

Theme: **A WORLD TURNED UPSIDE DOWN!**

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time!

1 February

2025

It is said that when Jewish rabbis gave instructions to their congregation in the synagogue, they sat down. Kings do the same when they address their people on state matters. Popes sit on their papal throne when they make official pronouncements.

When Jesus delivered what is now known as the **SERMON ON THE MOUNT**, he did so only after he had "sat down." Why? It was to make people understand that what he was about to say was very important. It is a summary of all Christian doctrine. And the Eight Beatitudes? They are the summary of the whole of the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:1-12) which in turn is the **summary of the gospel**.

Each Beatitude begins with "**happy**" or "**blessed**." Yet who are those whom Jesus calls to be thus? **The poor, the mourners, the meek or lowly, those deprived of justice, those persecuted and abused**. In the eyes of the world, such people can hardly be described as happy or blessed. In fact, they are the world's embarrassment. A country which wants to project itself as a tourist destination makes no mention of these kinds of people; rather, it hides them from tourists.

In the Beatitudes, Matthew is not offering an unusual program for happiness. Rather, he is describing what happens to his followers when the Kingdom of God breaks into this broken world. The Beatitudes speak of a variety of experiences that disciples undergo as a result of their involvement in living the gospel. Though Jesus considers the consequences of this involvement as part and parcel of discipleship, they appear to the world as senseless sufferings. In fact, people shun everything that Jesus calls "blessed." Here is what one spiritual writer says on how the **WORLD VIEWS THE BEATITUDES**:

To Jesus' **Blessed are the poor in spirit**, the world says that money is everything. To His **Blessed are they who mourn**, the world says, "Eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die."

To His **Blessed are the meek**, the world says that the only way to go ahead is to be aggressive.

To His **Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness**, the world says that it is dirty business out there and one can't help but get one's hand dirtied.

To His **Blessed are the merciful**, the world says that mercy is weakness and the only way to go ahead is to step on others.

To His **Blessed are the clean of heart**, the world says lures people with all kinds of beauty products to make them appear and remain "sexy and irresistible."

To His **Blessed are the peacemakers**, the world says that big money can be made in wars with the sale of weapons of destruction and death.

To His ***Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness***, the world says that those who want to reform the world along moral lines are dreamers. It says, "If you can't beat them, join them."

With the Beatitudes, Jesus turned the world upside-down. Not the rich, nor the strong, nor the powerful, nor the well-fed, nor the good-life chasers, but those who place their total trust in God are the truly happy or blest ones. Thus, the Beatitudes tell us that we **are** not losers but winners because God is on our side. We are blessed even as we suffer because we believe that we will be vindicated, partly here and now, and fully when Christ resolves all things in the end-time. This compensates for any misfortune that may befall us- persecution, contempt, sorrow, poverty, or injustice - in living the Kingdom values of truth, justice, freedom, love and peace.

The destitute, oppressed, those who have no power in society are called "blessed" because through God's justice, that is, his saving activity, their condition is going to change now that the kingdom of God is here. In God's reign, they are privileged not because of their special dispositions or virtues but because of God's favorable disposition towards them.

Finally, the Beatitudes tell us that blessedness is also a task. They point to the equally necessary human response to God's gift of salvation. Thus, present realities can become different if we live by the Beatitudes: peace in our homes and in the world if we have a merciful and clean heart; banishment of exploitation, hunger and war if we are poor in spirit, meek, and do not rely on weapons to make peace; the end of oppression and persecution if we really believe in and work for justice and peace.

My dear friends, the Eight Beatitudes show us who is truly blessed, how Christ lived, and how we are called to live if we want to inherit the Kingdom of Heaven.

**INDEED, THE BEATITUDES SHOW US THE WAY TO SANCTITY BY BEING CONVINCED THAT GOD IS WITH US, FEELING JOY AND FREEDOM IN THAT CONVICTION, AND TRYING OUR BEST TO LIVE UP TO GOD'S WILL IN EVERY MOMENT. IF GOD'S KINGDOM HAS NOT YET BECOME A REALITY HERE AND NOW, IS IT NOT BECAUSE WE STILL HESITATE TO LIVE BY THE BEATITUDES?**