

Our theme for this morning's meditation is that 'Jesus tells us who are truly blessed, happy'. When we think of blessedness or happiness we immediately associate it with prosperity and wealth. We tend to think that if a person is well off in life financially and has a house, a car and all other material goods then they are blessed. However, in Jesus' view the blessedness is not something that comes with what we own or what we have but rather the inner qualities of life which will make us blessed. Not only will we ourselves be blessed by these inner qualities but we will be a blessing to others.

The passage that we will be meditating on this morning is from Matthew 5:1-12 which is part of the Sermon on the Mount consisting of Matthew chapters 5-7. This is the first discourse which Jesus gives to his disciples. Matthew records for us that when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down and he began to teach the disciples and the crowd. The name 'Sermon on the Mount' is given because this discourse is given on a mountain top, from a vantage point from where Jesus could see all the people and he too was visible to the people. However, it is the disciples who take the ringside seats. They are the primary listeners to this discourse. The Sermon on the Mount 'is no manual for an exclusive spiritual elite. Its concern to elucidate the will of God is based on theological and ethical considerations and is not linked to a distinctive call for an exclusive few. The double audience of disciples and crowds fits in with this: the disciples learn from within the context of a relationship of committed discipleship, but that which they learn has pertinence as well to all the others who hear.'

Blessed is not just a state of happiness but just what Jesus thinks. There is a close connection between holiness and happiness. The Sermon on the Mount is symbolic of another law given on the mount – Moses and the Ten Commandments. But here it is a law of inward righteousness.

The first three are about the poor in spirit, those who mourn and those who are meek. The poor in spirit are those who are materially poor and broken in spirit. They have no one else to turn to. Their spirits are crushed by oppression like the Dalits in our country and they even wonder whether God will intervene. God says that he is a God in whose kingdom there will be justice and therefore the kingdom of God belongs to them. For those who mourn also, the message is the same. They may be mourning the loss of their property and land or they may be mourning in repentance recognizing their wickedness in the sight of a holy God. God will comfort them. Then there are those who are meek. Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones says, 'Meekness is essentially a true view of oneself, expressing itself in attitude and conduct with respect to others... The man who is truly meek is the one who is truly amazed that God and others think of him as well as they do and treat him as well as they do.'

The next three are to do with righteousness. Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be filled. Those who seek to be right with God will be justified. Jesus also calls for a moral righteousness which is righteous character and conduct which pleases God and is not just for public consumption. Righteousness also means seeking the liberation for human beings who are oppressed, promotion of civil rights, justice in law courts, integrity in business and honor in home and family affairs. In vs 10-11 Jesus calls his listeners blessed if they are persecuted for being upright and honest. We too are encouraged to be men and women of integrity. We are also blessed when we are persecuted for the sake of Christ and the Gospel.

The third set is about the reconcilers: the merciful, the pure in heart and the peacemakers. The merciful are those who show their compassion to all those who are in need. If we show mercy to others then we too will be shown mercy. The pure in heart are those who are transparent before God and human beings. Because of their integrity they are promised the presence of God. The peacemakers are those who go out of their way to make sure that peace is maintained within the body of Christ. They are in the business of reconciliation just as God in Jesus reconciles us and therefore they will be called the children of God.

As we meditate on these beatitudes this morning may we truly follow them in our lives through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.