

Sermon Matthew 5:1-11

May the words of my mouth, and the meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.



As Christians, we are on a mission - a mission from God. That mission is expressed throughout the Bible, including the Beatitudes, which we heard in Matthew's Gospel reading this morning. This mission statement is a map for our Christian life. The Beatitudes are the good news of transforming grace. They are the opening to the Sermon on the Mount. The Beatitudes put the demands of the Sermon in focus by starting it with a proclamation of grace. The Beatitudes tell us that we are to lead exemplary lives. Those who lead such lives will receive God's blessings. In return, they recognize God as the source of this blessing. Jesus is saying, "Blessed are the poor and the pure." Was he recommending poverty and piety? I don't think so. I think He was advising recognition of need and singleness of heart. He was saying to those who have nothing and those who have everything: "You have spiritual

needs that things will never satisfy". He was saying that no person can serve two masters. You cannot serve both God and money. He was saying that we are blessed to be a blessing to others. Our possessions are a blessing from God. The Beatitudes might seem to be out of touch with the reality of our modern world. They seem to be out of touch because they go against things that the world sees as important - power, wealth, oppression and greed. Can you just picture some young entrepreneurs being assigned the task of coming up with a list of beatitudes for the "real world". They would probably look like this: "Blessed are the rich and famous, for they shall have what they want. Blessed are the powerful, for their will shall be done. Blessed are the strong and young for they shall draw a lot of attention to themselves". It should be no surprise that Jesus emphasizes things that are the exact opposite - meekness, humility, poverty in spirit, care and compassion. Jesus set the example for us to follow, by always challenging the status quo. The radical ideas he and His disciples supported led to their persecution and death, and Christians today who support the same ideas must be prepared to face similar discrimination. Nevertheless, Those who follow the Christian life will have the support and blessing of Christ. The Beatitudes are God's way to get us to think of

more than what goes on around us and within us. God uses the Beatitudes to give us more than we think we are capable of appreciating, and to ask of us more than we think we are capable of doing. The Beatitudes are God's way of speaking to us now on what he wants us to know. They are ethical principles that describe how things will be reversed in God's kingdom. When we come to God with empty hands, bow down before the throne of grace, and are ready to receive whatever blessing God chooses, we will be blessed. When we empty ourselves before God, he fills us with whatever we need. The blessings of this present time - *that deep fulfillment and satisfying inner joy than can be experienced now in the living of our lives* - is possible because of the promises to which the blessing is attached. The promise depends on a God who not only makes promises but who can be trusted to keep them. Each and every day we are face-to-face with eternal choices. These choices begin in childhood and never end until our life on earth ends. Do we choose the easy way, the pleasure and profit for the moment? Are we willing to look ahead and sacrifice momentary gain for the greater good? The challenge of the Beatitudes is "Will you be happy in the world's way or Christ's way?" Jesus is saying, "If you set your heart and spend your energies to obtain the things the world values, you

will get them - but that may be all that you will get.” We are not alone on our mission. Jesus is always with us. And, we need each other. We need each other to remind us that we are blessed when we live life as if the love of God is the most important and most reliable reality in life. Satisfaction comes to those who are hurting for God’s righteousness as revealed in the cross of Jesus. The person who is poor in spirit accepts his limitations and is not too proud to ask for help before he reaches the end of his rope. He leans heavily on the Lord and not on his own power. That which the world rejects is precious in God’s sight. Happiness comes from within our hearts, and not from the outside. The blessings Jesus offers will come in the future because God keeps his promises. The blessings in this passage are not directed just to those who are oppressed or marginalized in society, but also to those who fight oppression, injustice, hunger and poverty. There are those who hunger and thirst from their rigorous climb for righteousness. The righteousness that they so intensely desire lies within their grasp. God wants to give it to them. Just as the pure in heart find their reward through surrender to Christ, those who hunger and thirst for it find the righteousness they seek through the same surrender. Because we have obtained, and shall obtain, mercy, we are

now free to be merciful, for purity of heart is to place our trust in God and God's promises, rather than in our own striving. The next verse in Matthew's Gospel, after our reading today, sums it up in Jesus' words:" Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

As Christians we are called to follow Christ's teachings, and to act on them with love, and God promises that we will receive our reward eternally in heaven with Him.

Thanks be to God.

Amen.



Remember the words of our Lord, Jesus Christ, "It is better to give than to receive".