

The Beatitudes - Matthew 5:3-12

The word 'Beatitude' is derived from the Latin word 'Beatus' meaning 'Happy' or 'Blessed', the meaning of which is very close to original Greek word that Jesus used. The Greek word for 'Blessed' is 'Makarioi' which means 'happy, supremely blessed, and fortunate'.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
 Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
 Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the earth.
 Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for justice, for they shall be satisfied.
 Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.
 Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God.
 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.
 Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

"Poor in spirit" means to be humble. Humility is the realization that all your gifts and blessings come from the grace of God. To have poverty of spirit means to be completely empty and open to the Word of God. When we are an empty cup and devoid of pride, we are humble. Humility brings an openness and an inner peace, allowing one to do the will of God.

It is pride, the opposite of humility that brings misery. For pride brings anger and the seeking of revenge, especially when one is offended. If every man were humble and poor in spirit, there would be no war!

"Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

Gregory of Nyssa taught that the Beatitudes built one upon another. Thus, if we are humble and appreciate that all of our gifts and blessings come from God, we grow in love and gratitude for Jesus Christ our Savior. But this can only produce mourning and regret over our own sins and the sins of this world, for we have hurt the one who has been so good to us.

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

A person who is meek is gentle and kind, and exhibits a docility of spirit. Obedience and submission to the will of God are certainly not in vogue these days, but they will bring one peace in this world and in the next.

"Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."

A continuous desire for justice and moral perfection will lead one to a fulfillment of that desire - a transition and conversion to holiness.

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

Love, compassion, and forgiveness towards one's neighbor will bring peace in your relationships. And your Heavenly Father will be merciful with you! Jesus reminds us that whatever "you did to the least of my brethren, you did it to me (Matthew 25:31-46)." Here are the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy:

Corporal

1. Feed the hungry
2. Give drink to the thirsty
3. Clothe the naked
4. Shelter the homeless
5. Comfort the imprisoned
6. Visit the sick
7. Bury the dead

Spiritual

1. Admonish sinners
2. Instruct the uninformed
3. Counsel the doubtful
4. Comfort the sorrowful
5. Be patient with those in error
6. Forgive offenses
7. Pray for the living and the dead

"Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God."

To be pure of heart means to be free of all selfish intentions and self-seeking desires. What a beautiful goal! How many times have any of us performed an act perfectly free of any personal gain? But an act of pure and selfless giving brings happiness to all.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God."

Peacemakers not only live peaceful lives but also try to bring peace and friendship to others, and to preserve peace between God and man. Gregory of Nyssa pointed out that by imitating God's love of man, the peacemakers become children of God.

"Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."

Jesus said many times that those who follow Him will be persecuted. "If they persecute me, they will persecute you (John 15:20-21)." But the Lord promises his disciples that their reward will be the Kingdom of Heaven!