

Teachings from the Mountain, Part I: The Beatitudes. Matt. 5:1-12

What is the good of telling the ships (in a fleet) how to steer so as to avoid collisions if, in fact, they are such crazy old tubs that they cannot be steered at all? What is the good of drawing up, on paper, rules for social behavior, if we know that, in fact, our greed, cowardice, ill temper, and self-conceit are going to prevent us from keeping them? . . . You cannot make men good by law. . . we must go on to think of the second thing: of morality inside the individual.

C.S. Lewis. *Mere Christianity*.

First Things

- A common and costly mistake is to view the Beatitudes as “rules” that we are to pursue ambitiously. _____
 - Rather, they are “laws” as in the laws of nature or physics which predict a consistent outcome for any known or given actions or behaviors. _____
- “Blessed” or blessedness: Gr. Makarioi, in this case, indicates a condition of character in common with the quality of God, and carries with it the additional meaning of being fully satisfied.
 - Blessed does not mean “happy.” _____
- Avoid the addition of additional characterizing words which modify the radical intent of this text. _____
 - There is a deliberate reversal of the order of perceived blessing which contrasts God and the world. _____
 - Don’t minimize the “sting.” _____

Now, Jesus’ first and most radical teaching.

- *Blessed are the poor in Spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*
 - “Poor,” gr. Ptokoi: a beggar, of humble estate, destitute.
 - Spiritually helpless. _____
- *Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.*
 - “Mourn,” gr. Penthountes: to grieve or be sorrowful, Any sense of loss. _____
- *Blessed are the gentle (or humble), for they shall inherit the earth.*
 - “Gentle,” gr. Praeis: meek, mild, gentle. Between the two extremes of anger without reason, and no anger at all.
 - Not passivity. _____

- *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.*
 - “Righteousness,” gr. Dikaiosune, the quality of “being” and “doing” rightness and justness. _____
- *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.*
 - “Mercy,” gr. Eleemones: those who practice compassion and kindness, not just sympathy or pity. _____
- *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*
 - “Pure,” gr. Katharoi: that which is pure and that which has been purified. _____
- *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.*
 - “Peacemakers,” eirenopoieo: those who harmonize, reconcile, bring healing. _____
- *Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*
 - “Persecuted” gr. Diogmos: pursued, hounded, driven out. _____
- *Blessed are you when men cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me.*
 - To be a true disciple of Christ will bring reproach and public humiliation. _____

Rejoice Jesus said, v.12: The order of worldly reward and satisfaction is hereby reversed. Those things we once considered worthy of pursuit have been replaced by spiritual, moral, and behavioral characteristics we once considered unworthy. The world still does.

For your reward in heaven is great. Yet the blessing, the *makarioi*, is with us now.

- We are not doomed to misery. _____
- We are not to practice self-elected martyrdom. _____

These characteristics which result in blessedness cannot be pursued as goals in themselves. You will fail. Those who attempt to do so, do so for their own benefit. Pursue the Spirit of God, though, and He will prevail, and then you shall also.