



Living with God's Eyes

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Opening Prayer

*Take a few moments of silence and perhaps play a song of your choice.
Invite one person to pray or pray as a group.*

Loving God,

we come to you this day as a community.

Bless the thoughts and words that will come from this meeting,
both those expressed and those held in our hearts.

Be with us as we strive to know you better
through your Words and through the gift of one another.

We ask this in the name of our brother, Jesus.

Amen.

Faith in Action

Take a few moments to give all an opportunity to share progress on last week's action.

Scripture: Matthew 5:1–12a

Catch a Phrase

Take a few moments to savor a word, a question, or a feeling that rises up in you. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

Reflection

This Sunday's gospel is part of what is called the "Sermon on the Mount," one of the major blocks of Jesus' teaching in Matthew's Gospel. It is evident from the reference to "the crowds" that this passage is addressed not only to the inner core of disciples, but to everyone. This is not the first time beatitudes appear in the Bible.

We see beatitudes in the Old Testament—the Wisdom books—as well as here in the New Testament. The difference between these two sets of beatitudes is that the Old Testament implies that the reward is in the here and now, while these Beatitudes suggest that the reward will take place sometime in the future, in the coming of God’s reign or the final day. Yet the New Testament Beatitudes are not “entrance requirements” to receive the “final reward,” rather they are characteristics of those who embody the will of God. The beatitudes are about life and how to live. We could also translate “blessed” as “those who are fully alive....”

If we take the Beatitudes as a model of “how to live,” it urges us to ask ourselves what it would mean to be poor in spirit, meek, and to hunger and thirst for righteousness. What would it look like to be merciful? To be pure of heart? Volumes have been written on the meaning of each of these Beatitudes, but eventually we have to ask these questions in light of our own lives. For example, what does it mean to be poor in spirit? Some have said, “To be poor in spirit is to recognize that all we have is God’s gift: our very existence, our families, our health, our talents, our situations in life. And Christ goes even further—even our successes.”¹ It is to realize that “We recognize our need for God. We depend on God. The poor in spirit know that God is more important than anything else in life.”²

Often it can be difficult to recognize that all is a gift from God. We get so caught up in the stress of classes, work, and relationships that days meld into each other. So then, how can we recognize our life as gift? Being poor in spirit urges us to challenge the mantra that we depend solely on ourselves, and to instead place our trust in the God who created us. To trust that there is a plan that is larger than our own, and that God is constantly initiating a relationship with us, calling us to listen, to become more attentive to his voice. What would it mean to live life as if we depended on God?

? Questions for Reflection

- What would poverty of spirit look like in my life? Which of the aspects mentioned here (recognizing life as gift, dependence on God) are areas that challenge me...console me?

- In my life, on whom (or what) do I depend? What would it mean to live life dependent on God?
 - Which of these Beatitudes speaks to me? Which is the most difficult to hear? Why?
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Beckoned to Action

Choose an action for the coming week. If possible, have the action response flow from your own thoughts and sharing. The following are suggestions:

- As you rise each day, attempt to recognize life as a gift. Take moments throughout the day to reflect on this. What changes, if any, do you notice?
 - Take an honest inventory of those things/people on which you “depend.” Does God make your list? Where does God fall (in relation to others)?
 - Reflect on the relationships of the Beatitudes to the messages of the media and of mentors. Are there similarities, differences?
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Closing Prayer

Invite one person to pray or pray together.

Read the Beatitudes one more time as a closing prayer. Take a moment to sit with what strikes you after this meeting. If you feel comfortable, offer it to the group.

Looking Ahead

Prepare for your next gathering by prayerfully reviewing the Scripture reading and Reflection for the next session as identified by your Small Community Leader.

¹ Holy Cross Family Ministry from <http://www.silk.net/RelEd/beatitudespoor.htm#top>

² Living the Beatitudes, Holy Name School in San Francisco, California