

Blessed and Patient

Matthew 5:1-12

Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

We live in a world of instant gratification. We want it our way right away. Is your internet too slow? Get high-speed internet! Getting gas? You don't have to go inside – you can pay NOW at the pump. Is snail-mail really that slow? Send email. Is your fast food not so fast? Check the time on the cash register: "average serve time 36 seconds." Some small comfort when your special order Big Mac takes ten minutes. We microwave our meals and we have overnight delivery of our packages! The one thing we don't have, it seems is patience. No patience and no desire to look forward to things to come. But there IS an eternal city, a paradise of God, an eternity of rest and being with the Lord. We don't have it yet. Now we walk by faith, not by sight, confessing the eternal joys of the life to come while yet struggling in this sin filled world of death.

One great struggle we face as Christians in this life is that we think we should have all of this peace and rest right now. No waiting. Because we are Christians, we think God should bless and reward us with a lack of problems. Christians shouldn't get sick. Christians shouldn't have trouble

paying their bills. Christians shouldn't have problems with their marriages or difficulties raising their children. All of the peace and joy and bliss of heaven ought to be ours immediately -- right now. But then when these things do happen, when we find ourselves far from God, unloving toward our neighbors and full of unbelief, despair and other great shame and vice, we wonder what's wrong.

God's word describes our life in His kingdom. His word tells what "real life" is like as a Christian, and at the same time comforts those who receive this word. "Blessed are the poor in spirit. Theirs is the kingdom of God. Blessed are those who mourn; they shall be comforted. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Blessed are those who are persecuted for my sake." All of these Beatitudes that our Lord speaks describe the life of believers in this world. But the blessed people of God are poor, mourning, harassed, hungering, struggling saints. In this life, the path of being a Christian--is one of hardship and sorrow that does not bring with it the "instant gratification" our world tries to buy and sell.

Let me explain what I mean by treating just a couple of these Beatitudes. "Blessed are the poor in spirit. Theirs is the kingdom of God." "Blessed are those who mourn; they shall be comforted." If you listen closely to the Beatitudes, you hear a description of those who are in Christ. The Beatitudes describe those who have been crushed by God's Law over their sins and have nothing going for them except Christ and His perfect life, death and resurrection for them, and His gifts delivered to them in the Gospel and Sacraments. The saints described by Christ are poor in spirit. That means they have nothing to bring before God to show how well off they are. They have a poverty of spirit. They are empty. They are nothing. Yet they have Christ, for "to such is the kingdom of God." They mourn over their sins. They are troubled and frightened by their lack of faith, they are grieved and sorrowful because they are not living to serve their neighbors in love. Such sin causes them to shed tears of repentance. But they are comforted. The Holy Spirit comforts them by delivering to them Baptism and the Word of God and the body and blood of Jesus. In the Beatitudes, Jesus describes those who are troubled by sins, frightened by death, suffering for His Name, and who have nothing in themselves and their lives to

cling to; rather, believers have only Christ and the promise of His future blessings.

All this demolishes the notions about what it means to be a saint -- one who is called out from the rest and living under grace.. The world sees saints as those who lead some extraordinary life doing things for others -- a life of near perfection and godliness. They are described as people who have a lot of faith and can talk easily about God. Saints are, in the world's eyes, those "goody-goody" perfect people. I must be a saint because I live a good life better than others. Or, the opposite: there is no way I can ever be a saint because I am not good enough; I am too sinful. Or, another idea: If I just learn to live as Christ describes in this chapter, I shall have all these blessings. Let us rethink all such notions that sainthood is about us! It is about Christ and Christ delivered to us by Gospel and Sacraments.

After all, who is the One who is truly poor in spirit? Who had a poverty of everything and everybody? Was it not Christ? Who is truly a mourner over sins, One who makes peace and has mercy on others and who hungers and thirsts for righteousness? Is it not Christ who did all things for us, Jesus who hungered and thirsted to bring you righteousness by dying for your sins? The Beatitudes are not "Be-Attitudes" that we try to check off so that we can get blessings from God, they are descriptions of our Savior, which become ours by being in Christ. Christ is poor in Spirit. Thereby, being in Christ through Baptism, you are poor in spirit. Christ is pure in heart; in Christ you are pure in heart. And so on -- for all of these Beatitudes. This is why He says, "Blessed are those who are persecuted for my sake." People are not attacked by the devil, world and flesh for "being good" but for having a righteousness that is not their own but Christ's. The world can't stand those who trust in Christ instead of themselves. Believe it! If you are in Christ, then the world will hate you, the devil will target you and your sinful flesh will give you no rest. That is why we flee to our worship with confession, hear God's Word, receive absolution for our sins, eat and drink Christ's body and blood, and live in our Baptism.

The Gospel and Sacraments in which Christ comes to us are all we have in this world. There is no guarantee of easiness, comfortableness, riches, fame, fortune, etc. No, all we have in this life is our Savior. But what else do we need? Nothing. The

promise of Christ in your Baptism is that you have a down payment, a guarantee of the blessings of the world to come. Having Christ, you do indeed have everything, but some things have not been given to you just yet. Those we confess also in the Creed: "I believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting." It's coming. But it's not here yet. We know it is ours in Christ, through the promises of Baptism and the body and blood of Jesus. But it isn't now. It's not like this world which demands things instantly. The everlasting city of paradise seen by Daniel and St. John with its golden streets, its crystal clear waters, and with the Lord Himself as its light. For now, we live in Christ, poor in spirit, mourning, persecuted, and so on. In this life, we hold forth Christ as the One who calls us His people and His saints and who goes with us as we walk by faith and not by sight. Then, in the life to come, we shall see Him as He is, for we will be like Him and we shall live forever in a paradise without fear, darkness, shame, sin, death, pain, suffering or tears. This is the joy of every believer who have gone before us. It is our hope and joy, too! Amen?

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January 29, 2017
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