

AN EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE: *The Beatitudes*



Lord, our God, Your Son, Jesus Christ spoke to his disciples on the mountain, where he spoke the Beatitudes as guides for living. His pronouncements of blessedness remind us of your word Given to Moses on Mt Sinai. On Mt Sinai, You appeared as clouds and thunder. In the Sermon on the Mount, You are present as a Divine and human being – God incarnate. On Mt. Sinai, you gave your people 10 pronouncements to aid them in their societal living. In the Sermon on the Mount, you express your will for us in terms of affirmation and reveal Your new creation of humankind.

As we prepare our consciences in God's presence, let us reflect on
The words Jesus gave to us in the Sermon on the Mount:

Gospel of Matthew 5:1-11

“When he 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 God.

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 because of me.

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

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

- Do I fear being poor, in spirit or otherwise, and prefer to be rich in money, brains, or influence?
- Is my desire for poverty of spirit congruent with my lifestyle?
- Do I use the word of God to rationalize my lifestyle, or am I willing to have God's word criticize it?
- Do I cling to my own ideas, opinions and judgments, sometimes to the point of idolatry?
- Do I contribute my time, talent and money to the poor of the world?

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

- Do I grieve over loneliness, despair, guilt and rejection in the lives of others?
- Am I willing to admit my own despondencies and need for comfort?
- Do I minister consolation and healing, or do I blandly encourage people to "have courage," thereby avoiding the opportunity to mourn with another?

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

- Do I see any value in meekness or nonviolence?
- Do I cringe at the thought of being called meek?
- How much are intimidation and force part of my lifestyle?
- Do I work for nonviolent social change?

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

- Are my energies and passions focused on Christ, or are they scattered, disordered, divided?
- Am I honestly trying to improve the quality of life around me?
- Am I trying to improve the environment, racial relations, care for the unborn, sexual equality, the lives of the poor and destitute?
- Have I let fear keep me silent when I should have spoken out against prejudice, injustice and violence?

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

- Do I operate on a double standard of expecting mercy but not wanting to grant it?
- Do I prefer the strict law and order approach, or that of mercy, tenderness and compassion?
- Are there places in my life where people are suffering because of me and my unforgiving attitude?
- Am I devoid of a merciful spirit toward those I call "enemy"?

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

- Am I trusting and trustful?
- Do I value living without pretense, or am I constantly fearful that someone will take advantage of me?
- Am I open and honest about who I am and what I do?
- Do I deflect the attention and honor due to God and claim these things for myself?

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- Have I been untrue to myself, even a little, for advancement, money or good opinion?
 - Have I failed to take time for prayer, solitude, reflection?

7. "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called children of God."

- Am I eager for reconciliation, or do I antagonize and yearn for revenge?
- Do I think apologizing is a sign of weakness?
- Am I willing to be a bridge in family and community arguments?
- Do I support violence in films, television and sports?
- Have I read, and do I support, the many official church statements against the arms race, nuclear weapons, war?
- Do I see the Christian vocation as one of peacemaker?
- Is my presence a source of peace to those around me?

8. "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account."

- Do I criticize or ridicule those who suffer for their beliefs?
- Am I embarrassed to step out of the mainstream to stand up for a principle?
- Do I worship security and fear costly discipleship?
- Have I called myself Christian without making my life a witness to the teachings of Jesus?
- Have I openly supported those who defend justice and give their lives for peace?

9. "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven."

- Do I live confident of the promises of Jesus?
- Do I surrender to pessimism and anxiety?
- Do I perceive that there is a paradoxical victory in the cross of Jesus that breaks through power structures and conquers in peace and love?
- Have I become cynical rather than hopeful?