

Matthew 5:1-12

¹ Seeing the crowds, [Jesus] 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 receive 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 others 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 they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

In the Name of Jesus.

Blessed are the poor in spirit. To them belongs the kingdom of Heaven.

Stand before God having nothing of your own. No righteousness, no justification for your life, no built-up treasury of merits, no excuses.

Just your sin. You don't get any poorer than to stand before God with nothing but your sin.

Stand before God with empty hands, unclean hands, hands holding nothing which God needs or wants.

Blessed are the poor in spirit. Theirs is the kingdom of God.

Blessed are those who mourn—mourning for those lost and now missed; mourning for lost days and years; mourning for good works to have been done but weren't; for sinful works to have not been done, but were.

Mourning as only one can mourn when he knows that all the intentions, the decisions made by the sinner to try to be less of a sinner, all of the spiritual yearnings—it all ends the same way, with a sinful body given over to death being let into the ground.

Blessed are those who mourn, says Jesus. They will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek. They will inherit the Earth.

The meek—those who didn't overcome, didn't seize the day, didn't stand as masters of their fate nor captains of their soul; those who don't grasp with power, realizing that the sinner has no power before holy God, those who stand before God with no strength or effectiveness of which to brag—blessed are the meek; they will inherit the Earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.

They hunger for that which they do not have. They stand as sinners, knowing that no sinner can make himself or herself to be otherwise, and all the claims of decisions, choices, or obedience are just emptiness, as if a sinner could ever choose or to be other than what he is.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for what they do not have, for they hunger and thirst for the righteous One, Christ Jesus, who, though he had no sin, became accounted as sinner for all those in sin, to put all sin to death in his own body on the cross. Blessed are they—in Christ Jesus, they will be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful.

Mercy is not the voice of this sinful world. This world is locked under the Law and is always ready to judge. This world is under *lex taliones*—the ancient law of an eye for an eye, tooth for tooth. Retribution is the Law—the sinner accused, the guilty one condemned until the last cent paid, the unclean one covered in shame. This world living under the Law, it considers mercy to be folly.

Mercy, though, is the abrogation of the Law, the denial of eye-for-eye, the refusal of retribution. Mercy is to judge another not by the measurements of the Law, but by grace, by the righteousness of Christ Jesus freely given the sinner so that the Law's accusation is made mute.

Mercy is he who came not to judge, but to be judged, to give his life the ransom for many.

Mercy is the life of sinful flesh, the life of the old Adam daily put to death in repentance, that the new Adam, the life of faith, is made to stand up to live before God in the free gift of righteousness in Christ Jesus.

Mercy is the life of faith. And the life of faith is over-and-done-with life under the Law, for faith looks only to Christ Jesus.

Blessed are the merciful; they receive mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart.

The heart is not pure. The heart is sinful; it is concerned with self; it is filled with lustful desires. From the heart comes every evil thought and desire, Jesus tells us. (Matthew 15:19).

There is only one who is pure of heart. To find him, look where he is hanging from the cross, with no retribution in his heart. We see him walking out of the tomb, not to exact justice on those who wronged him, but to give resurrected life to all who hear him.

We see him placing his Name on the sinner, bestowing the Name of the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit on those he loves, as our Lord gives us to see at every Baptism.

We see him coming among us by his Word in his Body and Blood, not to destroy, but to forgive sins.

The One with a pure heart, and it is only One—to him we pray and sing,
Create in me a clean heart, O God.

By his Word, his cleansing of the sinner in Baptism, his forgiveness given the sinner in his own Body and Blood, the One with a pure heart purifies the heart of the sinner, replacing the heart of stone with the heart of living faith.

Blessed are the pure in heart. They will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers.

Peace made between God and the sinner, it is the atonement of the cross, the reconciliation of the sinner with God, it is the wall of hostility between the sinner and God broken down by the word of grace. It is the work purely and fully of God the Son bringing the sinner to his Father in peace.

Blessed are the peacemakers, they are sons of God.

Blessed are those persecuted for the sake of righteousness.

This world of Law, of eye-for-eye, tooth for tooth, this world of retribution, this world ready to speak in judgment and cover in shame, this world can only persecute, revile, and cancel those who are justified not by Law but by faith, those who rejoice in not in power or decisions of the sinner, but in hearing the Word of grace, in receiving the gifts of Christ, living in mercy, being declared righteous by the One who is righteous and who shed his blood to make us righteous.

Those who live by faith, who rejoice in being justified by grace, they will be persecuted. They are blessed. Rejoice and be glad, for the kingdom of Heaven belongs to you.

Stand before God in the poverty of your sin. He blesses you with the riches of grace. Stand before God with mourning in your heart. He comforts you with the word of life. Stand before God meek, with no strength to show, he gives you the inheritance of eternal life.

Stand before God seeking the righteousness you cannot gain with your own works or decisions, seeking the mercy you cannot know in this world of retribution, this world under the Law which considers the word of grace to be folly—stand before God longing for the heart to be purified by the holy blood. Stand before God empty and longing for that which the world cannot give and does not comprehend; he blesses you.

This is the Word of the cross for all those living in this world of Law and retribution. As Paul wrote to the Church in Corinth in 1 Corinthians 1:

For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God ... for it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who have faith [in Christ Jesus].

In the Name of Jesus.