

THE BEATITUDES: "AND HE TAUGHT THEM SAYING..."

Gene Marshall, August 1972

The teachings of Jesus are summarized and arranged in perfect order by these eight sentences:

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

These eight familiar Bible verses are written in a language people do not readily understand. Words, after all, are only symbols for ideas. It is understandable that the same words sometimes represent different ideas to different people. Furthermore, if an idea does not exist in a one's mind, the words which symbolize that idea can have no meaning for that person. Jesus spoke of ideas that only a few had ever glimpsed. It is important to realize the tremendous depth of thought behind the simple sentences of Jesus. One must pause and look deep beyond the printed word to catch their astonishing significance.

Before I proceed with my interpretation of the Beatitudes, I would like to share with you a few ideas which have uncovered for me a new and extended insight into the teachings of Jesus. These ideas concern the nature of thought. What, after all, are ideas? What is one's ability to conceive and consider concepts? The following is not intended to be a philosophical explanation of the nature of thought, nor absolute truth. My purpose is to set the stage for my discussion of the Beatitudes.

People who have studied this vast and intricate universe, reduce it to an arrangement of mass and energy, showing they are not independent but two forms of a still simpler notion. But they have not shown how thought is a part of this tremendous design. We can still consider the possibility that thoughts are something entirely different from mass and energy. We usually think of thought as an electrical or chemical process going on in the brain. Science has well established the fact that the brain is the center of mental activity. It considers the impulses that come to us through our senses. It directs the movements of our bodies. It is the seat of consciousness and memory. And yet, when I consider things like my realization of existence, and all the impressions that come to me like hate, fear, joy, sorrow, love, etc., I feel as if I am examining something entirely different from mass and energy. I feel as if my mind is a link which connects me to another world.

If it is difficult for you to see thoughts as something separate from mass and energy, imagine for a moment that you have lost all five of your senses. You cannot see, hear, feel, smell, or taste. You would be virtually separated from the physical world, and yet you would be alive. You would still realize that you existed. You could think and remember. You could imagine and dream. But you would have no physical medium through which to share your thoughts and receive the thoughts of others. You would be living by yourself in your own world of thought.

For purposes of this discussion, I am going to propose the hypothesis that we actually live in two distinct worlds, and I define those worlds to be the world of thought and the world of things. The world of things includes our physical bodies, all the objects we see and touch, light, sound, energy, in fact everything that can be associated with the universe of mass and energy. The world of thought includes all conscious and subconscious activities of the human mind. It includes

dreams, fears, hates, joy, love, sorrow, realization, association, and any other word that signifies to you mental or spiritual activity. I do not attempt to make a distinction between mental and spiritual activity, but if you understand such a distinction you are but classifying this world of thought which I have defined. And it does seem that such classification is possible, for some thoughts are very closely bound to the world of things, while other thoughts seem to reach out beyond.

I want you to look again at the deathlike existence of being without all five of your senses. Seemingly you could not gain new ideas, for there would be no way for them to come to you. However, I want to consider the possibility that you could actually find new ideas even without the use of your five sense. It is possible that all truth exists within you, that your world of thought contains not only the thoughts you have considered and nourished but also all the thoughts you have never even known. If so, you can think original thoughts, and furthermore, you do not invent those thoughts but only find them. In other words, everyone's world of thought is exactly the same. Our differences result from the fact that each of us has explored our world of thought in different areas and to different extents. Now, consider the possibility that everyone lives in the same world of thought, that this world of thought has order and arrangement as does our world of things, and that the world of thought can be explored and understood. From now on when I use the term "world of thought", I would like for you to think not only of a unique personal realm, but also of this more general concept.

It is of great interest to study the relationship between the world of thought and the world of things. It is easily observed that what goes on about us in the world of things affects the world of thought. In other words, ideas come to us through our senses. Or perhaps a more accurate statement, ideas are suggested or pointed out in our world of thought by sense impressions that come to us from the world of things. And this process works the other way also: what we think affects the world of things. Notice that the brutality and meanness we find expressed in our thing-world has its origin in twisted hate-filled minds. Notice how selfish thought is almost always, if not always, the cause of injustice. Notice how one who is full of pride and self-esteem has an outward expression which is hard and cold. On the other hand, notice how a young girl's love glows with warmth. All of these are examples of how thought manifest itself in the world of things.

Now let us look a little deeper into the effect our world of thought has on our world of things. Within each of us there seems to be a core of attitudes that determines our personality, our sense of values, the nature of our choices, and ultimately - the way we act. The existence of such a core -- a core of attitudes which can be thought of as the very heart of the entire person -- is highly significant. Jesus said, *"As a man thinketh in his heart, so he is."* Also, *"Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."* Do you grasp what has been said here? Your deep-rooted thought is what makes you the type of person you are.

Finally, I want you to consider the possibility that what goes on in one's mind and heart can directly cause phenomena in the world of things. Consider the miracles of Jesus. Consider present-day faith healings and other so-called miracles. This is not all hearsay. There is too much evidence to completely overlook the issue. Somewhere is a grain of truth. Even our medical doctors are saying positively that a great deal of a person's physical disorder has its origin in the mind. And some cases that bear this out are truly amazing. Do you catch the impact of this? Your thought can be an instrument of direct cause in the thing-world around you.

Out of this type of thinking has come my interpretation of these eight mysterious sentences of Jesus. I do not set myself up as an authority, nor do I assume that the ideas that follow present the complete picture. I am still searching for truth and my thinking is still changing. Someday I may wish to change all that I now write. But for the present, I firmly believe in all that is to follow. These ideas are consistent with my thinking and with my experience. I sincerely hope that you can see

in my symbolism of words those ideas which I now try to present.

1. BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT, FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

The kingdom of heaven is a kingdom in the world of thought. Notice how this assumption puts meaning into these sayings, “*The kingdom is within you*” ... “*The kingdom of heaven is not a kingdom of this world*” ... “*The kingdom of heaven is at hand*”. This means that the kingdom of heaven is not something far away and out of reach but something available for you and me right now. More specifically, the kingdom of heaven is a condition for every human heart. Recall that the heart determines the whole. What is in one’s heart spills out into all areas of life. Thus, the kingdom of heaven is not simply a mental condition closed off from all sensory observation. It is a life, a power, and a radiance that cannot be hidden to any who would look. Also the phrases “*to live in the kingdom of heaven*” and “*to enter into the kingdom of heaven*” still have meaning. For to have the kingdom come in your heart is to produce such radical changes in your life as to seemingly transport you to an entirely new creation. Virtually every realization is different from the normal materialistic life.

The word “heaven” has significance, for the kingdom of heaven is the fulfillment of one’s fondest dream and deepest desire. A person who lives in the kingdom of heaven is free – free from anxiety and fear, free from want, free from torture or hatred and greed. To live in the kingdom of heaven is to have life – abundant life, life that is full of hope, life that is joyful and powerful. The kingdom of heaven is not a place of ease. It is not repose, but LIFE. To live in the kingdom of heaven is to be capable of the greatest of all realizations and the greatest of all expressions, LOVE. This is not sexual love that one shows one’s mate, not the possessive love that binds one to things, but the self-giving love that expands our concern from the “I” to the “ALL”. It is the love that loves the enemy as well as the friend. It is the love that embraces all of creation. To be capable of such love is heaven in itself. Needless to say, the kingdom of heaven does not yield itself to exact definition nor perfect description. It is like the Grand Canyon or Niagara Falls or a beautiful sunset. Each must go and see for themselves.

The word “kingdom” has significance also, for heaven is a kingdom. Heaven is a kingdom because heaven has a king. God is king of heaven. The kingdom of heaven is the kingdom of God. God, too, exists in the world of thought. God is truth. God is love. Consider the tremendous depth of those two concepts: “Truth” and “Love”. But God is even more than that. God is an intellect. God has realization and being. God has a free will even as we have a free will. God has initiative and can guide and direct us if we are willing. Furthermore, anyone who would live in heaven must surrender to God’s rule. For heaven is a kingdom and those who would be sovereign can never live in the kingdom of heaven. Jesus assures us, however, that that king is just and very much concerned for the welfare of His subjects. Jesus tells us that He is wise and far-sighted, and that he is much better qualified to direct us than we ourselves. Furthermore, Jesus says that He will direct us in paths that yield the highest good both for ourselves and for the whole Kingdom. Jesus compares this great king to a loving father who patiently cares for His children. The kingdom of God is a kingdom of love.

Who, then, are the poor in spirit? To be poor seems to indicate a lack of something. Let me show you how you are rich. You are rich with fears and hates and anxieties. You are rich with hardened attitudes and stubborn opinions. You are rich with esteem for yourself. You are proud. You are vain. You are self-righteous. These things wrap themselves about you like heavy cloaks. They blind you to truth. They separate you from life. They cut you off from that which is good and fine. They prevent you from entering into the kingdom of heaven. If you would live in the kingdom, you must become poor. You must be willing to part with everything you now are. You must be willing to humble yourself, to erase your all consuming concern for your own welfare, to see yourself as servant and not as king. Jesus

said, *“Deny yourself.”* Jesus said that he who would lose his life would find it. And truly, it is only as you lose yourself, as you renounce yourself as sovereign that you become poor in spirit and can enter the kingdom of heaven.

2. BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO MOURN, FOR THEY SHALL BE COMFORTED

Do you know what it is to mourn? Have you ever lost someone who was so close to you? Has your world ever caved in about you and lain desolate at your feet? Did you curse the world for what it did to you? Why did you mourn? Was it not because you placed your faith in things that were perishable? Then do not curse the world when you mourn, but look at yourself. If your faith were right, you would not mourn. Place your faith in the kingdom of heaven. Place your faith in God. These things are imperishable. These things are eternal. They can never be taken away from you. Jesus said, *“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”*

Put your faith in earthly things. You have learned to love your possessions, and to part with that love may not be easy. Yet you know that you cannot live in the kingdom of heaven until you are willing to part with the existence you now have. Of course, change is not easy. But even though you mourn, do not be disheartened; for out of the ashes of your broke world and through your tears shall come your comfort which is the kingdom of heaven. I think Jesus must have intended this Beatitude as a word of encouragement to those who find that their search for the kingdom causes parting and tears.

3. BLESSED ARE THE MEEK, FOR THEY SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH

To be meek is to renounce yourself as sovereign and put God on the throne. It is to reduce yourself from king to servant. It is to lay aside your pride and self-promotion and humbly, willingly, serve your heavenly Father. You will note that being meek and being poor in spirit seem very similar. Meekness, however, seems to reach out a little farther. It includes unconquerable faith in God. It means undivided trust like the simple servant who lives only to do his master's will.

The earth represents the world of things. To inherit the earth is to be given dominion over the world of things. Jesus had dominion over the world of things. He commanded the wind and the rain. He walked upon the water. He healed the sick and fed the multitudes. He even conquered death itself. Consider another aspect of the inheritance of the earth. Jesus said, *“Oh ye of little faith. Do not be anxious, saying ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek all these things; and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things shall be yours as well.”* Notice how this ties in with the kingdom of heaven and the freedom from want idea.

Does it seem strange to you that to receive control of the world of things, one must put their faith in God and the kingdom of heaven – both of which exist in the world of thought? Recall our previous consideration that the world of thought can directly cause phenomena in the world of things. Meekness seems to be the key which works this particular law of our creation. Is there not some degree of logic to all this? If you were God, to whom would you give dominion over the earth? Would you give it to the proud and selfish, who would use it to their own advantage? Would you give it to the lost and selfish, who would use it to carelessly and unwisely? God chooses to give this great gift to the meek – to His humble servants who are willing to do His will.

4. BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO HUNGER AND THIRST FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS, FOR THEY SHALL BE SATISFIED

You will observe that becoming poor in spirit is no small achievement. Jesus recognized this fact and now seems to be saying. *“Do not be disheartened if these great gifts do not come as soon as you would like. It is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Ask, and it shall be given. Seek and you shall find. Knock and it shall be opened to you. Hunger and thirst for righteousness and you shall be satisfied.”*

We know that hunger and thirst are the basic drives of the physical body. Anyone, who has gone without food until his stomach gnawed with pain or has gone without water until the mouth was parched and burning, knows the meaning of intense desire. Jesus is asking us to desire righteousness with that same intensity. The kingdom of heaven is not something that comes simply by a mental decision to be righteous. It comes only through an intense, concentrated, consecrated search for truth, for righteousness, for God.

5. BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL, FOR THEY SHALL OBTAIN MERCY

Mercy is a natural outgrowth of the life Jesus has been talking about. If the kingdom has come in one’s heart, being merciful is a natural as breathing. And it is only when mercy is an outgrowth of the kingdom of love that it possess its true value. We often think of the teachings of Jesus only in terms of the outward expression of mercy, but mercy must come from the heart. If we must force ourselves to do good deeds, we are missing that which is finest in mercy – the motivating love.

This Beatitude is an expression of the natural justice of all creation. The measure you give will be the measure you receive. As you forgive, so shall you be forgiven. As you love, so shall you be loved. Never will you be merciful and fail to receive your reward. If you seek the reward of your Father in heaven, let your mercy be an expression of love in your heart. Even do your alms in secret and your Father shall reward you openly with gifts of the kingdom of heaven.

6. BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART, FOR THEY SHALL SEE GOD

Jesus makes it very clear that it is not enough simply to do good on the outside. We must be pure clear to the core. We must be pure in heart. Jesus tells us that it is not enough to refrain from murdering our brother; we must not even be angry with him. Jesus tells us that it is not enough to refrain from adultery; we must not even look upon a woman with lust in our hearts. The scribes and the Pharisees appeared good in their outward expression. They broke no laws; they even did good deeds. But notice how violently Jesus condemns them. “Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within they are full of bones and all uncleanness.” Purity of heart is a tremendous achievement to say the least. To be clean clear to the core is nothing less than perfection. You will note that being poor in spirit, being meek, being merciful, and being pure in heart mold together to form one uniform standard of perfection. And Jesus says for us to be perfect even as our heavenly Father is perfect.

To see God has been a primary drive of human beings ever since drawing the first breath. For to see God is to understand all truth. God is truth. To see God is to realize unbounded love. God is love. To see God is to know life at its fullest. For God is the giver of life. Can you accept this remarkable suggestion? The answers to everything lie within our world of thought and our heart has eyes to see if we would purify that heart. Jesus was pure in heart. Jesus knew the truth. Jesus showed the world love and life. Jesus looked square into the face of God. Would you not follow in his steps? “I am the Example – I am the Way”, said Jesus.

7. BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS, FOR THEY SHALL BE CALLED SONS OF GOD

If you would be pure in heart, you would truly find peace. Peace because your house would be founded upon a rock of perfect confidence in things eternal. Notice that peace does not mean repose, for those who walk this path will find their hearts aflame and their lives consecrated to action. Peace indicates that state of security which results from unconquerable faith in God.

If you would be a peacemaker, you would be a maker of peace in the minds and hearts of others. You would be one who walks the path and leads others to do so. Is it not reasonable that this Beatitude follows the first six? How could you expect to lead others to peace until you know the way.

8. BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO ARE PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS SAKE, FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

This last Beatitude is a final word of encouragement to those who would dare to live the life that is outlined in the foregoing seven.

Humans are so engulfed in the sin of the ages that they are unwilling to accept the truth for what it is. Even though the kingdom of heaven is the most wonderful thing ever offered to them, they are still unwilling to accept it. They prefer hate and violence and war and death. They are blinded by their cloaks of sin and cannot see what is good and pure and true.

But to those innocent lambs, those few flickering lights who would dare to illuminate a world of darkness, Jesus give this last word of encouragement. *"When they deliver you up to courts and throw you in prison and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake, rejoice and be glad. For in that hour is your victory, not your defeat. In that hour you shout from the housetops that which you had spoken quietly in the streets. Your pain has become your joy. Your sacrifice, your ecstasy. Lo even unto death, I am with you. In that final hour great is your reward in the kingdom of heaven."*