

To Know To Believe To Live – Module 5 Official Handout

02.13.21 Version

Developed by Msgr. Michael Clay

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JESUS ANNOUNCES BY WORD AND DEED THE REIGN OF GOD AND ESTABLISHES THE VISION OF THE REIGN IN THE BEATITUDES

I. Introduction and Orientation to the Presentation:

- A. Magna Carta (Great Charter) of the Reign of God
- B. An invitation to reorder one's life by responding to the internal law of love rather than the external rule of law.
- C. Major Conversion: from human power to divine strength
- D. Meant as an antidote to the way people often think about the value, purpose, and destination of human life influenced by a secular perspective (Clifton)
- E. The Beatitudes express the belief that the Reign of God comes through those who are characterized by their poverty of spirit, their ability to mourn for the world, their lack of attachments or clinging to personal rights, their hunger for the healing of the world, their extreme mercy extended even towards their worst enemies, and their purity of heart. (Simpson)
- F. Justice is a high value in God's reign
- G. Reign of God is not just reserved for heaven; God also intends for it to be experienced, albeit incompletely, in this world.

II. The Beatitudes: An Overview

A. Blessed are the poor in spirit. The reign of God is theirs (Matthew 5:3)

- 1. Meaning: The poor in spirit are those who place their entire trust in the Lord rather than in themselves.
- 2. World's Alternative Beatitude: Blessed are the self-sufficient for they don't need anyone, including God.
- 3. First beatitude because it impacts one's ability to live the others.
- 4. Interpretation: Realize the need to reorder life around God first
 - a. One way to do this: detachment from goods of the earth which can become addictive
- 5. Discussion: What makes it challenging to reorder your life around God?

B. Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted (Matthew 5:4)

- 1. Meaning: God calls us to be moved by compassion for those who suffer, for those who are in need, and for the impact of sin and evil in the world.
- 2. World's Alternative Beatitude: Blessed are those with a safety cushion against life for they can minimize and cushion themselves against the experience of loss.
- 3. Types of Mourning: sadness, pain, anger, rejection, hurt, tears, and loneliness.
- 4. "Consolation" includes acceptance, understanding, touch, care, consolation, compassion, solidarity, presence, laughter.
- 5. Challenge: a society that is increasingly indifferent, apathetic to those who suffer

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C. Blessed are the meek; they shall inherit the land (Matthew 5:5)

1. Meaning: God blesses those who bear hardships with patience, endurance, and gentleness resulting from relinquishing attachment to personal rights and things.
2. World's Alternative Beatitude: Blessed are the self-centered. There's real joy in getting more. It's REALLY about acquisitions, acquisitions, acquisitions.
3. Interpretation: a nonviolent approach to life and freedom from the need to control by fear, intimidation, possessiveness
4. Meek ≠ Passive

D. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied (Matthew 5:6)

1. Meaning: Those who hunger for the healing of the world and are committed to that healing using the values of the Gospel are blessed in the eyes of God.
2. World's Alternative Beatitude: Blessed are those whose pursuit is for their own version of justice. Mercy, balance, and fairness are for the weak.
3. Interpretation: To be hungry for justice, especially for those who cannot achieve their own justice.

E. Blessed are the merciful for they will be shown mercy. (Matthew 5:7)

1. Meaning: Those who choose mercy and forgiveness when judgment and condemnation would be easier will experience the same from God.
2. World's Alternative Beatitude: Blessed are the mean for they will always have the advantage.
3. It is easier to judge/rebuke/admonish than to extend mercy/forgive/release, especially when we have been wronged by someone.
4. It is precisely in this that God proves God's love for us: in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)
5. Boundaries are not ends unto themselves.

F. Blessed are the clean of heart for they will see God. (Matthew 5:8)

1. Meaning: The heart is the center of our conscience/moral decision-making in Jesus' time. Being clean of heart enables one to see God more clearly and act more consistently like God.
2. World's Alternative Beatitude: Blessed are those whose lives are filled with the pursuit of unbridled pleasure, both of the body and the mind. Pleasure is their god.
3. Interpretation: Our purity of heart places us in solidarity with the heart of God which is perfect purity
4. Interpretation: Interior preoccupations/mindset/state indicate likely disposition towards external actions
5. Implications: eyes are the lamps of the body

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G. Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called children of God. (Matthew 5:9)

1. Meaning: God calls us to promote forgiveness, healing, and reconciliation with and among others. Doing this clearly reflects what God is doing with us at all times.
2. World's Alternative Beatitude: Blessed are the war-mongers and those who hate for by their bloodthirsty quest to conquer they will be rulers of the world and show people who's boss.
3. Not simply the absence of violence but also pursues healing and reconciliation.
4. Removal of violence is an important first step.
5. Requires a lot of work and a willingness to dialogue.

H. Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:10)

1. Meaning: The Gospel message will provoke resistance and hostility. You're blessed when your commitment to it results in people mistreating you.
2. World's Alternative Beatitude: Blessed are they who persecute others for challenging their "truth" so they can keep on doing what they're doing to promote their own kingdom.
3. Interpretation: Fidelity to truth and righteousness will bring resistance and hostility to you.
4. Fidelity to truth and righteousness also bring God's reign into being even if it can't be immediately seen.
5. Calls individual to an exemplary holiness in order to remain faithful to this calling

III. Discussion:

A. Which beatitude are you most drawn to? Why?

B. Which beatitude are you most challenged by? Why?

C. For the Christian, the focus is not just on becoming a fulfilled self but to become a fulfilled people, members of a whole human family living together on our small planet. How does this communal orientation impact the way you view and live the Beatitudes?

IV. Ongoing Reflection:

A. Reflect on where you are currently in knowing, believing, and living the Beatitudes in your life today AND how you might be invited to take another step forward growing in this area of faith.