

Strange Ideas!

But some of Christ's teachings seem strange. How many of us, for example, are seized with the longing to be poor in spirit or meek? Our Lord teaches us that true happiness is not to be found in riches or fame or power but in God alone.

And what about the pure in heart? This is not simply about matters of sexual purity. It is about being quite clear that our hearts should be set on God alone and not on other idols that jostle within us to take God's place: money, popularity, fame or whatever. Cardinal Newman wrote about these temptations and his words from the nineteenth century speak loud and clear to our shallow, celebrity-obsessed 21st century:

All bow down before wealth. Wealth is that to which the multitude of men pay an instinctive homage. They measure happiness by wealth; and by wealth they measure respectability... It is a homage resulting from a profound faith that with wealth he may do all things. Wealth is one idol of the day and notoriety is a second... Notoriety, or making a noise in the world—it may be called 'newspaper fame' - has come to be considered a great good in itself, and a ground of veneration.

All this is a far cry from the happiness that Christ ascribes to the Blessed. But to find this happiness for ourselves requires that we make definite choices about the kind of people we are going to be.



Food for Thought

- Which of the Beatitudes do you find most attractive? Which do you find hardest?
- Are you instinctively a peacemaker, at home, in your place of work, with your friends, in the parish?
- Can you think of people who seem to embody these Beatitudes?
- How do you react to the rewards that Christ teaches belong to the blessed? Are they for now or only for later?

Holy Innocents & Holy Trinity



BEAUTY FROM THE BIBLE

3rd Week of Lent: The Beatitudes

The Beatitudes (Matthew 5: 3-11)

1 Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down his disciples came to him.

2 And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

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

5 "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

10 "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 "Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you.

The Beatitudes... is the term used to refer to the eight promises of blessing that Jesus gives in Matthew 5: 3 –11, the opening section of the Sermon on the Mount. The Sermon on the Mount is the very heart of the teachings of Jesus Christ. If you want to read it all you need to read Matthew Chapter 5-7.

Come on, everyone, get happy!

The Beatitudes speak of those who are blessed or happy. But this is more than human contentment or gladness. It is the happiness that comes from God's gracious gift of blessedness. And it is what human beings long for. God has placed the desire for happiness in the human heart. God calls us to this happy blessedness and he alone can fulfil it.

The New Testament uses a number of terms to describe the beatitude to which God calls us:

- The coming of the kingdom of God (Mt 4. 17)
- The Vision of God (Mt 5. 8)
- Entering into the joy of the Lord (Mt 25. 21-23)
- Entering into God's rest (Hebrews 4. 7-11)

This is what St Augustine says about the blessedness of God's rest:

'There we shall rest and see, we shall see and love, we shall love and praise. Behold what will be at the end without end. For what other end do we have, if not to reach the kingdom which has no end?'

From *The City of God*

Second Nature?

Some of Christ's teaching is already second nature to us and seems deeply beautiful and attractive. At least it should seem that way. Think about what he says of the merciful and the peacemakers for example.

And yet how easy it is, even for Christian people, to be harsh, uncaring or just thoughtlessly careless of the needs and feelings of others.

The idea that peacemakers are blessed and happy seems joyous and good. Think of people like Martin Luther King or Nelson Mandela or even more ambiguous figures like Bill Clinton and the politicians of Northern Ireland who brokered the end of the troubles there. What they did to make peace was good. We can despair of the stubborn refusal of people in troubled parts of the world to lay down arms to live peacefully together.

But what about in the incidents of our life? Are we peace-makers or are we grudge-bearers? In families, workplace and parish it should be our business to make peace whenever there is tension.