

The Beatitudes

Seeing the crowds, [Jesus] went up on the mountain, and when he sat down his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. ~ Matthew 5:1-12

JESUS, like Moses in the Old Testament, goes up a mountain to proclaim the new law of the Gospel. He inaugurates this Sermon on the Mount with these eight statements above, called the Beatitudes. The Beatitudes are more than an introduction; they serve as the key to understanding the new life of grace being proclaimed by Jesus. They are at the heart of his teaching and give us his answer to the deepest question about our existence: what is human happiness and where can it be found? This question concerns all of us and is the foundation for the search for true wisdom.

God desires our true happiness

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The Offering: an icon of Mary's gift to the world in her Son, by Elizabeth Stefanick

so much that he has woven it into our being. We all have a natural desire for happiness. This desire is in us in order to draw us toward God, for he alone can fulfill it. St. Augustine writes that our hearts are restless until they rest in God. The Beatitudes are Christian attitudes that hold within them not only the promise of happiness but also its true meaning.

Jesus responded to this desire for happiness when he gave us the Beatitudes. They show us the final end for which God created us. He calls us to long for the coming of the Kingdom of God, for the vision of God, for the joy of the Lord, and for entry into his rest. While the promise of the Kingdom and these accompanying beatitudes are not fully realized until we get to Heaven, upon our reception of grace and the Holy Spirit in Baptism we begin to experience the Kingdom and live out these Beatitudes here and now. God created us to know him, to love him, to serve him, and to be happy with him forever in Heaven.

“The Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount, and the teaching given to us by the apostles provide us the path to happiness here and in eternity.”

The Beatitudes are blessed attitudes; they are an outpouring of grace by the Holy Spirit and a sign that, as baptized Christians, we have been made “*partakers of the divine nature*” (2 Pt 1:4), received the spirit of adoption (see Rom 8:15), and given the hope of eternal life. They reveal that true happiness is found in God alone, not in money, fame, power, or anything else. Therefore, we are invited to purify our hearts and seek God above everything else. The choice for God

will require difficult moral choices, but the Lord has given us these Beatitudes to sustain us and give us a foretaste of the true happiness of Heaven.

The Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount, and the teaching given to us by the apostles provide us the path to happiness here and in eternity. In the end, the goal of life leads to a person, and that person is Jesus, who says, “*Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*” (Mt 11:28).

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