

*When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. 2 Then he began to speak, 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 will be comforted. 5 "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.*

*6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. 7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. 8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. 9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. 10 "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*11 "Blessed are you when people 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 in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

“When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them.”

This is insider stuff. Jesus' words were not spoken to the crowds but were spoken to the ones who had left everything to follow Jesus: his disciples. He saw the crowds, in other places we read that Jesus had compassion on the crowds but his words to you today are not spoken to the entire world, some kind of general truth. Jesus is speaking to you who are gathered at his feet. Jesus is speaking to you who love him and want to follow him, you who are staking your life on him. Hear Jesus word to you:

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

Is this you? When you hear others tell of their great faith, do you feel judged? When you see them glowing with their joy in the Lord do you wonder if there is something missing in yourself? As they brag of the power of their prayers, are you ashamed of your prayers that don't work miracles? Then you are one of the poor in spirit, and Jesus says, “The kingdom of heaven belongs to you.”

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.” I think of a mother's sorrow over the death of her child. I think of a man whose wife left him, and he loves her still—his deep sorrow. I think of those whose hearts are continually saddened by the suffering caused by mental illness, over lives lost to alcohol, and that people are hungry. If you care about God's children beyond yourself there will be lots of sorrow in your heart and Jesus word is spoken to you. You will be comforted.

“Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth.”

The meek are gentle folks, struggling day by day to be like Jesus - not much noticed by the powerful. Many of you might be seen by your neighbors as among the meek, and they would not think it a compliment to give you that label, but Jesus promises you, the meek, will be given the whole world.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be satisfied.”

He said, “I want to be a better person.” In these days of self-promotion I don't hear many saying that of themselves, but he did. “I come here because I want to be a better person” - he hungers and thirsts for righteousness. Jesus promises if you come to Jesus seeking to be a better person that you will be satisfied. Jesus will not disappoint you.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.”

Jesus said that the judgement we give will be the judgement we get. He taught us to pray, “Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.” And here: The merciful shall receive mercy. Jesus is inviting you to be merciful; he will be merciful to you.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, they shall see God.”

I think of Jesus word: “Unless you become as a child, you shall never enter the kingdom of God.” Pure in heart: simply believing in God, trusting in God, hoping in God - hour by hour, day by day, year by year. I hope for every one of you that you will be pure in heart for the promise here is not simply of heaven or earth but is the greatest promise of all, you shall see God.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, they shall be called children of God.”

Are you a peacemaker? Do you go where there is trouble to bring Christ there? Making peace, sacrificing yourself for the cause of peace as soldiers sacrifice themselves in the cause of war. Sometimes we think that if we can just avoid conflict that will be good enough, but the greatest maker of peace, Jesus, risked himself, offered himself. He invites you to follow so that you may be a child of God just as Jesus is.

“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. Rejoice and be glad for your reward is great in heaven.”

Yes, for the peace makers life will not be peaceful. For followers of Jesus life will not be peaceful but full of trouble and conflict. But Jesus promises a reward for those who follow him - a great reward.

Today is All Saints Sunday. My temptation is to simply bless everyone who has died, say it will be wonderful in heaven, and send you out to live however you feel like living. But Jesus does not.

He calls you away from the crowds, away from just living life the way it comes, to live a life that is lived by his word. He has sat you here this morning not to bless you and send you on your way but to make of you peace makers and pure in heart and a people full of mercy.

Jesus wants you to be among those gathered in that great multitude, from every nation and people and language, who have come through the great ordeal by washing your robes and making them white in the blood of the lamb.

Jesus gives you his body and blood, washes you, cleanses you, leads and directs you. Jesus provides you with all the faith and the works and the love that you need to be among that great multitude. Hear his word, follow where he leads.

And at the end God will wipe away every tear from your eyes. How tender a word this is: Almighty God like a mother wiping away all the tears of your whole life, every loss and sorrow, every shame, every disappointment. God will wipe away every tear from your eyes.

Jesus is the cloth God uses to wipe those tears away.