

1-29-17 **Beatitudes:** Have you've ever wanted to know someone; to get inside their mind and heart to understand what really makes them tick? The Beatitudes allow us to get an inside look into the mind and heart of Jesus. Much of what follows comes from what we learned in our Bible Study from Jeff Cavins. I ask for your attention, to listen carefully, and discover how one truth builds upon another; one virtue leads to the next virtue. I ask that you reflect upon how Jesus, in his humanity, lived the Beatitudes perfectly.

*"Blessed are the poor in spirit; the reign of God is theirs."* Poor in spirit means, above all, to be humble. Humility is the first and indispensable virtue upon which all else builds. It is the beginning of holiness. It is the opposite of pride, which is the root of all human sin. The humble person recognizes that he or she cannot begin to be all God created him or her to be without a sincere self-assessment; a true look at all of our strengths and honest admission of all of our weaknesses. Humility is spiritual poverty which recognizes our total dependence upon God for every aspect of our lives.

*"Blessed are they who mourn."* Humility teaches us our own neediness for God. When we recognize our brokenness, when we admit how through our own fault we fail to please God we will then mourn over our condition. And the Lord comes to comfort us. It is a healthy sorrow. It leads us to further recognize our own weaknesses and temptations so that we can "fight the good fight" and grow in character and self-restraint.

*"Blessed are the meek."* Meekness does not mean weakness. Quite to the contrary. To be meek is first of all to be teachable. Consider the noble horse; such strength and power. An unbroken horse can throw you, maim, or kill you. A broken horse becomes meek and submits his strength to you. When we are humble, mourn over our own condition, and our good God comes to comforts us – it is then we can submit all of our strengths to the Lord. A meek person is gentle, restrained, yet every ready to unleash his or her strengths in service to the Lord. Consider what Jesus endured in his scourging and mounting of his Cross. That is meekness.

*"Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness."* It is the meek person to whom God entrusts more and more authority. The apostles will rule the nations with the Lord, huh. God will give the meek not only more authority in his Kingdom, but more and more hunger for righteousness. The righteous person is clothed with many good deeds in service to the Lord. The righteous person echoes the Psalmist: *"My soul is thirsting for you my God...When can I enter your courts and see your face, O Lord."* God creates this hunger within – and then he satisfies it.

*"Blessed are the merciful."* The right response for those who have been satisfied by God is to be eager to share his mercy to others. The righteous person is adorned with many acts of mercy. Mercy and righteousness are two sides of the same coin.

*"Blessed are the clean of heart."* Purity of heart increases the capacity to receive and assimilate more and more truths. The Catechism says that this Beatitude refers to the ability to attune our minds and hearts to the demands of holiness, especially in the area of charity, chastity, and sexual integrity. The righteous person, the merciful person, the pure person

has a deep love for the truths that pertain to all the goods for the mind, the body, and the soul.

All of these virtues, built one upon another, leads to the greatest Beatitude: "*Blessed are the peacemakers.*" Jesus is "*the Prince of Peace.*" We are made and graced by God to create peace – first in our hearts, and then in our families, and then extend it to the whole world. Peace does not mean the absence of war or conflict or difficulties, but an interior peace that comes with friendship and communion with God. In the words of Scripture, "*a peace beyond understanding that the world does not know and cannot give.*" An interior peace that rises above anxious bodily interest and worldly concerns. A divine peace which comes by way of self-sacrifice and self-restraint and which is motivated by love of God and neighbor. And yes is motivated by eternal rewards.

Finally, and this is so true, "*Blessed are those who are persecuted...when they insult you....and utter every kind of evil against you falsely because of me.*" Jesus was ridiculed, slandered, persecuted, and eventually executed. Jesus knows what total abandonment, loneliness, and helplessness feels like. Have you ever had to defend our faith, for example, state our pro-life views and be promptly ridiculed, slandered, and thought of as evil because of it? If so, "*be glad and rejoice, for your reward in heaven is great.*"

Through His teaching, the disciples were given an inside look at Jesus, how He expects us to follow Him, and the rewards for doing so. But even more so, the Beatitudes reveal the order by which each individual is lead to increasing happiness and interior peace. It is what each human being was created for and which each person, by the grace of God, can achieve. The Beatitudes are the preparation for the Beatific Vision, that is, to live the Beatitudes makes us ready to see God face to face in eternal gain.