

11. The Beatitudes: The Attitudes of the Kingdom

The Beatitudes are intimately related to the life of discipleship. They have been interpreted in many ways, but can best be described as actions manifesting the attitudes of the Kingdom. They cannot be lived, however, apart from the grace of God and the movement of the Spirit in our lives. In his Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, St. Augustine draws various connections between the Beatitudes, the gifts of the Spirit, and the petitions of the Lord's Prayer. Christ Himself provides the hermeneutical key for understanding the Beatitudes. He wishes us to share in His intimate relationship with the Father. We cannot do this for ourselves. If we open our hearts to Him, however, He promises to do this for us.

I. Introduction: The Call to Discipleship: Anyone Wishing to Be My Disciple (Mark 8:34; Matthew 16:24; Luke 9:23) My Yoke Is Easy; My Burden Light (Matthew 11:30)

The Narrative of Christ: He Entered Our World (Incarnation) He Gave Himself Completely to the Point of Dying for Us (Passion and Death) He Became Nourishment for Us (Eucharist) He Became a Source of Hope for Us (Resurrection/Mary)

Making Jesus' Narrative Our Own: We are Called to Enter the World of Others; We are Called to Give Ourselves to Others Completely; We Are Called to Be Nourishment for Others; We Are Called to Be a Source of Hope for Others

II. The Paschal Mystery and the Beatitudes: Through His Spirit, Christ Lives His Paschal Mystery in the Members of His Body, The Church. He Continually Suffers and Dies in the Church. The "Catholic" Interpretation: A Morality for a Spiritual Elite; An Idealistic Moral Theory: To Give Us an Ideal to Strive for An Interim Theory: A Morality to Live Until Christ's; Imminent Return: A Social Program: Blueprint for a New Society (Tolstoy) The Lutheran Interpretation: To Make Us Aware of Our Sins

III. St. Augustine on the Beatitudes: The Sermon on the Mount: He Is Continually Born In the Church. He Nourishes Continually Through the Church. He Brings Hope Through the Church. Therefore, the Beatitudes: Represent Christ's Activity in His People; They Are Perfected Actions Performed in the Spirit

Attitudes Toward the Beatitudes: The Moral Teaching of the Sermon on the Mount

It Functions as Charter for Christian Living. The Beatitudes Encapsulate the Entire Sermon.

The Beatitudes Correlate with Seven Stages in the Christian Life (the Eighth Beatitude is a Summary of the Previous Seven):

- Conflict between Humility and Pride (Poverty and Humility)
- Docility and Openness to the Word of God (Meek)
- Weeping for Our Sins (Mourning)
- Hungering and Thirsting for Justice (Hunger and Thirst for Justice)
- Looking to God for Mercy (The Merciful)
- The Purification of the Christian Heart (Pure of Heart)
- Peaceful Submission To God (The Peacemakers)

The Beatitudes Also Align with the Gifts of the Spirit and the Petitions of the Our Father:

- Gift of Fear - Poverty and Humility - Hallowing the Divine Name
- Gift of Piety - Meekness, Docility to Scripture - God's Kingdom Come
- Gift of Knowledge - Mourning for Our Sins - God's Will Be Done
- Gift of Fortitude - Hunger and Thirsting for Justice - Daily Bread
- Gift of Counsel - Being Merciful - Forgiveness
- Gift of Understanding - Purity of Heart - Avoiding Temptations
- Gift of Wisdom - Being a Peacemaker - Deliverance from Evil

IV. Christ: The Hermeneutical Key to the Beatitudes: We Thusly See that Christ is the Hermeneutical Key to Understanding the Beatitudes: The Christological Dimension of the Beatitudes: Jesus Is Talking about Himself. Jesus Is the Foundation. Jesus Builds the House. Jesus Is the Secret Subject of the Beatitudes.

Jesus Is the Middle, the Mediator between a Vision of the Beatitudes as an unreal moral lecture and a mirror that points out our sinfulness. The Beatitudes Represent a Call to Discipleship. The Eschatological Dimension of the Beatitudes: "The Future Is Hidden in the Present."

Conclusion: What Is the Good Life?

- It Is Following Christ
- It Is Living the Life of Discipleship
- It Is Allowing Christ's Narrative to Become Our Own
- It Is Making Christ's Values Our Own

- It Is "Putting on Christ"
- It Is Allowing Christ to Live in Us
- It Is Living in the Spirit
- It Is Living the Life of the Beatitudes by the Power of the Spirit
- It Is Living in and Looking Forward to Life in the Kingdom

Reflection Questions

1. What are the Beatitudes? How do they differ from the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit?
2. How have the Beatitudes been interpreted in the past? Describe the hermeneutical key to the Beatitudes.
3. What do the Beatitudes have to do with the Good Life? What do they have to do with the call to discipleship?