

# Disturbed Resolutions for My Life

Disturbed Resolutions Series

Central Baptist Church

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Scott Currie

## Introduction

[TITLE SLIDE 01] Good morning and HAPPY NEW YEAR everyone! I trust you all survived another pandemic Christmas.

So how about it? Do you want to be happy this year? Silly question, right? Who doesn't? The question is, of course, what makes me happy? What makes you happy? What do we need to be happy? How do we put the "happy" in "Happy New Year?"

You might be surprised to know that Jesus had something to say on this topic. In fact, the passage of Scripture that we just heard forms the basis for what he suggested would make us happy. In this version he offers us four things that in his view would make us happy. Ready? [SLIDE 02]

1. Poverty
2. Hunger
3. Weeping
4. Being hated [END SLIDE]

Wow! What a disturbing group of characteristics, right? These things are not usually associated with happiness and yet Jesus connects them to happiness. As I'm sure you realize, this list is the summary of the passage that we just read; a passage that is sometimes referred to as the Beatitudes. The English word "beatitude" is, in this case, derived from the Latin word "beatus" which can be translated as "blessed" or "happy." This is true for the Greek word here as well. While we tend to lean away from the word "happy" as a translation because it comes across as kind of thin for the implication of what Jesus is saying, it does fit because there is a human emotional element associated with the advice Jesus is offering. The meaning of this passage for us today is not merely that a person receives a kind of commendation from God – she is blessed. It also carries with it a human experiential element. In other words, Jesus is telling his audience that under the right condition, you and I can experience happiness even though we if we are poor, hungry, hated and even if we weep.

This is our task today and next week: to discover the conditions under which a person – you and I – can be happy in such states. In fact, following Jesus' lead, I am going to go further. I am going to suggest that you and I choose one or two or more and craft a new year's resolution. Something like: [SLIDE 03]

"I resolve to be poorer this year."

"I resolve to be hungrier this year."

"I resolve to weep more this year."

"I resolve to be hated more this year." [END SLIDE]

Fun, am I right?

Of course, it is likely the case that not a single person here is eager to make resolutions like these. I know I'm not. Maybe you are someone that shies away from making resolutions altogether.

[TITLE SLIDE 04] It is relatively traditional at this time of year, right at the beginning, to think big thoughts about our life, make big plans and make big pronouncements. We've all likely done it to one degree or another, right? The result of this common process then is what? Right! Resolutions! Resolutions are decisions that we make that kind of sound like promises to ourselves that one or two areas of our life need adjustment, sometimes more than two.

The problem with resolutions is, of course, we rarely, if ever actually follow through with them. This is especially true if we make grand, sweeping resolutions that are meant to last the entire year. "I am going to eat less sweets this year." "I am going to exercise more this year." "I am going to read the Bible all the way through this year." So, what happens? Well, it seems to me that the idea of making resolutions has kind of fallen out of favour. So, we stop altogether. I suggest that the activities related to making resolutions have Christian characteristics. It requires us to do things like:

- Recall our purpose.
- Assess our life in light of that purpose.
- Determine to live more in line with that purpose than before.

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul demonstrates this kind of activity. He explains that [SLIDE 05]

<sup>10</sup> I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, <sup>11</sup> if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

<sup>12</sup> Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. [SLIDE 06] <sup>13</sup> Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, <sup>14</sup> I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus. <sup>15</sup> Let those of us then who are mature be of the same mind; and if you think differently about anything, this too God will reveal to you. <sup>1</sup> [END SLIDES]

How does someone get to this point? To explain this, I will be relating three topics together: [SLIDE 07]

the Beatitudes,

Advent (yes, Advent) and

the Kingdom of God [END SLIDE]

Together, these topics help us see how a person might be happy to become poorer, hungrier, more hated and to weep more.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989), Php 3:10–15.

## Body

### [NEW TITLE SLIDE08] The Implication of Advent [END SLIDE]

For the Christ-follower, Christmas, specifically the character of Advent is a time to remember that there is a hesitation, or pause, worked into the relational dynamic between humanity and God Almighty. During Christmas, we often read and celebrate passages in the Bible like Isaiah 9:6

<sup>6</sup> For a child has been born for us,  
 a son given to us;  
 authority rests upon his shoulders;  
 and he is named  
 Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
 Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. <sup>2</sup>

Rightly so! This passage helps us to see that God has a plan and is intentional about how he deals with his world. At Christmas we celebrate that this promise ultimately applies to a child who is none other than Jesus and we receive him as a gift. As we do that, however, maybe we forget, even just for a moment, that there was a time when this was not the case. A time when Jesus had yet to be born; when this promise was yet to be fulfilled. What about the people who first received this promise? What about the generation after that? And after that? A total of about 700 years passed before this promise was ultimately fulfilled in Jesus. What did the people do until then? What did the people HAVE to do until then? They had to WAIT.

Even as we celebrate the birth of THAT child, the fulfillment of THAT promise of God, we are reminded of another. Right? At least, it is hard not to be reminded of that other promise, or that we hear the echo of that promise. The promise that is summarized by a series of Paul's magnificent statements in 1 Corinthians 15:

- that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, <sup>4</sup> and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, <sup>3</sup>
- <sup>24</sup> Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power. <sup>4</sup>
- <sup>57</sup> But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>5</sup>

Then in 2 Corinthians he writes:

- <sup>17</sup> So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! <sup>6</sup>

Right?! I mean, if you have been around Christian teaching for a while, you have most likely heard all of this. If you are new. This is important for you to hear. The baby that was born in that manger, that we have just finished celebrating, that baby grew and began teaching (I'll explain more about his teaching in a bit), and eventually he sacrificed himself for all of humanity, dying on a cross. He remained dead for

<sup>2</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989), Is 9:6.

<sup>3</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989), 1 Co 15:3–4.

<sup>4</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989), 1 Co 15:24.

<sup>5</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989), 1 Co 15:57.

<sup>6</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989), 2 Co 5:17.

three days and then rose from the grave, appearing to many for a period of 40 days. At the end he gathered his closest followers together for one last commissioning and ascended before their eyes into the clouds. The Bible explains that now Jesus is the mediation of the promise of God that one day he will return to reveal what has taken place: Jesus has achieved victory over sin and death on behalf of humanity and is now turning over rule to God.

For now we must await that final revelation. This is our advent.

What then is the rule of God? Here we come to our next topic.

### [NEW TITLE SLIDE 09] The Rule of God [END SLIDE]

In his message last week, one of the great points Phil made out of Deuteronomy was to Remember the Privilege. What is that privilege? Intimacy with God. That IS a privilege. So let me build on that because as I understand it, the desire that God to be close with his creation forms a kind of motto for the Kingdom.

The first instance of this is found in Exodus. Recall this is the time in the experience of the people of Israel when God miraculously frees them – his people – out of slavery under the rule of the Egyptians. What does God say is the purpose of his salvation? We read it in the message that Moses is to pass on to the Israelites in Exodus 6:7: [SLIDE 10]

<sup>6</sup> Say therefore to the Israelites, 'I am the LORD, and I will free you from the burdens of the Egyptians and deliver you from slavery to them. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. <sup>7</sup> **I will take you as my people, and I will be your God.** You shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has freed you from the burdens of the Egyptians.' <sup>7</sup> [END SLIDE]

[...]

### [NEW TITLE SLIDE 11] The Beatitudes

*Advent, the Kingdom and Poverty* [END SLIDE]

[...]

"This year, I resolve to become a little bit poorer."

- Materially
- Spiritually (acknowledgement)

How?

This year, I resolve to be more generous."

### [SLIDE 12]

[ADD TO SLIDE] *Advent, the Kingdom and Hunger* [END ADDITION]

[...]

"This year, I resolve to become a little bit hungrier."

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<sup>7</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989), Ex 6:6–7.

How?

“This year, I resolve to eat better.”

- To be righteous
- To be fed by God’s word.

[...]

## Conclusion

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German pastor and theologian explained the relationship between Advent, the Kingdom and the Beatitudes this way: [SLIDE]

Not everyone can wait: neither the sated nor the satisfied nor those without respect can wait. The only ones who can wait are people who carry restlessness around with them and people who look up with reverence to the greatest in the world. Thus Advent can be celebrated only by those whose souls give them no peace, who know that they are poor and incomplete, and who sense something of the greatness that is supposed to come, before which they can only bow in humble timidity, waiting until he inclines himself toward us—the Holy One himself, God in the child in the manger.<sup>8</sup> [END SLIDE]

[...]

[ORIGINAL TITLE SLIDE]

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<sup>8</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *God Is in the Manger: Reflections on Advent and Christmas*, ed. Jana Riess, trans. O. C. Dean Jr., First edition (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 6.