

*Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you,
and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil
against you falsely, for my sake.*

If we desire to preach the Gospel to all, we must expect that Satan's forces will revile us and even persecute us because Jesus has penetrated our very souls with His special blessing. Once we accept Christ into our lives, we have conquered the evil one. Jesus prevails as our Lord and Savior.

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Reflections on the Beatitudes

Arthur Berk

***Blessed are they which are persecuted
for righteousness sake:
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.***

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

In this beatitude, our Lord and everlasting savior has reminded us that we are a blessed people when we are willing to accept punishment for obeying God. In those moments we experience the Kingdom in Christ's magnificent light and grace that brings much joy in our hearts.

Jesus reminds us that the Hebrew prophets were persecuted for listening to and obeying our precious Lord by the religious establishments of their day. The religious ruler persecuted Jeremiah for declaring that God has written His Laws into our hearts. Likewise so-called authorities objected to Isaiah's prophecy that declares "we will turn our swords into plowshares. . ." These two prophets were imprisoned but continued receiving God's blessing.

First generation Friends also were persecuted for "righteousness sake." Many of our Friends were imprisoned in appalling cells for their participation in waiting worship and their refusal to bare arms. Jesus blessed them in his love which motivated our beloved Friends to proclaim the good news of God's salvation.

May we be willing to face persecution in the name of our everlasting Lord. Then we will receive the kingdom of heaven.

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***Blessed are the peacemakers:
for they shall be called
the children of God.***

Jesus declares, "Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God." In other words, these obedient servants are participating in God's blessing as obedient servants of the most high.

They understand that Jesus has - and still is - extending God's gratitude for their understanding that our heavenly Father has inculcated these Friends with the command to settle disputes in God's peace, not in their personal ideology.

That is why Christ teaches His followers to love their opponents. We know that Jesus is communicating with them inwardly much like His communication to us. We feel His presence within to such an extent that we realize in the power of the Lord that God has the love and power to minister to the so-called unlikable individuals.

Small wonder Jesus teaches us, if we are listening, "to turn the other cheek." Then we begin to "love our enemies" as potential friends of Jesus. We thus make peace in God's blessing. We may not always be successful but, more important, we are obedient to the Lord, His Friend. This love, as Jesus admonishes, enables us to forgive our opponents, not with our own limited minds, but in Christ's spirit. Of course we need to pray for the love and power manifested in that beloved Spirit. As a result, we receive the spiritual armament of God and become His peacemakers.

04-02-2007

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

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

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

Matthew 5:3-11, KJV

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

My Catholic worker friends - and they are my friends - would declare that they reject earthly riches not only to minister to the poor but also to share the agony of economic deprivation with those they serve in the Lord.

We Quakers, on the other hand, acknowledge that we are poor in spirit in desperate need of God's bountiful riches. That is why we need to wait on the Lord for God's grace, for God's peace as well as His enlightenment. Then and only then will we be God's instruments in conquering evil.

Once we accept Christ's power, and relate to others in all empowering love, we can relate to the needs of others recognizing our own limitations. Jesus, and not we, will prevail and we will be blessed in the spirit.

03-15-2007

***Blessed are the pure in heart:
for they shall see God.***

If we merely center on our own human concerns and needs, we become selfish, so selfish that we are unable to recognize the Spirit of the Crucified One in our very troubled souls. We become egotistic and leave little room for God to prevail.

But when we wait on the Lord to free us from our secular needs, we recognize God's inspiring leadership and then, my friends, we shall see God in all His manifestations. We will see the Lord consoling us in His role of Shepherd and inwardly we will hear His prophetic voice teaching us in His everlasting wisdom. Once we become truly obedient, our beloved Lord will be present and active in our midst.

07-12-2007

***Blessed are the merciful:
for they shall obtain mercy.***

When we are merciful as a result of being blessed in God's mercy, we receive the Lord's grace and are able to display that quality to our fellow beings. But remember it is a gift from God. We need to wait on the Lord for that gift and eventually become witnesses of the Lord's compassion which enables us to act in joy as well as compassion. For that to happen we need to welcome God in our lives. Mercy will permeate our lives so long as we are imbued in God's spirit.

07-12-2007

***Blessed are they that mourn:
for they shall be comforted.***

God cares about our sadness when we lose loved ones who have expressed their love of God and love of us not merely verbally but through their devotion to Christ and their human friend. Small wonder God comforts us in these moments of tragedy.

May God lead us to comfort our Friends when they loose people who were and are dear to them.

07-12-2007

***Blessed are the meek:
for they shall inherit the earth.***

Jesus proclaims, "Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth." Jesus has blessed those who have accepted and are participating in God's meekness, not their own interpretation of that most desirable quality.

For this to occur, we in addition to accepting Jesus' admonitions, need to be empowered by God to accept simplicity in obedience to our Holy Father. That is the reason we cannot aspire to power over our fellow humans, recognizing that our beloved Savior is and will continue to be our caring Lord.

Small wonder the founders of Ohio Yearly Meeting preached the necessity for us to remain obedient to Jesus to embrace meekness in our daily lives. Then we will truly be living in God's domain recognizing our humbleness. And in God's Kingdom, we will exercise kindness to God's animals and plants. In adhering to God's blessing, we will inherit the earth, so long as we are faithful.

03-29-2007

God has provided this planet for us to extend His blessed Kingdom, a Kingdom in which God commands and we listen, and more important, obey.

As we know, the prideful are incapable of recognizing God's everlasting power and love and therefore are in a state of rebellion. They desire to rule, in other words.

On the other hand, the meek are cognizant of their limitations and accept their dependency on God's grace and display their willingness to seek Jesus guidance. May we welcome our meekness.

07-12-2007

***Blessed are they which do hunger and
thirst after righteousness:
for they shall be filled.***

First of all, we need to desire righteousness above all other wants, then God will provide His love within our souls. But we need to wait on Christ to open ourselves to God's care. Then we begin to seek God's all embracing righteousness. And finally we become members of God's sacred government.

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