

Ordinary Time 4A 2017

The Beatitudes

At the beginning of his ministry, Jesus preaches a great sermon that we call the Sermon on the Mount. At the outset of this sermon, Jesus proclaims eight beatitudes that describe the blessings of the kingdom and the conduct of those who live as his disciples. While we may be tempted to say nobody can live in this way, this is the way Jesus intends us to live every day. And if we do, he promises us the blessings of the kingdom of heaven. Listen again to the beatitudes that teach us the way to perfect holiness.

Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. The poor “in spirit” are those who understand their need for God’s grace and mercy no matter how rich or wealthy they are. They know they stand as beggars before God, always in need of God’s grace. Such people are happy because they know their poverty before God.

Blessed are they who mourn; for they shall be comforted. These are the people who mourn because of the evil and injustice in the world that contradicts the kingdom of heaven. They mourn for what has happened to God’s good creation and to God’s holy people. They wait for God to set all things aright. For when that happens, they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the land. Like the “poor in spirit,” the meek are not aggressive; they do not assert themselves as all cost. They live with others in humility before God. And because they do, they will inherit everything.

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness; for they will be satisfied. Righteousness is God’s holiness. It is a way of life that is totally in harmony

with God's will. Those who seek to live in 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. Nothing is more important than mercy. And so we ought to forgive as we have been forgiven, and be merciful just as God has been merciful to us.

Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God. The clean of heart are those who are single-minded in their purpose and devotion to God. They have a pure intention to serve only God. And so 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 to each other. Since they have experienced God's peace and reconciliation in their lives, they now extend that peace and reconciliation to others. And so 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. These are the people who have lived their lives according to God's holiness and been persecuted for doing so. While they suffer great travail now, they will inherit the kingdom of heaven where they will live with Christ.

These beatitudes are the road to happiness. This is the way of life that we try to instill in our children at St. Mary's School and in our religious education programs. This is way of life that we ought to live every day. Reflect upon and live these beatitudes and you will have perfect joy. Live according to these beatitudes, and you will be a disciple of Jesus who inherits the kingdom of heaven.