

## *How to Live a Happy Life*

Everyone wants to be happy. Ask people what they want from life, and they will respond, “I just want to be happy.” Ask people what they mean by “happiness,” they will say that happiness is a deep sense of peace and contentment that seems so elusive. But if you probe further and ask how we can attain such happiness, you will receive many answers. We all want to be happy. We all experience moments of happiness. But none of us is quite sure how to attain happiness. This is why today’s gospel is so important.

As Jesus starts his ministry, he delivers a great sermon we call *The Sermon on the Mount*. He begins his sermon with a series of “beatitudes” that describe the “beatitude” or “happiness” of those who belong to the kingdom of heaven. These beatitudes are the “charter” of the kingdom of heaven because (1) they describe the kind of life Jesus’ disciples live; (2) they describe the beatitude or happiness of the kingdom. Here are the eight beatitudes with a brief commentary.

*Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* The poor “in spirit” are those who know that no matter how much they possess, they always stand in need of God’s grace. No matter how rich they may be, they stand as beggars before God, always in need of God’s mercy and forgiveness. These people are truly happy because they know their need for God.

*Blessed are they who mourn; for they shall be comforted.* Here, Jesus is talking about something more than personal grief, although this is surely included. These people are those who mourn because of the evil and injustice in the world that contradicts the kingdom of heaven, and so they wait for God to set all things right. Then they will be comforted.

*Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the land.* Like the “poor in spirit,” the meek do not aggressively assert their will. They do not push their own “agenda” at the expense of everything else. They live in humility before God, and in the new age they will inherit all things.

*Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness; for they will be satisfied.* Righteousness is God’s own holiness. It is the sum total of all that is good and right. Those who seek God’s holiness will be satisfied because God will make them holy.

*Blessed are the merciful; for they will be shown mercy.* Mercy is the hallmark of Jesus’ ministry, and it should be the hallmark of our lives as well. We ought to forgive as we have been forgiven and be merciful just as God has been merciful to us. Then we will be happy.

*Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.* The clean of heart are those who are single-minded in their service to God. They have a pure intention of serving God and only God. They will see God because nothing distracts them from God.

*Blessed are the peacemakers; for they will be called children of God.* The peacemakers are those who reconcile people who are alienated from each other. Having been reconciled by God, they extend this peace and reconciliation to others. They are the sons and daughters of God.

*Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness; for there is the kingdom of heaven.* Those persecuted for righteousness are those who have lived their lives

according to God's righteousness and have been persecuted for doing so. While they suffer great travail now, they will inherit the kingdom of heaven where they will rule with Christ.

Mediate upon these beatitudes and you will find the way to happiness. Reflect upon them and you will know how to live a blessed life. Most importantly, incorporate them into your daily life, and you will be happy. *Father Matera*