

Words Of Celebration

Psalm 15: 1-4

Matthew 5: 3-12

The reading today, in Matthew, is a part of Jesus' inaugural discourse spoken on one of the hills near Capernaum, and our verses are referred to as the Beatitudes. The Beatitudes are a compass for the journey of Christian discipleship, they offer a character sketch of who disciples will become if they follow Jesus, and are a beginning of the journey for disciples of Christ.

In the Beatitudes, Jesus offers us the foundation of the laws of the kingdom and shows us the path of Christian perfection. The Beatitudes are a portrait of Jesus Himself: poor, lowly, merciful, single hearted, peaceful, persecuted, sorrowful, hungry, and thirsty for holiness; they also are a portrait of the ideal Christian.

The Beatitudes are a great contrast to the worldly concept of blessedness and happiness, they cut across the worldly, popular view of how to live your life. It's no wonder they don't make sense, and are contradiction to the carnal mind; just as it says in 1 Corinthians 1: 18, "for the message of the cross is nonsense to those who are being destroyed, but it is God's

power to us who are being saved.” Also we have to remember that the Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount defied the expectations of the earthly kingdom which the Jews thought the Messiah would establish; how can you establish an earthly kingdom by the meek, how can you be merciful to enemies, how can you be peacemakers or let others persecute and insult you? How can that kind of a kingdom overturn and defeat the Roman empire? But we know Jesus wasn’t referring to an earthly kingdom, but to the kingdom of heaven.

Let’s look at some of the characteristics, in these Beatitudes, to inherit this kingdom of heaven.

The Beatitudes, in Matthew 5, say blessed are the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, and those who are persecuted for righteousness sake. A line-up like that is guaranteed to have people waiting in line to sign up for the Christian team, right? Not likely, that’s why Jesus said there will be many on the wide road, but few on the narrow path.

The Beatitudes tell us of passive personal qualities and also of active social qualities. Some passive personal qualities are spiritual inadequacy, spiritual contrition, spiritual humility, and spiritual aspiration. These qualities are regarding things like a person realizing their spiritual bankruptcy and they fall back on God and then draw on God's limitless resources; as Martin Luther said: "we are all beggars living on the bounty of God." This spiritual bankruptcy leads to spiritual affluence, the kingdom of heaven belongs to them. These qualities also involve bereavement and deep grief over sin and failure, mourning over our spiritual bankruptcy, this is Godly sorrow that produces repentance that leads to salvation. The meekness mentioned is controlled power, energy directed sinless anger when God's interests are at stake, and supreme self control empowered by the Holy Spirit. These qualities include having a passionate craving for a right relationship with God, this is the opposite of self righteousness; Psalm 51 speaks of a broken and a contrite heart. One of the three roots of sin and independence from God is pride of life, whereas poverty of spirit is the root of all virtues. 2 Corinthians 7: 10 tells us , "godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation, but worldly sorrow brings death." Peter had godly sorrow after he denied Jesus,

he wept bitterly and grieved for his failures. Speaking of meekness and pride, the Jews took pride in their race, the Romans in their power, and the Greeks in their knowledge; Jesus didn't assert the prideful or the aggressor, but rather the poor in spirit and the meek. What do the worldly people hunger and thirst for? Power, fame, money, beauty, and sexuality; but there are those who hunger and thirst, in other words, long for God, they aren't satisfied by worldly things, they are seekers who yearn after God. This hunger and thirst are daily needs and are fulfilled thru faith in Christ, didn't Jesus say: "if any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink?"

Some active social qualities are: compassionate in spirit, pure in heart, conciliatory in spirit, and unswerving in loyalty. It is possible to have passion for righteousness and still lack mercy and compassion for those who don't attain that righteousness. When we can enter into someone else's situation and be sympathetic toward their problem, this is distinctly a Christian grace. You can't be truly merciful to someone unless you do something about it, you must do something about their situation. We must show mercy because God has been merciful to us. Jesus summarized it very well, just read Matthew 25: 35-40. Psalm 51 tells us: "create in me a pure heart, O God,

and renew a steadfast spirit within me”, pure means not defiled, polluted, or mixed with impurities. We can’t make our heart pure on our own, God initiates, sanctifies, and perfects the heart of man; so how do we pursue purity? By living, active fellowship with God thru daily personal time with Him and prayer, Paul said God started a good work in us and God will carry it to completion. To be a peacemaker means to be a reconciler and the peace probably is made at a cost to us, Jesus did this , He did peace at the cost of His life and by the blood of His cross. Peter said if you suffer for what is right, you are blessed, but how can a person rejoice or feel blessed when you are going thru insult, persecution, suffering, even death for doing right? Yet, Jesus clearly proclaims blessedness for those who are being persecuted for righteousness sake, suffering is the authentic hallmark of Christianity. For persecution to bring happiness or blessing, it requires some conditions: (a) it must be for righteousness sake and not a result of our character (2) the evil spoken against you must have no basis in facts (3) it must be a result of consistent loyalty to Christ. It is the cause that makes a martyr, not the suffering; it is our privilege to suffer with Christ.

Okay, now if we follow all that Jesus says in these Beatitudes, what do we receive or get as

a reward? Well according to Jesus, we will be rewarded as follows:

- (1) receive the kingdom of heaven**
- (2) shall be comforted**
- (3) inherit the earth**
- (4) shall be filled**
- (5) shall obtain mercy**
- (6) shall see God**
- (7) called sons of God**
- (8) kingdom of heaven, reward in heaven.**

In actuality, what have I just told you in this message? Maybe about how to be an ideal disciple? Didn't Jesus have all those qualities, didn't He live His life following them as a guide?

A disciple is called to be Christ-like, you must follow Christ's commands and be humble and loving to those around you. A disciple is called to share the sufferings of Christ and you will also experience rejection and persecution because you belong to Christ.

I will finish with this hymn verse: Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine! O what a foretaste of glory divine! Heir of salvation, purchase of God, born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.

AMEN.