

Almighty God, grant us thy Holy Spirit to be our interpreter, leading us through the written word to him who is the incarnate Word, such that we may know thee more fully, love thee more truly, and to serve thee more faithfully to the honor and glory of thy Name. Amen

Imagine two identical women are given the same job and told: "You are part of an assembly line, and I want you to put part A into slot B and then hand what you have assembled to someone else. I want you to do that over and over for eight hours a day."

The only difference:

- 1st is told, "At the end of the year = \$30K"
- 2nd is told, "At the end of the year = 3 Million"

After a month you can imagine the outcome...

- 1st (Boring, thinking of quitting)
- 2nd (Whistle while I work!)

What's the difference?? Their expectation of the future!

Where is your reward? Here there is persecution... but our King promises protection and provision to all who trust in Him

1. Persecution is normal here

Jesus has just told his disciples our key verse... Remember? Mark 1:17 Follow me, and I will make you become, fishers of men

More and more are following him... and sits down with his disciples and helps them gain perspective:

vv. 3-10 3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. 5 "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. 6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. 7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. 8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. 9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. 10 "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

A. Not a set of achievements to attain... but a description of reality for Christ followers

- Crowds are dangerous – Persecution is for believers!
- Persecution is normal!! (SCALE)
 - Mild - Mourning, Hunger and Thirst, Injustice
 - Severe – Churches lose their buildings throughout the world / Pastors are put in jail / Christians are beaten (India)
 - Subtle...
 - Aren't you being a bit judgmental by insisting on sexual ethics?
 - You be You... is the mantra... as long as it isn't Christian
 - College campuses, like Presbyterian, that are limiting Campus Pastors from being on the campus more than a few hours...
 - To be pro-marriage (holding normal Christian Ethics) is now to be "inciting hate" / "bigoted" / phobic...

B. What's the response supposed to be?

- Meek, Peacemaking, Meek
- Jesus will later say, "Turn the other cheek"
- These can be abused
 - The emperor Julian the Apostate (332–63) is reputed to have said with vicious irony that he wanted to confiscate Christians' property so that they might all become poor and enter the kingdom of heaven
 - Should we be "open handed" with our property
 - Absolutely!
 - But, it's okay to hunger and thirst for righteousness
- To be meek and peacemaking is to LOVE
 - When people persecute you... don't hate them

- Love them / Pray for them / Forgive them
- Doesn't mean let them walk over you
 - Paul appeals to Caesar
 - Jesus protested when he was struck
 - (Okay to say, "Illegal / Not Right!")
- But, if our reward is in heaven... then we can seek justice without vengefulness or retribution...
- We can forgive!

- C. Ultimate response?? Rejoice!! For great is your reward in heaven
- a. Thor Ragnarock – Thor saves his people... but loses his homeland...
 - i. Asgard is not a place, it's a people
 - b. How?? Have a clearly understood definition of reality NOT invested here but in the Kingdom...
 - c. From money to children to property to goals... everything should be held with open hands as a GIFT from God to be Stewarded!!
 - d. And here's the cool thing... We are the people of God AND WE INHERIT THE KINGDOM of God... People AND Place!!

Revelation has a clear picture of this "reward in heaven"...

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9-10 The good guys are huge in number

Rev. 7:9 After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, 10 and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

(A huge number from everywhere see God providing their salvation and worship triumphantly)

1. White –robed Martyrs crowd surfing... Could you imagine this worship service?

a. What's the largest crowd you've been to? Chicago on July 3rd – 1.5 mill +

But who are these people?? V. 14... These are they who have come out of the great tribulation... (Specific group... but the principles translate to any suffering!) *** Temporary powers may triumph... but not ultimately!!

b. Suffering is real!! 100K Christians live daily with the threat of persecution for believing that Jesus is Lord (ruler over everyone else)

c. Just a couple of weeks ago Iraqi Christians were shot to death in a church service.... This is NORMAL... web...

All Saints CELEBRATES 365 +++++ martyrs... those "counted worthy"

I could tell story after story of Christians who have died this year... and ask you to ***research for yourself... persecution.com ... persecutedchurch.org***

v. 10 And they cried out in a loud voice "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne and to the Lamb"... All the angels (joined in) saying, "Amen! Praise and Glory and wisdom and thanks and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!"

(This is like the Holy Holy Holy that we will sing in the Eucharist)

Do you remember what they are waving?? ***Palm branches... sign of victory!!***

Rich irony... Remember the Gospel... "Mt. 5:11 "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Tukutendereza Yesu / Yesu omwana gwendiga / Omusayi gwe gunazziza // Nebaza (Yesu) Omolokozi //// We praise you Jesus, Jesus the lamb of God, His blood washes me , I thank Jesus the Savior.

Written during the reign of Idi Amin ... who, being a Muslim, slaughtered Christians for sport! The Church grew stronger... and sang praises to Jesus.

EVERY tongue, tribe, nation, will sing praise to God for the salvation He provides!!

On our coins it says, "In God we trust" ... but I think more often **we put our trust in the Donkey and the Elephant RATHER THAN THE Lamb!**

God provides salvation... and everyone in the Universe sees it!!

11 All the angels ... elders and the four living creatures. .. worshiped God, 12 saying: "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!"

11-12 They sing the truth in such a way that even the Angels agree... even the universe agrees God gets praise for salvation (saved, being saved, will be)

... the question is, "Will I agree??" Dwarves in the Last Battle... sitting in a circle, blind and refusing to follow Aslan... thinking everyone is playing a trick on them!

Where is your reward? Here there is persecution... but our King promises protection, provision, and promise to all who trust in Him

13 Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?" 14 I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. A. God's protection comes at the cost of his own life... and is available to all who let him cover them

>> Who are these? Those that suffer... Those who follow Jesus
>> Jesus didn't promise a "get out of suffering free" card...

CONTRAST - In America we pray for the burden of suffering to be lifted from our backs. In the rest of the world Christians pray for stronger backs so they can bear their suffering.

These are those who suffered... but are covered...

> Blood of the Lamb
> Tent to cover them

Jesus covers all of our debts... Righteous for the un-righteous! But that gets us to Zero!

Have been saved... Am being saved ... Will be saved...

Tent to cover them is provision... everything they need!!

Where is your reward? Here there is persecution... but our King promises protection, provision, and promise to all who trust in Him

15 "Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. 16 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat.

B. God's provision meets every need

> Clothing – White robed martyrs... clothed in Jesus
> Shelter – Jesus will be their shelter
> Food – They will eat with him at His table
> Companionship – wiping away every tear from their eyes

HOW? How does a dead guy provide for this?

Liberal Resurrection – He rose again in our hearts!

No, thank you!!

Resurrection provides hope that the future is there... and certain

> You lose nothing!!!

> THE RESURRECTION IS YOUR CLAIM CHECK!!

Where is your reward? Here there is persecution... but our King promises protection, provision, and promise to all who trust in Him

17 For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

C. God's promise of a certain end to trouble

> The Lamb will be their shepherd... wiping away every tear... in other words.. There will come a time when there will be no more tears.

The shepherd becomes the King... promising that No One can snatch them out of my fathers hand!

***In Boston there is a Revolutionary war bar... tavern that has stood...
Over the entrance to the bar it says, "We have no sovereigns here"***

The question for all of us is this... Will we trust ourselves to get out of here...

Or will you bow the knee to a Shepherd Sovereign... who promises that "no one can snatch my lambs out of my hand"

A – I don't know what trouble you have in your life... it may be huge and overwhelming OR it may be like a persistent gnat... Whatever the case... it is trouble to you... In the midst of it... be a Saint... Trust in Christ...

- Trust in Christ's promises... There will be trouble... but he'll make it right
- Trust in Christ's provision... He counted you... marked you... he'll get you through
- Trust in Christ's protection... He wins in the end... and he WILL end suffering

Lord, give us your grace to follow your saints with strong backs that trust you to bring us through... that we may come into your presence and enjoy your care for us!

Notes

Setting (5:1–2)

- Here Jesus stands at the height of his popularity. Although his ministry touched the masses, he saw the need to teach his "disciples" (mathē tai) closely. The word "disciple" must not be restricted to the Twelve, whom Matthew has yet to mention (10:1–
- 2 NIV masks the idiom "he opened his mouth and taught them," found elsewhere in the NT (13:35; Acts 8:34; 10:34; 18:14) and reflecting OT roots (Job 3:1; 33:2; Dan 10:16). It is used in solemn or revelatory contexts
- Many scholars have compared the "mountain" (cf. Lk 6:17) here to Mount Sinai, where God through Moses first taught his ethics by the law (Ex 19–20;
- stand to read Scripture publicly, Jewish teachers would sit to expound it
- The audience is clearly specified as his disciples, as opposed to the crowds.
- Theme and Form
 - The controlling theme around which this material is collected is that of discipleship, or 'life in the kingdom of heaven'
 - Old Testament literary form
 - Happy are those who ..., for they shall ..." (e.g., Ps 1:1)
 - In 4:17 Jesus summarizes his message: "Repent, for the kingdom is at hand"; Matthew 5–7 shows in greater detail the repentant lifestyle that characterizes the people of the kingdom.
 - Lutheran orthodoxy often understands the Sermon on the Mount as an exposition of law designed to drive men to cry for grace. This is Pauline (Rom 3–4; Gal 3), and grace is certainly presupposed in the sermon (e.g., see on 5:3).
 - the sermon cannot be reduced to this. The righteousness envisaged (see on 5:20) is not imputed righteousness.

- The disjunction between Matthew 5–7 and the Christian gospel is theologically and historically artificial.

5:3–10 The good life

- beatitudes'. Neither blessed nor 'happy' adequately translates makarios, which is rather a term of congratulation and recommendation.
 - qualities are to be envied and emulated
 - followed by a reason, pointing out that no-one will be the loser by following this way of life, however unpromising it may appear in the short term
- Poor in spirit suggests the OT theme of the 'poor' or 'meek', the oppressed people of God who, nonetheless, trust in him for deliverance
- 3
 - Entrance-Requirements' or Eschatological Blessings?
 - The Beatitudes "are but an expression of the fulfillment of Isaiah 61, the OT promise of the Heilszeit ['time of salvation'], in the person and proclamation of Jesus.
 - beatitudes find their roots in wisdom literature and especially the Psalms (
 - The implicit demands of the Beatitudes are therefore comprehensible only because of the new state of affairs the proclamation of the kingdom initiates (Mt 4:17, 23), the insistence that Jesus has come to fulfill the Law and the Prophets (5:17).
 - These blessings thus deal with the gift of the kingdom (5:3, 10).
 - bracket a section
 - Since Luke speaks simply of "the poor," many have concluded that he preserves the true teaching of the historical Jesus—concern for the economically destitute—while Matthew has "spiritualized" it by adding "in spirit."
 - This does not mean there is lack of concern for the materially poor but that poverty itself is not the chief thing
 - poverty is neither a blessing nor a guarantee of spiritual rewards, it can be turned to advantage if it fosters humility before God.
 - biblical balance is easy to prostitute
 - The emperor Julian the Apostate (332–63) is reputed to have said with vicious irony that he wanted to confiscate Christians' property so that they might all become poor and enter the kingdom of heaven
 - On the other hand, the wealthy too easily dismiss Jesus' teaching about poverty here and elsewhere (see on 6:24) as merely attitudinal and confuse their hoarding with good stewardship.
 - Many Jewish people believed that the kingdom would be ushered in only by a great war and force of arms; Jesus promises it for the "poor in spirit," the "humble" or "meek" (5:5), the peacemakers (5:9)
 - To be poor in spirit is not to lack courage but to acknowledge spiritual bankruptcy. It confesses one's unworthiness before God and utter dependence on him.
 - poor could encompass either physical poverty (Lk 6:20), or the faithful dependence on God that it often produced ("in spirit," as here).
 - All must begin by confessing that by themselves they can achieve nothing.
 - an established church must likewise recognize its precarious position when it claims to be rich and fails to see its own poverty (Rev 3:14–22).
- 4
 - Some commentators deny that this mourning is for sin (e.g., Bonnard). Others (e.g., Schweizer) understand it to be mourning for any kind of misery. The reality is subtler. The godly remnant of Jesus' day weeps because of the humiliation of Israel, but they understand that it comes from personal and corporate sins.
 - meek" (praus) is hard to define. It can signify absence of pretension (1 Peter 3:4, 14–15) but generally suggests gentleness (cf. 11:29; James 3:13) and the selfcontrol it entails.
 - The Greeks extolled humility in wise men and rulers, but such humility smacked of condescension. In general the Greeks considered meekness a vice because they failed to distinguish it from servility
 - To be meek toward others implies freedom from malice and a vengeful spirit
 - Meekness therefore requires such a true view about ourselves as will express itself even in our attitude toward others.
 - Comfort" was one of the blessings promised for the future time when God would restore his mourning people (Is 40:1; 49:13; 51:3, 12; 52:9; 54:11; 57:18; 61:2; 66:13).
- 6
 - Hunger and thirst"
 - the deepest spiritual famine is hunger for the word of God (Amos 8:11–14).
 - Ps 42:2
 - hungering suggests that the righteousness that satisfies will be given as a gift
 - TDNT
 - These people hunger and thirst, not only that they may be righteous (i.e., that they may wholly do God's will from the heart), but that justice may be done everywhere

- it is better to take this righteousness as simultaneously personal righteousness
 - and justice in the broadest sense
- All unrighteousness grieves them and makes them homesick for the new heaven and earth
- Satisfied with neither personal righteousness alone nor social justice alone, they cry for both
- the advent of the messianic kingdom.
 - satisfied
 - only when the kingdom is consummated
 - Jewish people understood that God would also satisfy his people's needs in the future kingdom (Is 25:6; 41:17–18; 55:2), as he had supplied for them in the exodus when he first redeemed them (Deut 6:11; 8:7–10). But the greatest object of longing should be God (Ps 42:1; 63:1) and instruction in his righteousness (Ps 119:40, 47, 70, 92, 97, 103; Jer 15:16).
- 5:8
 - The “pure in heart” (Ps 73:1) were those in Israel whose hearts were “clean,” or undefiled, those who recognized that God alone was their help and reward (Ps 73:2–28).
- 9
 - the making of peace can itself have messianic overtones.
 - Prince of Peace” (Isa 9:6–7)
 - Isaiah 52:7—“How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, ‘Your God reigns
 - Our peacemaking will include the promulgation of that gospel.
 - It must also extend to seeking all kinds of reconciliation. Instead of delighting in division, bitterness, strife, or some petty “divide-and-conquer” mentality, disciples of Jesus delight to make peace wherever possible
 - Making peace is not appeasement: the true model is God’s costly peacemaking (Eph 2:15–17; Col 1:20).
 - This beatitude must have been shocking to Zealots when Jesus preached it, when political passions were inflamed (Morison).
 - Both the Jewish people and the righteous were called “sons of God” in Jewish tradition; the ultimate declaration of that fact would be made in the sight of the nations on the day of judgment.
- 10
 - Most Jewish people did not believe that prophets still existed in the Old Testament sense, so Jesus’ comparing his followers to the prophets indicated that they would have an extraordinary mission.
 - It is no accident that Jesus should pass from peacemaking to persecution, for the world enjoys its cherished hates and prejudices so much that the peacemaker is not always welcome
 - Opposition is a normal mark of being a disciple of Jesus, as normal as hungering for righteousness or being merciful
 - Judaism highly honored martyrs for God’s law; yet no other rabbi called disciples to die for his own teachings or name.

5:11–16 The distinctiveness of the disciples

- last beatitude is picked up to emphasize that the persecution which results from following Jesus puts his disciples in the succession of God’s faithful servants
- The reason for the persecution in Mt 5:10 is “because of righteousness”
 - now, Jesus says, it is “because of me.”
 - it so identifies the disciple of Jesus with the practice of Jesus’ righteousness that there is no place for professed allegiance to Jesus that is not full of righteousness
- the prophets to whom the disciples are likened were persecuted for their faithfulness to God and the disciples for faithfulness to Jesus
 - Not Jesus but the disciples are likened to the prophets.
- Discipleship means allegiance to the suffering Christ, and it is therefore not at all surprising that Christians should be called upon to suffer. In fact it is a joy and a token of his grace” (Bonhoeffer, pp. 80–81)

Illustrations / Articles

- What would a secular version of the beatitudes look like?"
 - Based on the way our culture defines success, here's how I think a worldly version of the beatitudes might read: 1. Blessed are the self-confident because they rule the world. 2. Blessed are positive-thinkers because they don't need anybody's comfort. 3. Blessed are the cocky and assertive because they get what they want. 4. Blessed are those who hunger for fame because they get reality TV shows. 5. Blessed are the vengeful because they get respect. 6. Blessed are the impure, pleasure-seekers because they see a good time. 7. Blessed are those who beat their opponents because the victors write the history books. 8. Blessed are the popular because everybody loves them
- True human flourishing is only available through communion with the Father God through his revealed Son, Jesus, as we are empowered by the Holy Spirit.

- Pennington's definition: "A macarism is a makarios statement that ascribes happiness or flourishing to a particular person or state. A macarism is a pronouncement, based on observation, that a certain way of being in the world produces human flourishing and felicity." (42) "Macarisms don't generally describe actions but rather people who are in a certain state . . ." (49)
- "A woe is the opposite of a macarism in that it describes the result of a way of being in the world that does not result in flourishing but in loss, grief, and destruction." (55)
- On grace, Pennington warns us not to pit grace and virtue against each other; otherwise, we create a "self-inflicted dilemma that cannot make sense of the entirety of Scripture's witness" (159). Grace is foundational to everything about Jesus's ministry, including his teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. And grace is demonstrated through the invitation to the full and human flourishing way of life, the kind of life that displays the wisdom of God to the world. "Jesus' macarisms are grace-based, wisdom invitations to human flourishing in God's coming kingdom." (161)
- The blessings happens in the present, even though most of the reasons occur in the future. For example: "Blessed are the pure in heart" (right now!), "for they shall see God" (one day, in the future).
- the timing
 - Though we have a myriad of reasons for mourning, mourners are blessed now since they have a God who will one day comfort them completely, wiping every tear from their eyes, and who even now is intervening on their behalf.
 - The blessedness of the future bleeds into the present with the same redemption God has always been working—a redemption decisively accomplished through his blessed Son.
- From the perspective of the world, there's absolutely nothing blessed about mourning, meekness, or mercy. The world asserts the opposite: "Blessed are the powerful, for they shall inherit everything."
 - the Beatitudes are not prescriptions or postulations; they are proclamations. Jesus isn't primarily instructing us in the pursuit of certain virtues. (Though there's certainly an aspect of this: we should grow in meekness, be merciful, and pursue pure hearts, for instance.) Rather, Jesus is announcing where his kingdom is found and who will inherit its fullness—so that we can recognize it when we see it and join in.
 - demonstrate what it looks like to counter the empty pursuits our cultures value so d
- these statements assure us of the full realization of all our human desires: to know God, to be his children, to know his comfort and satisfaction, and to dwell with him forever
 - you can't have the Jesus of the Sermon of the Mount without the Jesus who cleansed the leper, and healed the centurion's servant, and stilled the storm,
 - and cast out demons. The writer who gives us the one, gives us the other, and it is arbitrary to do what some modern folk try to do; namely, say that they admire the ethical teacher of the Sermon on the Mount but they don't want to get involved with the spooky supernatural Person who stills storms and casts out demons.
- theirs is the kingdom
 - Future Promises Sandwiched by Present Assurance
 - these are promises for the future. "They shall be comforted. . . . They shall inherit the earth. . . . They shall be satisfied" and so on
 - But the promise of the first and last beatitude in verses 3 and 10 seems to relate to the present: the disciples are assured that "theirs is the kingdom of heaven."
 - This is what the kingdom brings: comfort, earth ownership, satisfied righteousness, mercy, a vision of God, and the awesome title, son of God. You don't have to pick and choose among these promises. They all belong to the kingdom.
- A Present Yet Future Kingdom
 - "Theirs is the kingdom of heaven"), but that the full blessings of the kingdom will have to wait for the age to come ("They shall inherit the earth").
 - Jesus has brought the kingdom of heaven to earth in his own kingly power and fellowship, and we can enjoy foretastes of it here and now; but the full experience of the life of the kingdom will have to wait for the age to come.
 - the best news a hopeless sinner could ever hear: the condition we must meet in order to have any dealings with God is spiritual bankruptcy. It is the easiest — and hardest — condition of all. What could be easier than having an empty hand — unless you are clutching a \$1,000 bill, or a personal "bill of rights"?
- Kevin DeYoung
 - Quick—think of eight things you wish were different about you. Got them in your head?
 - What did you come up with? If you could reinvent your personality, your habits, and your character with the snap of your fingers, what would the transformation look like? Maybe your list was something like this: I wish I could lose 25 pounds. I'd like to have more time and more money. I want to exercise more and go to bed earlier. It would be nice for my sports team to win it all just once. I want my health back. I'd like a more prestigious position.

- Nothing terrible in that list, several pretty good things in fact. But if that's all we want, we don't know what it really means to be blessed (Matt. 5:3-12). If we are honest, we too easily buy into the Beatitudes of the World.
- Blessed are the rich, for theirs is the kingdom of pleasure. Blessed are those who feel good about themselves, for they shall be confident. Blessed are the aggressive, for they shall control the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for recognition, for they shall be noticed. Blessed are the demanding, for they shall receive what's coming to them. Blessed are the sexually liberated, for they shall be their own gods. Blessed are the scheming, for they shall be called children of the powerful. Blessed are those who are praised by the world, for theirs is the kingdom of now.
- Isn't that what the world considers blessing? And isn't it a million miles from being a disciple of Christ seeking after the kingdom of heaven? Jesus expects more from us, and he promises to give us much more than we can ask or imagine. So who are you going to be and whose promises are you going to believe?
- Do not seek the Beatitudes. Do not turn them into moralistic teaching. Seek Jesus Christ who alone embodies the Beatitudes, and the Beatitudes will then be true of you as well.
 - Why? Because Jesus fulfills them. . . . Seek him through the gospel and you will be a new person, enjoying all the benefits of a relationship with God, living in the kingdom. Christianity is about coming over and over again to rest in the life that Jesus lived and the death that he died for you as a gift of sheer grace. (18-19)
 - The Beatitudes] convey the essence of the gospel, but when reduced to flat moralistic teaching, they lose all their richness. In fact, that kind of teaching is just wrong. . . . So, take a few steps back and marvel. The Beatitudes reveal the profile of the Christian, the character of the one who has had a life-changing encounter with the grace of God. . . . If your life bears any resemblance to the Beatitudes, it is because you are blessed in Jesus—you died with him so that you might live in him. The Beatitudes flesh out outrageous grace, which is yours as a gift through the gospel. (115123)
- R.T. France has written: The teaching of the Sermon on the Mount is not meant to be admired but to be obeyed.
- The Most Often Abused Verses in the Sermon on the Mount: And How to Treat Them Right,” Southwestern Journal of Theology 46/3 (Summer 2004): 1-17.