

Beatitudes

The Beatitudes are a ladder of spiritual progression; they can be used to measure where we are in our spiritual life. Augustine calls it “the perfect pattern for the Christian life”. It is a sequence of progression on our way.

Jesus calls “blessed” the conditions of life that we consider to be wretched.

Blessed are the poor in spirit: Blessed are the humble. For most of us this is a life-long struggle. If we acquire other virtues, we still must work on humility till our last breath. We must be conscious of both our sin and our need for God. Humility is the chief of virtues; without it none of the other virtues matter. We must love both God and our neighbour. It means, also, that we must not be encumbered by wealth. We must not let our stuff begin to own us.

Blessed are they who mourn: Those who mourn for their own sin; those who mourn for the sins of others, not in a judgemental way, but in a loving compassionate way. It is to see abuse and mourn the affect of it both on the abused and on the abuser. Those of us who grieve can see the pointlessness of what the world considers to be worthwhile. “Bear one another’s burden and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

Most of us, myself included, are still working on these first two.

Blessed are the meek: Those who are patient, those who do not think that they are better than others, those who are able to be taught by the simplest. The meek would rather bear an offense than to commit one. In the Epistle to the Galatians we read of

patience , kindness, gentleness, self control are all aspects of the Fruit of the Spirit that meekness summarizes.

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness:

Those who seek justice for not only themselves, but for others – especially for others: for often when I seek justice for myself, my ego is what is driving it.

The Righteousness of God's will – not my will. Here we must remember that Righteousness has to do with our covenant relationship with God. In our case the covenant is sealed by Baptism, Chrismation, and the Eucharist; for He is our bread and He is our drink. Rather than hunger and thirst for the things the way our world wants us to do, we must hunger and thirst for communion with God.

Blessed are the merciful: Those who love and work to know how to forgive others. Blessed are the Compassionate. We are all beggars before God. We must be compassionate to the beggar before us, for we too are a beggar before God. We visit this in the Our Father, where we ask for God's forgiveness of our debts, as we forgive our debtors. Jesus will, in another place extend this compassion to our enemies. The Fruit of the Spirit is kindness

Blessed are the clean in heart, for they shall see God: Here Jesus sets forth for us the natural progression of Theosis. We work with God to purify and cleanse our hearts, to end our double mindedness. When we are cleansed we are illumined and can see the uncreated light. Then we proceed to unity with God. Unless the eyes of our heart are clean, the light they would see will be painful. Love is one of the ways we cleanse our heart; Love as St. Paul describes it in 1st Corinthians 13. "Now we see in a mirror

darkly but then Face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know, even also as I am known.”

Blessed are the peacemakers: This is a natural progression from having cleansed our hearts. First we make peace within ourselves, then with ourselves and others, and then between others.

Through this we become sons of God. First we must make peace with ourselves; then we must make peace with others. Much of the peacemaking with ourselves happens through the cleansing of our heart. Again this points us to our relationship with Christ; for as St. Paul observes: “He Himself is our peace, Who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us. This peace is one of the aspects of the Fruit of the Spirit. “For if we live by the Spirit let us also walk by the Spirit. Let us have no self-conceit, no provoking of one another, no envy of one another.”

Blessed are they that are persecuted for Righteousness sake:

When our lives have shown forth the previous virtues we will shine a light on those who do not want a light to be shown. We have many outstanding examples of such persecution from heathens: The royal passion bearers, St. Elizabeth of Moscow, and St. Tikhon Patriarch of Moscow, a confessor for the faith. The first three centuries of the Church has thousands of martyrs who were killed by heathens; in the last century millions of martyrs who were killed by the godless.

But this will not only come from outside the Church, but as some of us here have experienced, it may well come from within. John Chrysostom and Kyril of Alexandria are both saints of the Church, yet Kyril persecuted John through envy. If we look at the prophets of old, they were not killed by heathens; they were killed

by their own people. So also some of those who have been charged with watching over us have done evil to us.

Blessed are you when men shall revile you and persecute you and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for My Name's sake: Jesus tells us we will be slandered, and we have been slandered; Jesus tells us to expect witch-hunts; and there have been witch-hunts. Brothers and sisters, I say this not to incite anger in you, or fear, for the very next thing Jesus says is:

Rejoice and be exceedingly glad for great is your reward in heaven: Rejoice! for God's Kingdom rules over all. Rejoice! for the reproaches here on earth are as nothing compared to the Kingdom of God. Rejoice! for our glory comes from glorifying the King of the Universe. Rejoice! for He comes to us in our poverty! Rejoice! for He is the consolation of our mourning. Rejoice! for He comes to us in meekness! Rejoice! for He is the fulfillment of Righteousness! Rejoice! for He is our mercy! Rejoice! for He is cleansing us and saving us! Rejoice! for He is our peace!