

The Sermon on the Mount

Learning to Follow Jesus

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“What could be newer than these injunctions wherein the very things which all others avoid, these he declares to be desirable?”

- St. John Chrysostom, *Commentary on Matthew*

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.” (Mt. 5:6)

St. Luke’s Gospel: “Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled” (6:21a).

‘Righteousness’ and ‘justice’:

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness [justice; Greek: δικαιοσύνην]”

“Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.” (Mt. 5:7)

Being “merciful” is not a feeling or attitude; it describes “those who come to the aid of the needy” (St. Augustine).

“Mercy is about action; specifically, generous action that delivers someone from need or bondage.” - Stassen and Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics*

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.” (Mt. 5:8)

καθαρός = “clean, pure”

“Beware of practicing your righteousness before others in order to be seen by them, for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven” (Mt. 6:1)

“The organ for seeing God is the heart.” - Pope Benedict XVI

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (Mt. 5:9)

Two kinds of “peacemakers”: 1) those who work for reconciliation among fractured parties, 2) those who have rightly ordered their emotions and desires

All humans are created in the image of God (*imago Dei*; see Gen. 1:26), but this divine peace restores and heals us and sets in right relationship with God

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (Mt. 5:10)

“Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Mt. 5:11; see also Lk. 6:22-23).

Tradition refers to the “seven beatitudes” in the Sermon; these 8th and 9th beatitudes are distinct for literary reasons:

- Note the recall/reference to the first beatitude: “for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”
- Note the transition from third to second person in 5:11: “Blessed are you...”

These beatitudes qualify and inform a Christian understanding of “happiness”

“[T]he life of discipleship that constitutes true happiness is always in this life accompanied by suffering.” - William Mattison, *The Sermon on the Mount and Moral Theology*

“Whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.”

- Matthew 10:38-39