

Homily

All Saints Day, 30th Sunday in OT

November 1, 2020

A young girl learned in school that people came from monkeys and asked her dad to explain what this meant. So he told her the evolutionary theory of how humans evolved first from single cell organisms to small water creatures and fish to reptiles, birds, mammals and eventually monkeys and then man. She was even more confused, so she went to her mother, who told her that God created Adam and Eve, our first parents, and that we were born from them. The daughter smiled but asked why Dad said we evolved from monkeys. She put her arm around her daughter and said, "Well, he was explaining where his side of the family came from.

There are always two sides to the story. And so it is with today's Gospel. Mary Fairchild in an article she wrote a few months ago had some wise words to share about the Sermon on the Mount⁽¹⁾.

We listen to Jesus teach us how to live. A beatitude is supreme blessedness; a possession of all things held to be good, from which nothing is absent that a good desire may want.

Many interpretations and teachings have been set forth through the principles conveyed in the beatitudes. Each beatitude is a proverb-like saying packed with meaning and worthy of study. Most scholars agree that the beatitudes give us a picture of the true disciple of God.

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

The phrase "poor in spirit" speaks of a spiritual condition of poverty. It describes the person who is empty and recognizes his need for God. "The kingdom of heaven" refers to people who acknowledge God as King. One who is poor in spirit knows he is spiritually bankrupt apart from Jesus Christ.

Paraphrased, it means: "Blessed are those who humbly recognize their need for God, for they will enter into his kingdom."

And in contrast: "Cursed are the full in spirit, for they are filled with things of this world and have no room for God."

"Blessed are they who mourn,
for they will be comforted."

"Those who mourn" speaks of those who express deep sorrow for their sin and repent from their sins. The freedom found in forgiveness of sin and the joy of eternal salvation is the comfort of those who repent.

Said another way: "Blessed are those who mourn for their sins, for they shall receive forgiveness and life eternal."

And in contrast: "Cursed are those who do not know their sins or don't care that they have sinned, for they will be condemned in the next life."

"Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the land."

Similar to "the poor," "the meek" are those who submit to God's authority and make him Lord. Revelation tells us God's children will "inherit all things." The meek are also imitators of Jesus Christ who exemplified gentleness and self-control.

Another way to say this is: "Blessed are those who submit to God as Lord, for they will inherit everything he possesses."

In contrast: "Cursed are those to reject God and His commands, for they will lose eternal life."

"Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled."

"Hunger" and "thirst" speak of a deep need and a driving passion. This "righteousness" refers to Jesus Christ. To "be filled" is to be satisfied to our soul's desire.

Or it can be said: "Blessed are those who passionately long for Christ, for he will satisfy their longing."

In contrast: "Cursed are they who don't know Christ, for they will be forever lost and lonely."

"Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy."

We reap what we sow. Those who demonstrate mercy will receive mercy. Likewise, those who have received great mercy will show great mercy. Mercy is shown through forgiveness, kindness, and compassion toward others.

Said in another way: "Blessed are those who show mercy through forgiveness, kindness, and compassion, for they will receive mercy."

In contrast: "Cursed are the cruel, for they will be treated harshly."

"Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God."

The "pure in heart" are those who have been cleansed from within. This is not outward righteousness that can be seen by men, but inward holiness that only God can see. The Bible says in Hebrews that without holiness, no one will see God.

Also said this way: "Blessed are those who have been purified from the inside out, being made clean and holy, for they will be in the presence of God."

In Contrast: "Cursed are those who remain wicked, for they will only see darkness.

"Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called sons of God."

The Bible says we have peace with God through Jesus Christ. Reconciliation through Christ brings restored fellowship and peace with God. 2 Corinthians says God entrusts us with this same message of reconciliation to take to others.

Paraphrased: "Blessed are those who have been reconciled to God through Jesus Christ and bring this same message of reconciliation to others. All who have peace with God are his children."

In contrast: "Cursed are those who remain estranged from God and who remain estranged from all others; they will remain lost and lonely.

"Blessed are those who are persecuted
because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Just as Jesus faced persecution, so will we who follow Him. Those who endure by faith rather than hide their faith to avoid persecution are genuine followers of Christ.

Remember Peter denied Christ three times. There's hope for us yet.

Said another way: "Blessed are those daring enough to openly live for Christ and suffer persecution, for they will enter into the kingdom of heaven."

In contrast: "Cursed are they who deny Christ, for they will be denied eternal rest."
The Good News is that our God is merciful, all merciful and all loving. He gives us as many chances as we need, calling us to repentance and always forgiving us. He loves us more than we can know. His love is infinite. He craves to be with us. As long as we keep our focus on Jesus and stay in His Light, He will bless us and bring us home.

This week, strive to live by the Beatitudes; strive for perfection; and know we have forgiveness when we stumble.

And most importantly, go to confession; always, always seek forgiveness, especially when we are ashamed to seek it.

1. Fairchild, Mary. (2020, August 25). What Are the Beatitudes? Retrieved from <https://www.learnreligions.com/what-are-the-beatitudes-701505>