

The Good Life

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 11 October 2026

Preacher: Tim Suffield

[0:00] What does the good life look like? I think that's a question that you might not ask in that way, and he tells the people who he's talking to how to live.

He tells them how to flourish. He tells them what a good life looks like. It's actually what he does through chapters 5, 6, and 7. It's basically what we're going to be looking at probably until we start thinking about Christmas.

But what does a good life look like? How do you flourish? Let me read the first part of that. It's often called the Sermon on the Mount. Let me read that first part of it to you, starting in chapter 5.

Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came up to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

[1:35] Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored?

It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden, nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.

In the same way, let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. This is the word of the Lord. Blessed, blessed, blessed, he keeps saying.

[3:03] What does that mean? What does it mean to say, blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted, and on through the rest.

What does blessed mean? I mean, that word is in our Bibles because of a man called William Tyndale who 500 years ago this year published the whole Bible in English for certainly for the first time in a long time.

I guess King Alfred published the first English Bible. Whatever that would have been, 600, 700 years before that. But, and that's a wonderful thing, that we have the Bible in English.

We celebrate him this year. But the thing is, blessed has changed its meaning in English since 500 years ago. And so we read that and we might not quite get what he's saying.

It doesn't mean these people will be blessed by God. I think we'd probably, that's what we'd first think because that's how we use the word in English today. It's like, oh, blessed are the poor in spirit and those who mourn and the meek are like, oh, so God's going to bless them.

[4:09] That's not what it means. That is what it would have meant if you'd read that 500 years ago. But it means happy.

Happy are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Happy are those who mourn for they shall be comforted. Amen. Jesus is describing the world as it is if we have eyes to see.

He's not saying, do these things and God will bless you. He's saying, this is just the way it is. It's the way the world works. There's a famous scholar on this passage called Jonathan Pennington who says the best word to translate it in very modern English would be flourishing.

flourishing are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Flourishing are those who mourn for they shall be comforted. Flourishing are the meek for they shall inherit the earth and on. Jesus is giving like a vision for a way of being in the world and that's what he goes on to do through the rest of this sermon over several chapters. He's like, this is what life looks like if you want to live well.

[5 : 22] This is what it looks like to be happy. This is what it looks like to have a life that flourishes and it is supposed to shock us. Flourishing are those who mourn for they shall be comforted.

That doesn't quite sound right. But Jesus says that's the way it is. And after this series of flourishing are, flourishing are, flourishing are, he gives these two pictures.

He talks first about salt and he says you are supposed to be like salt but if salt loses its taste, what's the point of it? He threw it away.

What's salt for? Salt seasons food. It makes food taste better. If you put too much in, it just tastes salty. You put a little bit of salt in, oh, all the flavour of the food comes out. It tastes better.

I remember vividly having my friend Marvellous, who's from Nigeria, we were living in Nottingham at the time, came over to our house for the first time and I got the impression he'd probably not been in many English people's homes at that point and he sat down, I mean, it was a comedy, the whole thing was a comedy of errors but there we go, there was lots of cultural confusion between the two of us but he came over with his wife's blessing and the children they had at the time and sat down for a meal and ate it and then went, oh, it's not bland.

[6 : 47] than I do, interesting, that's funny. Which, I mean, great, but his perception would be all English food is very bland.

I have eaten in his house many times and he would often say this one's hot to him, be careful, I'd eat something else and be like, pfft, but the, I like hot food but some of the stuff I was served was challenging for me to eat but he would be like, oh, it's not bland.

I mean, who wants to eat bland food, right? Now, our palates, our taste buds might judge different things, sure, and some of that's cultural, sure, what you grew up with but to your mouth you don't want to eat something that's bland.

What's the point? Doesn't taste of anything. Jesus is saying, don't be bland people. The point of you, he says, is to be salt.

You're supposed to make things taste good. If you lose all your flavour, what is the point? And he says this right after giving us a kind of this, difficult to understand, but this kind of vision of living in the world.

[7 : 49] So he says, live like that and you'll make things taste better. Be salty. Be something that can be tasted. The people around you are like, oh, tastes a bit better when you're around. The way you live is a bit different from everyone else.

Be those kind of people. Season the world. And then he gives this other picture right by it trying to say a similar thing where he talks about lighting a lamp.

He says, you are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Well, that's the point, right? If it's on a hill, you can see it from a long way away. And then he says, nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket.

And we, because we're just used to reading the Bible and kind of rolling on, we're like, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. It's a joke. Just picture the thing. He's saying, can you imagine in your house lighting a candle, now you might think turning on an electric lamp, and then putting a big basket over it.

Why would you do that? What would be the point? Well, that's what he's saying. What would be the point? Like, if you want to light something to make it light the room and then you immediately cover it over, you're like, well, that was a waste of time, wasn't it?

[8 : 59] There's no light. You can't see anything. He's saying, light needs to actually be seen in order to light the space. If you're a light and you kind of hide it away, this is easy, that doesn't work.

If you hide it away somewhere so you can't see it, well, then there's no point to it. And again, to the people he's talking to, he's saying, you're meant to be light, not, you're meant to make it taste better, and you're meant to be seen.

If you do all the hiding away so nobody can see what's going on, well, what's the point? He's like, there's no point lighting a lamp and putting a basket over it. There's no point you living a good life, a happy life, a flourishing life that no one can see.

It'd be like having salt, but it's lost all of its taste. It'd be like putting a lamp under a basket. Don't do it. And so what's he saying to us?

He's saying, does your life look different? He's given these slightly enigmatic sayings and then goes on to give lots of ethical teaching that we'll get into over the coming weeks and months, but does your life look different?

[10:10] It should. And we need to kind of dwell on that, I think. It's like, does my, if someone, does my life look different? If someone saw the inside of my life, would they go, wow, that's different?

Would there be something attractive about it? Something kind of salty or like, like, or indeed, I said, if someone saw the inside of my life, can they? Can they see my life?

Can people see it? Like, is that, and I don't necessarily mean, oh, I must go and stand in the streets and be like, I am wonderful. That's probably not really what Jesus is saying at all. But, is it visible to those that know you?

Is it visible to your work colleagues, your friends, your family members, your neighbour? Is there, in places that they have an in into your life, can they see something is a bit different?

Because Jesus is suggesting they should be able to. But what does that, what does that look like? I mean, he gives these sayings, flourishing are, happy are, happy are, happy are, flourishing are, they're, they're like wisdom sayings, by which I mean, they do not give up their meaning immediately.

[11:21] It's not like you read, flourishing are the merciful, for they, well, that's actually easier than some of them, flourishing are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. And you immediately know what's going on.

You're supposed to chew on them like a cow chewing the cud. Supposed to sort of work it round in your mouth over time. This kind of, that's how wisdom sayings in the Bible work.

You don't necessarily just read one of the Proverbs or one of Jesus' Proverbs just here and think, yes, I get it. Sometimes you have to turn them over. Turn them over in your heart, turn them over in your heart, turn them over in your heart. What is he saying?

So again, I would invite you to do that. And what I'm going to do with the rest of my time this morning is dive into one of them, which is more about, forgive me, more about the prep time that I had rather than anything else, but dive into one of them just to sort of show some of what's included in it.

But all of them need turning over. So I'm drawn every time I read this to be fair, to blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted.

[12:30] Happy are those who mourn for they shall be comforted. Flourishing are those who mourn For they shall be comforted. Doesn't make sense.

I mean, is mourning a Christian attitude? Surely not, right? Surely God wants us to be happy.

I mean, God is the happiest being in the cosmos, right? There is no one out there happier than God. He is happy. And he wants to share his joy with his people, right? That's true.

This is not a trick question. God does want you to be happy. Surely, he says things like in Philippians 4, rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I say, rejoice.

Well done. He wants us to be happy. He wants us to be full of joy, right? That's like, you could open the Bible on many a page and find that. He's calling us to a happy life because he is a happy God and he wants his people to be happy.

[13:39] In fact, enough so that I, when I was on holiday, a couple of weeks back, I read this little book called Happiness by Andrew Wilson who's a friend of ours and of our church and of our movement which is all about the idea that God wants us to be happy and that God is happy and that actually the happiest way to live is the way that the Bible tells you to live.

It's worth your time. Very simple little book, not very long, do consider it. We should be happy. So if that's the case, why would Jesus say flourishing are those who mourn?

But they should be comforted. And surely mourning is going to end, right? It literally says it in Revelation chapter 21 that the age to come is not an age of mourning.

There's going to be no more crying, no more tears. Mourning done. Nothing to mourn about. Sin's dead, the devil's gone, and death is dead. Happy days. No more mourning.

So why flourishing are those who mourn? Well, for a start, that is one of the things that helps us see that all of these things are not talking about what will the age to come be like, but what's it like now, much the same, blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake.

[14:49] Well, no persecution in the age to come, but this is how you live now. So what's the thing that we're supposed to be mourning if we're supposed to be happy?

Well, maybe it's our sin. I think that's true. I don't think there's everything that's true. We should mourn our sin. There should be a kind of sorrow in our hearts over what we're like.

Like that sort of, you know what you're like in a way that no one else does and you kind of hope that they don't ever find out. Right? What if you can relate to that experience, that thing when you're like, people sometimes say nice things about me and then you're like, yep, I'll take it, but gosh, me and Jesus know.

And of course, the wonder of the gospel is he knows what I'm like better than I do and loves me more than I can possibly imagine because I'm much worse than I think I am. That's what the gospel tells us.

That's what the Bible teaches. You're much worse than you think you are. You're much more loved than you could possibly imagine. Like, that's the wonder of the gospel. You're like, oh, well, I can get up in the morning now.

[16:05] But we are worse than others might know. Probably, again, if we're aware of ourselves, have some sense of this. Should that make us, should that give us some sorrow?

Yeah. Is that worth mourning? Yeah. Does your sin hurt you? And I don't mean in the, like, you do a stupid thing and you have the consequences of it, sure.

But I mean, as in you, do you have any of that awareness in your heart of just like, I am sometimes an idiot and I do that or I think that or I feel that and I really wish I didn't but I find it in myself.

I think we should have that, well, that should make us mourn. We're like, I wish I was different. And we know in the gospel that we're called to, oh, one day you will be. Like, Jesus promises progress, yes, and then one day you'll see him face to face and bam, like him on the inside.

You're like, okay, one day I am not going to be like that. But I don't even think it's just mourning our sin.

[17:07] How do I know that? Because the one I read about persecution, he says, blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake. So not for any reason. If people persecute you because you did a terrible thing, Jesus is not saying that's the setting in which you will flourish or be happy.

He's like, if it's for the sake of righteousness. So he qualifies it. He qualifies several of them. He does not qualify mourning. Happy are those who mourn. Flourishing are those who mourn for they will be comforted.

So is mourning good? Is grief good? It certainly leads to flourishing. Which at the very least means that you need to hear if you come here today and you're like, I am burdened by sadness.

I am burdened by grief for all sorts of things. You might even use the word grief for it, but that just churned up feeling about like you've got a thing to carry and you've got to kind of learn to live with. How do I walk with this through the rest of my life? Whether it's about someone who's died or something else. That's okay.

[18:24] You might think, I don't want to be told it's okay. I want to go away. Yeah, I know, I know. But Jesus would say, flourishing are those who mourn. Happy are those who mourn.

You're not wrong that you feel like. You're like, but you just said Christians should be happy. Yes, I did. Yes, I did. The happiest people are often the saddest.

I wonder if that was one of the, it was a sentence from Andrew's book, but I just, I was struck by it. I was like, no, that's true. I can just see it in lots of people's lives. The happiest people are often the saddest. And if that doesn't make sense to you, you might seem to experience it in the lives of others.

But those with big emotions, well, that's not even the right way of putting it. Those with lots of joy in God will often find themselves deeply grieved. Those two things are not always opposites.

You can be in joy and happiness in God at the same time as deeply grieved about something else. That's normal.

[19:27] Again, I think we often might feel like, no, that's not normal and I shouldn't feel like that and I'm a bad Christian because I'm not okay about this awful thing that happened. It's not

supposed to be okay about it. It's okay that you want to mourn.

It's okay that you feel sad. You need to work through the pain of the thing. Okay. Find happiness in God at the same time as working through grief, mourning.

And it's just this strange paradox when I think the thing that the modern world most wants to avoid, sadness, is the thing that Jesus said, that's blessing.

And as most of us hear that and think, I don't like it. No, I get that. We're like, why would I want that? Jesus says, that's blessing. That's blessing.

Mourning leads to flourishing. Mourning leads to growth.

[20:29] Mourning leads to happiness in God. What's going on there? I think lots of things. We mourn things that die. People, yes.

Also situations, also things that die within ourselves. Think about it like this. The Bible says on multiple occasions that maturity requires suffering.

Romans 5 being one of the more famous examples. But to grow, to develop, to be mature, which is the thing the Bible's really keen that we do. We become mature. We grow up. It says we start as children, whatever age you might be, but we can grow up in God.

To be mature requires suffering. And of course we think, I don't want that. Why would I want that? But the way to grow up in our characters usually is to have something happen that is painful and work through it with God.

Now, it's not automatic. It's not like a bad thing happens. Ta-da! I'm more mature. But it gives an opportunity for us to mature in God. Why is that?

[21:34] Because I think we go through various different kinds of death in the life. Some of it's psychological, some of it emotional, some of it physical, some of it the death of those who are dear to us. and it provokes this opportunity for resurrection as we work through it in our hearts.

Thus the gospel, things that die come alive. It's as we mourn often, which is work through the thing with God, that we come alive again.

I can't remember the acronym that my counselor taught me when we were just working through some pretty awful stuff that had happened to me. But essentially the gist of it was the first thing, Tim, that you need to do is feel it.

He's like, in fact, that was my problem. He's like, you're not allowing yourself to feel the thing. You're trying to move on. You're trying to be a good Christian. You're trying to do the things you think you're supposed to do. You're leading a church. You're like, you're, feel it.

And then after you've felt it, you need to take it to God. And we looked in the Psalms and went through, the Psalms are full of people feeling their feelings and taking them to God. He said, and then the third thing you can do is make godly decisions about what to do next.

[22:44] But your problem, he was telling me, is you're just trying to do this. You're trying to make godly decisions about what to do next. You know what the right answer is? You haven't felt anything. You haven't mourned it. You can't grow. And he had a lovely little acronym for it, but I've late 20s, back in Nottingham.

An older man took me aside and he didn't say it literally like this, but essentially said to me, Tim, this is going to be a hard thing. Don't worry if you haven't been broken yet, the Lord will see to that.

Now he didn't put it quite like that, it wasn't so neatly put, but in essence, it's like what happens in church leadership, it's like you will be broken because you need to be broken. You can't really do much for God unless you've been broken and broken and broken.

And it's as we're broken and we mourn the death of whatever has been broken that we find the comfort of God and then we flourish and we change, we grow.

That could be our grief over ourselves, over the world, over our own death in numerous different ways in our life is what leads to a flourishing life. happy are those who mourn for they will be comforted.

[24:11] In a couple of minutes we're going to come to God's table, what we call the Lord's Supper or Communion, and we will see, in our case a piece of bread, but we will see Christ's body broken.

God's broken. It's as we mourn our sin, our brushes with death and indeed the death of God on our behalf, that's what we do at the table.

We come almost in an act, we come almost mourning, oh, is that, but we come mourning. And as we eat and drink we receive comfort. Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted.

So we see God broken, we think of ourselves broken, and we're like, oh, and then we eat and we drink and we're like, oh, it's comfort. And that's why sometimes we say it's not solemn, it's not a funeral.

You just told me to mourn, yes I did, but it's not a funeral, in some ways it's a party, because it's I'm broken, the world's broken, oh my word, Jesus is broken, so that I can be comforted, and then I eat and I drink.

[25 : 28] Hallelujah. Comfort from God. And we do believe that as you do that actually by the Holy Spirit you can encounter him at the table. My Pentecostal friend Jonathan loves to tell stories of how when people take the bread and the they would have wine, and the bread and the wine, they get healed.

I wonder if that's our expectation. But when we come to the table, this is a place of real life.

I think we probably think of it as a little ritual thing that we do, but it's a place of real life where we bring our mourning to receive what God gives to those who mature through suffering, which is comfort.

So we bring the stuff that hurts, we bring the thing that we're struggling with this week, we bring our grief, pain, we bring our frustration, and we eat and we drink, and it's like, thank goodness.

He welcomes us to his table to be comforted. Should we do that? The band are going to come, and we're going to take the Lord's Supper together.

[26 : 45] The way that's going to work, they, in a minute, when they're set up, they'll play a song, and while they do, we invite you to come up to, there's one just here that you might be able to see, but there's a number around the room, most of them probably behind you, so go to the one nearest to you, but come to one of these tables, take the little thimble of juice, tear off a piece of bread, as you tear it off, think, Jesus has broken, and then take those with you back to where you're sitting, keep singing, going to sing about the death and resurrection of Jesus, and then we will eat the bread together, and we will drink the cup together, and as we do, you'll receive comfort from God for your soul.

This is for those who are Christians, if you're here and you're like, I, that's not me, I'm looking in, I'm not sure about this, or I know I'm not a Christian, well then, please don't come and get the bread and the cup, but we're so glad you're here.

Do pray, if you're open to that, while we do it, ask the Lord, are you really there? But this is his table for his church, his table for those who are part of his body, who are part of his family, and he loves us.

He has to son and he to his! his! He has son!