

Mid Year Devotions 2024



The Beatitudes are part of the Sermon on the Mount, the teaching of Jesus. It is not surprising that they are some of the most famous sayings of history.

When he spoke, Jesus was especially speaking to those who are his disciples, who have already entered his kingdom. These are the ones who left all to follow him.

That means he is still speaking to us who are today's disciples. We follow Jesus as our Lord and Saviour.

What do these Beatitudes say to us and about us?

We look at Matthew 5 verses 3 to 12:

1. **'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'** (5:3)

The poor in spirit are those who recognise their spiritual helplessness. They are the humble, making no pretence that they can impress God because of their goodness or worldly success. They cast themselves on the mercy of God, since otherwise they have no hope. And yet, paradoxically, they gain all that life is about, the kingdom of heaven. They enter the realm of the Lord and their future is assured.

Response: O Father God, nothing in my hand I bring, for my sins are many. Please accept me as a member of your kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

2. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.' (5:4)

The path into God's kingdom is by repentance and faith. Jesus calls on us to mourn over our sins, to turn away from them, to turn to God and seek his forgiveness. The response of God to those who truly mourn their sins is his comfort. The Spirit draws us to the cross of Jesus, in which our sins are forgiven, and we have the comfort of assurance of the forgiveness and acceptance of God.

Response: Heavenly Father, please forgive my sins as I forgive those who sin against me, through the death of Jesus for me. Amen

3. 'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.' (5:5)

We don't believe that do we? We believe that the strong will inherit the earth. That is what history seems to show. But Jesus says that the meek will inherit the earth. The future is theirs. The meek are strong in their own way, namely by their trust in God and their walk with him. It enables them to be gentle towards others, an aspect of love. Jesus describes himself with the same word in *Matthew 11:29* when he invites us to come to him, 'for I am gentle and lowly in heart'. No-one would describe Jesus as weak, for it takes great strength from God himself to be meek.

Response: Thank you Father for the meekness of Jesus. Help me to come to him and trust in him and show others the gentleness which he has. Amen

4. 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.' (5:6)

When we hunger and thirst, we become obsessed with the need to meet these basic needs. What do the true followers of Jesus hunger and thirst for? Not for food and water but righteousness, that is a life of faith and obedience, striving to please the Lord in all things. The perfect example of this is, of course, Jesus. As we walk with him, we become more like him by the power of the Spirit and one day our longing to be like him will be fulfilled.

Response: Father, help me to be like Jesus, by the power of your Holy Spirit. Amen.

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

We know as disciples of Jesus, the importance of forgiving others. Here the word mercy is more than forgiveness. It is the task of showing mercy to the vulnerable and weak. The Good Samaritan went all the way in showing mercy. But, of course, mercy is best personified in Jesus himself, who came among us to save us as an act of mercy. Mothers' Union across the world has countless acts of mercy in caring for the weak and vulnerable. For we have received mercy now and will receive mercy at the end of days.

Response: Merciful Lord, please help me to look out on the world with the eyes of mercy, as you did in entering the world to save us. Amen.

6. 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.' (5:8)

How blessed are the pure in heart, for this is what we were created to be, what a blessing such followers have as we shall see God. This purity includes but is not limited to sexual matters. Rather, it is a devotion to God which holds back nothing but gives all to him. It is the devotion we see in Jesus as he says in Gethsemane, 'not my will but your will be done'. When the first disciples left all to follow Jesus, they were modelling this purity of heart which is the sign of the followers of our Lord. But like us, they often failed. But the glory of following Jesus in this life includes his forgiveness for our failures.

Response: Thank you Lord that you have given me a new heart. Help me each day to be pure in heart as I give myself to you in true worship. Amen

7. 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.' (5:9)

The peacemakers are those who have peace with God and are the children of God. The peace we have received through Jesus we now show the world through forgiveness and mercy. Many today do not realise they need the peace that only God can give. We now also share the love of God through the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, so that others too may have peace with God and be children of God now and in eternity.

Response: Almighty God, thank you for the wonderful privilege we have as children of God to call you 'Father'. May I always be like Jesus through whom you made peace with the world. Amen.

8. 'Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' (5:10)

In the first seven beatitudes, Jesus describes his true disciples, the ones who have entered the kingdom of heaven. These are the things which characterise them, and the reward can be summed up by saying that God's present and God's future will be theirs. But now Jesus warns us that to live as his disciple will involve confrontation with a world which does not know him and even persecution. This has indeed been the case down through history. But we will not be surprised, as we follow the Lord. Sometimes we even find challenges to our Faith in our families. What we will do is to keep trusting in the Lord and stand firm and remember the Lord is our shepherd always.

Response: Heavenly Father, give me strength to follow Jesus come what may, confident that your promises will be fulfilled and I will have the great joy, with all your saints, of seeing you in all your glory, through Jesus Christ my Lord. Amen.

AMUA Prayer and Spirituality Coordinator

Christine Jensen OAM

prayer@muaustralia.org.au