

The Beatitudes

(Read the Opening Prayer and Scripture out loud.)

Opening Prayer

Bless us, O God, with your love and the love of our neighbor. Give us peace of heart, stillness of mind, and the command of our own affections as we strive to live the Beatitudes everyday. We make our prayer through Chris our Lord. Amen

Scripture

When he saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he had sat down, his disciples came to him.

He began to teach them saying:

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

Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land.

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

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God.

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

Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you (falsely) because of me.

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.” (Matthew 5:1-10)

(Take time for silent reflection, then read the Introduction out loud.)

Introduction

Its place in Scripture indicates that the Beatitudes are one of Jesus’ first teaching experiences. This instruction, founded on love, is Jesus’ concrete response to the needs of the people, springing from his unshakable faith in the promises given to Israel and His understanding of His Father’s love during the desert temptations. This program explores the spiritual contributions that the Beatitudes offer us as we work to bring the Kingdom to our world.

(Introduce a speaker or the facilitator can read the following paragraphs with pauses in between.)

Documentary Tradition

The Sermon on the Mount in Matthew’s Gospel is probably one of the most read and commented upon sections of the Bible. Bookstores are full of commentaries, reflections, and research, all of which lay the foundation for books and articles with such titles as *Jesus’ Pattern For A Happy Life*, *A Blueprint For Living*, *A Program For Action And Attitudes Of Being*, *The Directory Of The Devout Life*, and *The Laws Of The Spiritual Life*. The interest in this passage seems to indicate that this sermon has abundant meaning in the 21st century.

“The Beatitudes are at the heart of Jesus’ preaching. They take up the promises made to the chosen people since Abraham. The Beatitudes fulfill the promises by ordering them no longer merely to the possession of the territory, but to the Kingdom of heaven: ... The Beatitudes depict the countenance of Jesus Christ and portray his charity. They express the vocation of the faithful associated with the glory

of his Passion and Resurrection; they shed light on the actions and attitudes characteristic of the Christian life; they are the paradoxical promises that sustain hope in the midst of tribulations; they proclaim the blessings and rewards already secured, however dimly, for Christ's disciples; they have begun in the lives of the Virgin Mary and all the saints." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church #1716*)

Jesus returns from the desert with the distinct reality and clarity of insight that we humans are more than the conditions in which we find ourselves, and that there is always abundance available if we allow ourselves to experience it.

Understanding the structure and wisdom of the Beatitudes is to grasp an understanding of blessedness. While each beatitude has a wealth of information, mystery and wisdom, their collective message is encountered by realizing that we are people who are blessed. To be blessed means moving through life in a flow of inner well being that understands that everything reveals the reality of God. The structure of the Beatitudes can be described as a window that allows us to view how we can cooperate and participate in the Kingdom of God. We can move toward the Kingdom's fulfillment in us and our fulfillment in it by embracing the blessings of the hurts of our past, the possibility of the present, and our fears of the future.

As the gift of wisdom always presents the way of promise, there is implicit in each beatitude a wisdom pertaining to the awareness of obstacles that may block the flow of grace in our life. But when released of these blocks, our hearts and lives may become more Christ-like.

(The facilitator can read the Discussion Questions out loud for general or small group discussion.)

Discussion Questions

1. What are some of the challenges the Beatitudes bring up in your life?
2. What are some of the blocks in your life that keep you from fully experiencing the blessedness of the Beatitudes?
3. Where does Serra exhibit this blessedness?

Closing Reflection

The Beatitudes invite us to be open to the presence of God within us. Then our Christian attitudes of social justice, peace, and mercy can flow over into daily acts of compassionate love and service. When we live inspired by the Beatitudes, we are more open to the truth and beauty and possibilities of our faith.

Bibliography

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