Running on Empty

Matthew 5:3–4

November 8, 2026

THE GOOD LIFE

DAY 1: THE MASK WE WEAR

READING: PSALM 139:1-16

Long before Greek actors wore linen masks in open-air theatres, humanity developed a different kind of mask: the practiced smile, the rehearsed answer, the "I'm fine" that covers a life quietly falling apart. The psalmist David never pretended with God. He wrote with raw honesty about being fully known, fully seen, and fully loved. The God who formed you in secret has no interest in the performance you offer in public. He already knows what is behind the mask. The invitation today is not to clean yourself up before coming to Him. It is simply to come. Real. Unguarded. Unpolished.

Personal Reflection: What mask do you most commonly wear in front of others? In what areas of your life are you saying "I'm fine" when you are not? What would it look like today to bring your real self before God?

Practical Application: Set aside ten minutes today to write an honest prayer to God. Do not edit it. Do not make it sound spiritual. Simply tell Him the truth about where you are.

DAY 2: POOR IN SPIRIT, RICH IN KINGDOM

READING: MATTHEW 5:1-3 AND ROMANS 12:1-8

The first beatitude lands like a disruption to everything the world applauds. Jesus declares that those who are destitute in spirit, those who have arrived at the end of their own self-sufficiency, are the ones who inherit the kingdom of heaven. Paul echoes this in Romans 12:3, urging believers not to think more highly of themselves than they ought, but to assess themselves with honest, sober judgment. Being poor in spirit is not weakness. It is the most accurate self-assessment a human being can make before God. The kingdom does not open to the polished and performing. It opens to those who finally stop pretending they do not need it.

Personal Reflection: What does honest, sober self-assessment look like for you right now? How does humility before God actually produce strength rather than diminish it?

Practical Application: Identify one area of your life where you have been operating in self-sufficiency. Write it down and intentionally surrender it to God in prayer today, naming your poverty of spirit in that specific area.

DAY 3: THE GIFT OF GRIEF

READING: MATTHEW 5:4, PSALM 34:15-22, AND JOHN 11:32-36

Jesus does not skip over grief. He doubles down on it. Blessed are those who mourn, He says, because they will be comforted. The Greek word translated as comforted is parakaleo, meaning to be brought alongside someone. Grief, in the kingdom economy, is not a sign that God has abandoned you. It is an invitation for Him to draw near. Even Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus. He did not stand at a distance and offer theological explanations. He stood in the pain with those He loved. Your mourning is not a detour from the good life. It is, according to Jesus, one of the paths directly into it.

Personal Reflection: Is there grief or pain in your life that you have been avoiding or suppressing? What would it mean to mourn in community rather than in isolation?

Practical Application: Reach out today to one person in your life who is grieving. Do not try to fix it or offer answers. Simply be present with them. Practice being the parakaleo, the one who comes alongside.

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DAY 4: UNMASKED PRAYERS

READING: PSALM 63:1-8 AND PSALM 22:1-11

David wrote Psalm 63 from a wilderness. Not a metaphorical one. He was physically in the desert of Judah, likely fleeing for his life. And yet the prayer that emerged from that wilderness is one of the most breathtaking expressions of trust and longing in all of Scripture. He describes his soul as thirsty, his flesh as faint, his surroundings as dry and weary. He does not clean himself up before crying out. He brings the wilderness with him into the presence of God. The Psalms are the Bible's collection of unmasked prayers. They give us permission to be honest, to be desperate, and to discover that God meets us precisely there.

Personal Reflection: How does David's honesty in Psalm 63 challenge the way you typically approach prayer? What wilderness are you currently walking through that you have not yet brought fully before God?

Practical Application: Read Psalm 63 slowly and out loud. Let it become a prayer for your wilderness, your own current circumstances. Releasing and surrendering with raw honesty to a loving and caring God.

DAY 5: HE BLESSED THIS MESS

READING: MATTHEW 5:3-12 AND 2 CORINTHIANS 12:7-10

The Beatitudes are not a list of achievements to reach. They are a description of the person God is already at work within. Poor in spirit. Mourning. Hungry for righteousness. These are not ideal conditions the world would celebrate. But Jesus declares each one blessed, meaning filled with divine joy and favour. Paul discovered this same upside-down reality in 2 Corinthians 12, where he describes his weakness becoming the very place where God's power was made perfect. The mess is not the obstacle to the good life. For those who stop performing and start surrendering, the mess is where the blessing actually begins. Jesus does not bless the mask. He blesses the person underneath it.

Personal Reflection: Looking back over this week, where have you seen God meeting you in your brokenness rather than in your strength? How has your understanding of what the good life looks like shifted through these five days?

Practical Application: Write down three areas of your life that feel like a mess right now. Next to each one, write this phrase: "He blessed this mess." Spend time in prayer surrendering each one to God, trusting that His kingdom, His comfort, and His presence are already available to you in those exact places.