

Here comes one of these religious guys to Jesus. He's young, he's climbed the religious ladder early in life, he's succeeding, and he's an awesome young man. And he's quite wealthy, which was not uncommon for the preachers of that day. He comes to Jesus and says, "I've been watching You and I know there's something different about You and it's led me to believe there is something missing in me. Something is wrong. What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus gives him a few commandments. "But I've done those," he answered.

Jesus said, "Okay, you lack one thing. If you really want Me to tell you how you can get eternal life, here it is. Go take everything you have and sell it and give it to the poor and then I want you to come follow Me." The young man stood there for a moment and I think he probably ducked his head and maybe even with his foot he kicked the ground as he was processing this. Then he turned around and walked away. He couldn't do it.

I'm going to tell you two reasons why he couldn't. We usually only think there's one but there's two. The first reason why he couldn't do it was first, of course, because he loved his money. But secondly, he had a theological problem with it. From early consciousness to that day he had been trained in the Bible to believe that if you had wealth it was God's blessing. In effect, he heard Jesus say to give up God's blessings. He must have thought to himself, "I know there is something missing, I know that, but my wealth is God's favor! This I am sure of." That's what he doctrinally, theologically, and religiously had come to believe. It was difficult for him to turn loose of the sign that he was favored by God.

On the other hand, it was the poor, the weak, the sick, and the undesirables that were believed to be under the curse of God. This is the religious day of Jesus. You went to the synagogue on Saturday, that was the Sabbath, and this is what you were taught. And if you believed those who stood in the pulpit you accepted their teaching as being from God. They had the Scriptures and they told you what the Scriptures meant. They told you if your life is poor, if you're weak, if you're miserable, if your life is unsuccessful, and you have one failure after another and life is a disappointment, then your life is cursed by God. Where did they get that? From the Old Covenant.

The Old Covenant blessing was a physical blessing. Look at Deuteronomy 28:11-13, it's the whole chapter really but I'm going to give you a little sample. This is what these people heard every Sabbath. This is the Law of God through the servant Moses. God said through Moses, "If you obey Me, Israel, I'm going to bless you and it will be physical blessings. I'll bless you and increase your wealth, health, and success. I'll bless you physically."

“And the LORD will grant you plenty of goods, in the fruit of your body, in the increase of your livestock, and in the produce of your ground, in the land of which the LORD swore to your fathers to give you. ¹² The LORD will open to you His good treasure, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season, and to bless all the work of your hand. You shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow. ¹³ And the LORD will make you the head and not the tail; you shall be above only, and not be beneath, if you heed the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you today, and are careful to observe them.” (Deuteronomy 28:11-13)

If we were to keep on reading, you would read then the curses. The curse is, if you don't obey God, just the opposite will happen. The land will be cursed, it will not produce well, the heavens won't produce rain so your crops will fail, you'll have sicknesses and plagues, some of the same plagues God put on Egypt. He would curse them so they would not have success.

From this they developed the doctrine of those who are wealthy and well are blessed and those who are not prosperous or popular are not blessed. But they didn't rightly interpret what God was saying. God did not say that if your life is difficult then you're cursed. He didn't say that. He just promised that if you obey what He would do in general to the nation. They extrapolated from that the wrong conclusion that if you have a difficult life that means you're cursed and if you have a good life you're blessed.

After this event transpired, Jesus walks up to the disciples and they are shocked at what they just saw because they looked at that young man as the religious goal. *I want to be good like that man. That's a real spiritual young man.* Jesus turned to them and said,

“Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. ²⁴ And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” ²⁵ When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, “Who then can be saved?” (Matthew 19:23-25)

Jesus, we've been taught our whole lives that these are the people we ought to emulate and strive to be like, we're supposed to be like him—if he's not saved, who then can be?! Do you see their shock? Jesus was cutting against the religious grain of His time.

The religious considered the common people cursed and ignorant of the law.

“Then the officers came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, “Why have you not brought Him?” ⁴⁶ The officers answered, “No man ever spoke like this Man!” ⁴⁷ Then the Pharisees answered them, “Are you also deceived? ⁴⁸ Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed in Him? ⁴⁹ But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed.” (John 7:45-49)

The religious leaders of Jesus' day considered the masses of the people of Israel to be under a curse and not knowing the law because they weren't wealthy or comfortable or elite or privileged like them.

Look at Jesus' audience. Go back to the Sermon on the Mount in chapter four when Matthew wrote this. Matthew did not put the chapter division. Chapter four flows right into chapter five. This multitude that is following Jesus is described as our Lord's audience.

“And Jesus went about all Galilee,”

Do you know anything about Galilee? It was like the Appalachia of Judea. According to the elite of Jesus' day it was where the ignorant hill folk lived. These were the poorest of the poor, the untouchables.

“teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people.”

Sick people. Again, in the minds of the religious those were cursed people.

“Then His fame went throughout all Syria;

Syria is not a part of Israel, which means Syrian gentiles were following Christ.

“and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed,”

You can't get more evil than that—the devil owns you and possesses you. And these are the kinds of people following Jesus?

“epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them. ²⁵ Great multitudes followed Him—from Galilee, and from Decapolis,”

Decapolis is a Gentile area. It's the place where the Gadarene was demon possessed and Jesus cast out the demons and they entered into the pigs that went over the cliff and drowned.

“Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan.” (Matthew 4:23-25)

Here are the kinds of people who are following Jesus and Jesus is touching them, blessing them. It's to the religious rejects that God came to work amongst! This sermon is saying to this crowd, “I know what they say about you in Jerusalem, but I'm telling you what your heavenly Father says about you. The kingdom of God is yours! God loves you just the way you are and the proof of it is that I'm here and I'm touching your bodies. I don't consider you religious outcasts or untouchable. I've come for you! God has good news for you: you can know Him! I'm the King of the kingdom and I'm available to you.” He spent very little time in Jerusalem; He spent most of the time with these kinds of people.

So with that in mind, when you read these beatitudes they become something completely different. The beatitudes are a list of the religiously rejected people of that day.

1. The “poor in spirit” are the religious nobodies, the “spiritual zeroes”. These are the people the church says have nothing to contribute. These are the people they say have no spiritual good about them so we have to keep our distance from those people. Jesus is saying, “No! Blessed are you, favored are you! God does not withhold His blessings from you just because you are a spiritual zero. I’ve come for you!”

2. “Those who mourn” are the hurting and broken. Blessed are you if you’re broken and hurting—the kingdom is available to you! God no longer bars the door to you. Your life is broken and messed up, God says to those who are weeping and not rejoicing, blessed are you for God’s kingdom is available for you. If your spouse leaves you and rejects you and you have nothing but pain—blessed are you because God favors you! He looks upon your broken heart and He weeps with you. You’re not alone. If you have nothing to offer God because your life is so broken and so hurt, don’t think that God is like the Pharisee and will reject you also.

God’s not looking for what you can give Him—He has everything. Blessed are you who have nothing to give Him.

3. “The meek” are the gentle who are taken advantage of. Isn’t that what happens to meek, gentle people? They’re taken advantage of. There seem to never have success.

4. “Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness” are the ones who want to be right with God but can’t find it within themselves to put themselves right. But Jesus said that’s who the kingdom is available to.

How many of you don’t think you fit? Maybe you’re even a little uncomfortable even being here. Hear me—blessed are you! You’re favored by God. If you want to be right with God but you look within and find no righteousness, so you hunger, you clamor, you want it, God says you’re favored. That’s a favorable position to be in, according to God.

5. “The merciful” are those who show compassion to the very ones the religious will not tolerate. They are guilty by association. Look at what they often criticized Jesus for—hanging out with publicans, sinners, and prostitutes. They criticized Him for being merciful to evil people who were God’s enemies.

Religious people, generally speaking, have no motivation to give a known sinner the time of day. The Pharisees would not eat with a sinner; they would not associate with someone considered unclean, and they certainly would not talk to someone sinful. Jesus came being merciful to the ones the religious religiously avoided. He takes a prostitute and casts out a demon, and she becomes one of His most loyal followers and the first proclaimer of the resurrection, Mary Magdalene. Anybody that would show mercy to the religious outcasts was considered a part of the disciples and Jesus said, “Blessed are you.”

6. “The pure in heart” are the very opposite of the religious who do religious deeds with impure motives. In Matthew 6, Jesus shows that the Pharisees prayed long prayers, fasted, and gave money to be seen of men. Impure motives prompted their seemingly holy behavior. But the pure in heart do good simply because that’s their heart. They don’t see to be seen. In fact, they try to hide their good deeds and for that reason were not considered by the religious to be very holy.

7. “The peacemakers” are those who try to build relationships with enemies and thus are considered religious traitors. Jesus accepted the tax collector. I’m convinced that even the disciples had problems with Jesus over this issue. When Matthew joins the band of disciples, I’m sure Peter is really offended by this. A tax collector was a traitor to Israel. These are Jews who sided with the Roman authorities, collected Roman taxes, and then extorted from the people. They took more than what people owed Rome and pocketed it. That was a tax collector. No wonder they were spiritual outcasts. Can you imagine the reaction from the disciples when Jesus invites Matthew to join their merry band?

They disciples were not your best examples of godliness when Jesus found them but at least, in their own minds, they weren’t as bad as tax collectors. You can always find somebody a little lower on the totem pole to look down upon and say, “Well, at least I’m not that bad.”

Peter, James, and John looked at Matthew and said, “Well, at least we’ve never been a traitor to Israel. I’ve always been faithful to God’s people. What are You doing, Jesus? How can he be one of us?”

But Jesus was a peacemaker. He built bridges with people who were considered enemies.

8. Lastly, Jesus mentions “the persecuted.” Who were the persecuted? It was the majority of those following Jesus at the time. And who would have persecuted them? There’s only one group of people who would persecute them and that was the religious people. Blessed are you when the religious people mistreat you. Blessed are you especially if you’re mistreated because you believe in Jesus. Blessed are you because the kingdom of heaven is open to you, in fact it’s yours.

Beloved there’s an important reason for me to share this, and I’m speaking now to the believers of Oak Grove Baptist Church. It’s not just important for people who are not Christians or a part of our fellowship. This message is aimed at yours and my heart. This is where God has been aiming it. It is so easy to fall into the trap of religious superiority, thinking that you are better than others because your lifestyle may be better than theirs. It’s so easy to fall into that trap and not even know it. Jesus is saying that’s where His favor does not rest. It does not rest on those who condemn others.

I want to give you a real example. Some of you aren’t going to agree with me, I just pray you listen to me and think of Jesus. Right now the American church is faced with an accelerated hostility

against it coming from the progressive left of American politics and also by the militant homosexual movement. If you don't believe me, you've buried your head in the sand and you haven't been listening to what's going on in Indiana and Arkansas. There is a group of people who hate us, who not only want to silence us, they want to remove us from culture altogether. If we're not careful we'll be like the scribe and the Pharisee who will say, "they are untouchable, unreachable, beyond the pail of God's grace."

Do you know why the American church is being marginalized today? I'll tell you why. It's because the American church has marginalized these kinds of people. We have treated them like social outcasts, untouchables, wanting nothing to do with them.

The American evangelical church has been in hot pursuit of political power thinking that if we had political power we could make this a better nation for God. Friends, when are we going to cease with that idea? This is not the time for political power. Jesus will take care of that when He comes and sets up His kingdom on this earth. Now is the day of the Gospel to proclaim to the untouchable, to the broken, to the weak, to the vile, to the sinful, that the kingdom is open to them.

"Come! Now is the time. God will accept those who have been found wanting by self-righteous." That's the mission and message of the church, nothing else. We are to go to the unwanted, and not wait for them to come here. We are to go to them and say, "Blessed are those who are spiritual zeroes. Join the club because that's all we are. Be blessed with us!"

This message is about that poor dear woman who is pregnant without a husband. This message is about the man who is strung out on drugs and he can't stop his addiction. He has nothing to offer. He has nothing to give God or the church, but Jesus said, "Blessed! These are the ones for whom I've died. And, My church, if you want to represent Me and represent Me well, you will not treat them as outcasts but you will love them as I did. You will lay down your life for them."

Not everybody will become a Christian. Most won't. But all I need to do is remember that if it were not for the grace of God and His love for me, such was I. I'm no better, not even after all these years and serving Him in the ministry I'm still a spiritual zero.

I've said this was about the resurrection. It is.

II. THE RESURRECTION'S HOPE FOR THE REJECTED

A. Jesus Was Rejected.

You've have somebody in Jesus who knows what it means to be rejected. In fact, He knows what it means to be rejected more than you do. Jesus was rejected by the church of His day too. They crucified Him. That's how much they didn't want Him.

But His Father also rejected Him in a way I cannot communicate to you. I just can't tell you the horror and the darkness in His heart when the Father looked at Him and saw you. Remember, He identified with you? He came to say, "I'm Kathy. I'm Pete. I'm Shannon. I'm going to live for them in their place." And sure enough, on the cross, in your place, He died. When the Father looked at Him with your sins clinging to Him and He became the very person you are, yet without sin in Him, God turned and rejected His Son. Jesus knows about rejection better than you or I know it. He was rejected.

B. Jesus Was Resurrected.

The resurrection is hope because three days later the Father did not forget what His Son had done. His Son had perfectly obeyed Him and suffered for your and my sin for us. He finished it. He put an end to it and the Father said, "Because You've done such a great job, Son, I'm not going to leave You in the tomb."

*Up from the grave He arose,
with a mighty triumph o'er His foes!
He arose a Victor from the dark domain
and He lives forever with His saints to reign.*

His saints! Who are His saints? It is those who are the rejects, the broken, the weak, and the vile. Those are the saints. And with His saints He shall reign forever and ever.

C. Let the Rejected Come to the Resurrected.

The kingdom is open. What are you waiting for? If you're waiting to become like me let me put your waiting to an end. That's not the requirement. You don't have to become like me. I pray you'll never become like me. I pray you become like Jesus. *That's even more difficult.* I know. But the truth of the Gospel, the good news of the kingdom is that the King will come and live inside you and He will transform you. He doesn't do it overnight, it's a process that will last between now and you die or He comes back but one day when you get into heaven's portals and there you're led to the very seat where God is, He will look about you and He will look at His Son and look back at you and He will say, "I can't tell them apart. Accepted. Perfect." Oh, would you hear that the kingdom is available to you. Be blessed. Amen.