

The Beatitudes

Matthew 5:1-10, Trinity Sunday I

June 2, 2013

Beloved of the Lord.....If we are to understand today's lesson rightly, we must see Jesus went up the mountain so He could speak these words to His disciples alone, the believers. "When His DISCIPLES came unto Him: He opened His mouth and taught them." When an unbeliever thus reads the Beatitudes without the light of faith, he wrongly concludes God's mercy can be earned by being merciful. Or he might concludes that if he makes peace with his neighbor, God will make peace with him. There is a wrong way then to view and see these verses without faith, and there is a right way by faith alone.

The proper use of the Beatitudes then is this: it is the third use of the law. It is definitely law, for we are told to do something and there is a promise to those who do. Yet this is law for believers alone, for the world is not God's children, nor does the world inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. These Beatitudes then are God-given Christian virtues which can only be performed by faith. Just as our Lord above has certain attributes or characteristics, so God's children by grace through faith exercise these Christian virtues in love, for "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love *is* the fulfilling of the law." Today then let us learn a little better, this holy life Jesus wants us to live knowing, "I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."

Therefore *Blessed are the poor in spirit: for their's is the kingdom of heaven.* These poor in spirit are not the financially poor of this world, but *poor in spirit*, for they inwardly feel the smart of their sin, fearing God's wrath and judgment. These are they who understand they do not measure up to the strict demands of God's law. If then you see yourself as a miserable transgressor of all of God's holy commandments, Jesus says the Kingdom of Heaven is yours. It is yours because your dear Jesus took your sins and the wrath of God upon Himself, so you would be delivered, saved by grace. Though you are poor in spirit Jesus has opened the doors of heaven for you. "Though He was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." How poor can the poor in spirit be when they are rich in grace?

Now....*Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.* This is the heaviness of each believer in the knowledge of our sin. We lament and mourn our grumbling spirit, our bad temper, our cruel nature. We see that our sins ruin everything in our life and they even hurt the ones we love around us. Sometimes we despair. How can God take us to heaven when we have so many sins and we daily sin much and indeed deserve nothing but punishment? It is certain we can't change who we are, poor miserable sinners, and our soul often cries out for God's mercy. Yet for those

that mourn, Jesus promises, *they shall be comforted.* In the midst of our grief Jesus sends us His Spirit, the Comforter, who gives us forgiveness and peace. This Comforter testifies "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid". Our comfort is that the great chalkboard of our sins, has been blotted out by our dear Savior. "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee." Our life then is much like a continual funeral, where we cannot stop crying, and we need a shoulder to cry upon. Our sins grieve our heart, yet when we pray, we go to cry upon the shoulder of our dear Jesus who comforts us. When we mourn in the knowledge of our sin, in prayer we cry upon the shoulder of our Good Shepherd who gave His life for us. This Friend of Sinners, our Brother, comforts us by saying, "I have washed you clean of all sins in your baptism, and in My body and blood given you in Commune, you have my assurance, my seal, all these sins are put away. This Gospel message stops our tears so our face is refreshed with grace.

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Meekness is not just humility which never elevates itself before others, but meekness is also an absolute acceptance of God's will and judgments in our life, without complaint. Ylvisaker defines meekness this way: "Meekness is the opposite of rage or indignation.....here the Savior has those in mind who quietly resign their all to the will of God and who without anger and resentment tolerate those who harm them or cause them personal offense. The meek remain calm and unruffled when others are easily aroused, they do not seek revenge, but forgive from a loving heart." (Triumph of the Church, T. Pederson, pg 25). How often dear brethren have we been meek, humble, and accepting of God's many judgments in our life? Consider then our meek Christ who for our sake was mocked, beaten and spit upon, When "he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed *himself* to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed."

But how do the meek *inherit the earth*? Since Christ is the Ruler and King of the world, since all children of God are intimately connected with Christ, it follows that all believers partake in His glory. The entire world and its resources belong to the Christian, that we might use such to the glory of God. Let us not then abuse our inheritance as the Prodigal Son, but "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." We do this because "All things are yours."

Now, *Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.* It is pleasing to God when believers truly inwardly hunger and thirst to be holy in this world, to live a holy life and do God's holy will in service to God and neighbor. Luther writes, "Therefore understand here the external righteousness before the world, as we comport ourselves one toward another....that is a truly blessed person that always continues and with all his might strives after this, that all things everywhere be in

proper order and every person do right." (Kretzmann, NT, Vol. I, pg. 24) Jesus says such "shall be filled", and we are filled with the righteousness of Christ by faith. It is His righteousness then which satisfies our soul, for we can never be satisfied with our own righteousness for we have none. "There is none righteous, no not one." Yet Jesus is called "the Lord OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" and this same righteousness takes all who believe to heaven, This is why David prays in Psalm 17, "As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness."

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Merciful is one of the divine attributes of God. Though we are criminals and transgressors of God's holy law, "our Father who art in heaven" had mercy upon us. Our Triune God looked with pity upon fallen mankind, and the Judge chose to send and give His only-begotten Son. Christ comes forth from God's merciful heart, and that is how we are saved. While we know this truth, so often we fail to look with true mercy and compassion on our fellow man. When they fall or suffer for their sins, inwardly we sinfully rejoice in their misery. "They got what they deserved" we say inwardly with a cold heart. This is just the opposite of what God has called us to do. When our neighbor suffers, even if they have done us wrong, true mercy will have compassion on their fallen estate. What better time is there to show the love of Christ, then when our neighbor is knocked down and hurting? What better time is there to reach a pardoning hand, so the evil thoughts of his heart be overcome? When we see the evil of this world, we should never be content to say "This world is going to hell and I don't care." Jesus did care. Jesus did have mercy, and His mercy alone saves us. Wherever there is then true faith, God's mercy for us will reveal itself in mercy toward others. It's not just "love your enemies", but "Love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful."

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. God's children seek to be pure in heart, when they inwardly strive by faith, against all the evil within. Repenting of our impure thoughts we seek to have holy and pure thoughts for "by grace are we saved." When we see within these various evils struggling and working to gain the upper hand, by the power of the Spirit we fight and struggle against the flesh, knowing the Spirit will help us overcome. We think of Jesus and we rejoice in the promise of God, that "God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." The pure in heart then truly do see God. We see Jesus in His Word and Sacraments. In His purity we find the strength to fight and overcome daily the impurity of

our unclean heart. Jesus then was pure for our sake, and through Christ God counts us as pure and holy children.

Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God. Peacemakers make peace and not war. You could say the world is at war with us, for they hate Christ, but are we at war with them? It is true we are the Church Militant, yet we fight a battle only to make peace. Using the sword of the Spirit, we seek to bring the peace of Christ to the hearts of our enemies. Therefore we must not behave as they do. Hence "if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." If your enemies throw grenades at you over the fence, do not throw grenades back at them. Quiet words of God spoken in faith will go further than loud words spoken in anger. Proverbs 15:1 says, "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger." When you speak the Word of God in love, you shall be called the children of God.

Finally beloved, *Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake: for their's is the kingdom of heaven.* If you suffer for your sins, this is not persecution for righteousness sake. Such is the fruit of your sin. Yet if you suffer in this world simply because you are a Christian confessing Christ, it is written "happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." Do not fear the persecution of the world, but pray for strength and call upon the name of the Lord. Psalm 97:10 says "Ye that love the LORD, hate evil: he preserveth the souls of his saints; he delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked." If then you are persecuted, such is proof you are an heir of the Kingdom of heaven. "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." Being "bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." As Jesus said, "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me." Amen.