

The Meaning of The Beatitudes

Want to know the secret to happiness?

The answer is revealed in The Beatitudes. Want to be the best Catholic you can ever be? The Beatitudes tell you how. Want to make Jesus happy? Practice the doctrine of The Beatitudes. The Beatitudes are eight simply stated, yet profound guidelines Jesus revealed to His followers during His Sermon on the Mount. Jesus uses the words of The Beatitudes to paint a picture of what the true people of God look like. Not physically, but morally and spiritually.

Beatitudes

The word beatitude is defined as a state of utmost bliss. The eight Beatitudes are, therefore, the roadmap Jesus gives to us to help us find the utmost bliss in this world and the next. Those not familiar with The Beatitudes may be taken aback when they read them and discover that the secret to happiness is hungering, thirsting, and being persecuted for what is right, living meekly, mourning, and being merciful.

Is this right? Yes. The Catechism of the Catholic Church explains that The Beatitudes "are the paradoxical promises that sustain hope during the tribulation." The Beatitudes are difficult for us to understand because they are the antithesis of everything that the world we live in pushes us to believe; that to be happy, we have to be rich, own a huge home, be physically attractive, have an extensive wardrobe, etc.

Like any bad habit, we have to break away from this way of thinking and follow instead the blueprint of The Beatitudes. If we can do it, we'll have the full blessings of the Kingdom of Heaven to look forward to.

Let's Consider the Meaning of the Beatitudes

1. Blessed are the Poor in Spirit; the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

Humility is realizing that all our gifts and blessings are given to us by God. There is nothing arrogant or self-righteous about someone who is truly humble. Furthermore, when we are humble, we acquire an inner peace that allows us to do the will of God.

To be poor in spirit means to be humble before God.

2. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

We are to mourn not only the violence, hatred, and injustices present in this world but also our sins and the sins of others. When we mourn, we open our heavy hearts to the Lord, and in turn, He comforts us.

3. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

To be meek means to behave in a spirit of gentleness and self-control. The meek aren't violent, vengeful, or willing to exploit others.

4. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for what is right; they shall be satisfied.

Jesus doesn't mean going without food or drink; rather He's referring to one's passion and drive to do God's will.

5. Blessed are the merciful; they will be shown mercy.

Like the phrase in the Our Father, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us..." those who are merciful to others (treat them with kindness and forgiveness) will be shown mercy.

He is the ultimate peacemaker, He has the purest heart, He is merciful, and most importantly, He was persecuted—for us!

6. Blessed are the pure in heart; they shall see God.

St. Augustine explains, "A simple heart is a heart that is pure; and, just as the light which surrounds us cannot be seen except through eyes that are clear, so neither is God seen unless that through which He can be seen is pure." A pure heart shows acts of love and mercy and beats for righteousness and justice. There is no hatred or jealousy in a pure heart.

7. Blessed are the peacemakers; they shall be called the children of God.

God is the source of peace and He empowers us to be bearers of peace. We show ourselves to be children of God when we actively work to reconcile with others, bring together adversaries, and work in harmony with one another.

"For God is not a God of disorder but peace." (1 Corinthians 14:33)

8. Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of what is right, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

A prime example of those who are persecuted for the sake of what is right is the saints and the martyrs. All of us are called to be saints. And like the saints, when we suffer for Christ and others, the Kingdom of Heaven is our reward.

9. Jesus is the Face of The Beatitudes

The message of The Beatitudes takes on a whole new level of meaning when we realize that they're a mini-biography of Jesus' life. He is the ultimate peacemaker, He has the purest heart, He is merciful, and most importantly, He was persecuted—for us! The road to happiness may not be easy, but Jesus gave us the blueprint. All we have to do is follow it!