

SPIRITUALITY

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Matt 5:12a

R⁷. Alleluia, alleluia.
 Rejoice and be glad;
 your reward will be great in heaven.
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Gospel

Matt 5:1-12a; L70A

**When Jesus saw the
 crowds, he went up the
 mountain,
 and after he had sat down,
 his disciples came to
 him.**

**He began to teach them,
 saying:**

**“Blessed are the poor in
 spirit,
 for theirs is the kingdom of
 heaven.**

**Blessed are they who mourn,
 for they will be comforted.**

**Blessed are the meek,
 for they will inherit the land.**

**Blessed are they who hunger and
 thirst for righteousness,
 for they will be satisfied.**

**Blessed are the merciful,
 for they will be shown mercy.**

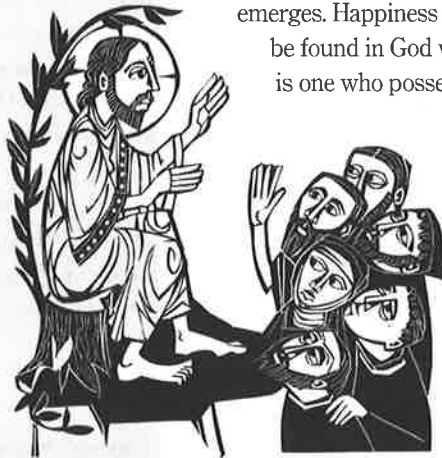
**Blessed are the clean of heart,
 for they will see God.**

**Blessed are the peacemakers,
 for they will be called children of
 God.**

**Blessed are they who are persecuted
 for the sake of righteousness,
 for theirs is the kingdom of
 heaven.**

**Blessed are you when they insult you
 and persecute you
 and utter every kind of evil against
 you falsely because of me.**

**Rejoice and be glad,
 for your reward will be great in
 heaven.”**



Reflecting on the Gospel

Before his baptism by St. Ambrose at Easter in AD 387, St. Augustine went to northern Italy near Milan on a kind of retreat. While there he wrote a small work entitled *The Happy Life* in the form of a dialogue with various family members, a typical rhetorical style of the time. With his “dialogue partners” he establishes that all people wish to be happy but that happiness will not be found in material things one desires. Satisfying one desire, another simply emerges. Happiness is not fleeting but is permanent and, therefore, it can only be found in God who is everlasting. Augustine concludes the happy person is one who possesses God. Possessing God is a matter of living a good

life, doing God’s will, and having a clean spirit. No doubt St. Augustine would have been familiar with the Beatitudes. He knew Scripture well. His conclusions about happiness square up well with the Beatitudes, which lead us away from ourselves and our own desires and toward God. The Beatitudes point to permanency; ultimately, “they will” lead to heaven, to everlasting Life, to seeing God. The “kingdom of heaven” is promised to those who seek the happiness, the blessedness that comes from possessing God.

Jesus announces the blessings for those who live in “the kingdom of heaven.” In this he describes the qualities that mark true discipleship: poor in spirit, mourning loss, meek, seekers of justice, merciful, clean of heart, peacemakers, bearers of insults and persecution. To be so blessed, so happy, so fortunate requires letting go of self. All these qualities exhibit the self-emptying of Jesus himself. Blessedness is of, in, and with Jesus—and his followers. Our blessedness is both a quality of who we are and a blueprint for how we are to be and live as followers of Jesus.

Happiness is a factor of how we relate to others—we are to be Jesus’ blessed Presence for others. Gospel living—taking seriously the Beatitudes—turns upside down the relationships people have with each other and invites a new world order that is the presence of God’s “kingdom of heaven.” And this presence of God’s kingdom is not so much our own doing, as what God is accomplishing in us. Happiness—blessedness—is God’s gift to those who seek God and do God’s will.

Living the Paschal Mystery

The Beatitudes seem to describe behaviors and attitudes that we generally ascribe to those we call “saints.” Yet, all of us can name good people we know—truly *good* people. We can name the qualities and actions that lead us to judge them truly *good*. These (and we ourselves) are truly *good*—the blessed.

It is awesome to think that our own halting efforts at being really *good*—at extending mercy, justice, and righteousness to others as God has extended them to us—are one means for bringing God’s blessedness to others! Simply sharing in God’s work of salvation—providing for those in need—is a blessing in itself that brings unequalled happiness. Our deepest happiness comes not from fulfilling our own needs and wants, but from reaching out to others as God reaches out to us in blessing. Happiness that comes from our own desires and efforts is fleeting; the blessings of God that are showered upon us as we live humbly, justly, and faithfully last forever. Here’s the truly amazing part: the happiness we share now is but a taste of our great reward in heaven!

Focusing the Gospel

Key words and phrases: Blessed are . . . , for they . . .

To the point: Jesus announces the blessings for those who live in “the kingdom of heaven.” In this he describes the qualities that mark true discipleship: poor in spirit, mourning loss, meek, seekers of justice, merciful, clean of heart, peacemakers, bearers of insults and persecution. To be so blessed, so happy, so fortunate requires letting go of self. All these qualities exhibit the self-emptying of Jesus himself. Blessedness is of, in, and with Jesus—and his followers.

Connecting the Gospel

to the first reading: The blessings Jesus announces continue an ancient tradition reflected in the first reading: God extends protection and refuge to those who “seek justice” and are “humble and lowly.”

to experience: When people hear the word “blessed,” they tend to think of holiness and discount themselves. The Beatitudes remind us that blessedness is bestowed by God on those who faithfully follow Jesus.

Connecting the Responsorial Psalm

to the readings: What is the kingdom of heaven that the psalm refrain (taken not from the psalm but from Matthew’s rendition of the Beatitudes) promises us? It is the experience of being saved by God. Through myriad images of human debility the psalm reveals that when we are not able to save ourselves, God acts for us. Even when Israel has abandoned the right living of the covenant, it is God who creates a remnant of faithful believers (first reading). No matter how far from salvation the human condition seems to be, the psalm offers us reason to hope, for the reason is God.

The psalm also offers us the model for the Beatitudes of the gospel. We are to be like this God who saves, and this means being poor in spirit, compassionate, merciful, hungry for justice and righteousness; desirous of peace; and willing to sacrifice ourselves to overcome evil. When we do so, we imitate God. And we find ourselves in the kingdom of heaven.

to psalmist preparation: While Jesus presents a challenging rule of life in the Beatitudes (gospel), you describe for the community how God responds to those who know they are in need of salvation (psalm). Perhaps the secret of the Beatitudes is knowing our neediness and allowing God to fill it. What helps you know your neediness before God? What leads you beyond this neediness to the kingdom of heaven?

ASSEMBLY & FAITH-SHARING GROUPS

- The Beatitudes are lived in my family, in my parish, in my workplace when . . . by . . .
- The letting go of self that blessedness requires includes . . .
- Jesus calling me to be blessed makes me feel . . .

PRESIDERS

My experience of blessedness spills over into the way I minister to others when . . .

DEACONS

My ministry proclaims Jesus’ message of blessedness to those I serve whenever I . . .

HOSPITALITY MINISTERS

I see and respond to the blessedness of the people gathering whenever I . . .

MUSIC MINISTERS

My music ministry challenges me to live the Beatitudes by . . . Music ministry gives me a taste of the kingdom of heaven by . . .

ALTAR MINISTERS

My ministry embodies these qualities of the Beatitudes . . .

LECTORS

The qualities of the Beatitudes that have the biggest impact on my proclamation are . . .

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

The quality of the Beatitudes that I need to grow in so that I might be a better extraordinary minister of Holy Communion is . . .