

In this Gospel reading, Jesus invites us to go up the mountain as He begins the Sermon on the Mount with the Beatitudes. Here we have couple of statements about beatitudes and their meaning.

- Blessed are the poor in spirit, those who realize their spiritual poverty and need for God. Theirs is the kingdom of God because they are open to the riches of God's kingdom. They know they are not spiritually self-sufficient, that the soul does not nourish itself. They know their need of God.
- Blessed are they who mourn, those who grieve over the depth of sin in their life and in the world, who are not deceived by the glitter of a superficial culture. They shall be consoled and will know the joy and renewal of forgiveness.
- Blessed are the meek, the humble, those who know the real truth about themselves. They shall inherit the land, the spiritual possessions and the sense of place that come from the honest truth.
- Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for holiness. They are not pursuing a pipe dream because in Christ their desire will be filled.
- Blessed are those who show mercy, who don't just read about mercy and pray for mercy but who show mercy. They can be sure of God's mercy toward them.
- Blessed are the clean of heart, those whose motives are clear and Christian. They shall see God with the same clarity.
- Blessed are the peacemakers, those who bring people together. They are doing God's work and they will be called sons/ daughters of God.

Through these Beatitudes, Jesus enlarges our vision of our world.

We live in a world captivated by bad news. Bad news travels fast. If all goes well, we have little to say. But when things go wrong, we have lots to talk about, to interpret, to speculate, to look at details. Whole careers are built out of scandals. There was bad news also at the time of Jesus. There were corrupt judges, rebellious and ungrateful children, prostitution, theft, disloyal servants, and murderers. All made their way into the stories Jesus told.

Against this background, Jesus climbs the mountain, takes us with Him, and says that there are things going on that show God's kingdom is at work. We should look not just at the arrogant, but at those who know their need of God; don't just look at the glib but at those who appreciate the reality of sin in our world; don't just look at the pompous, but the humble, the realists who really know who they are; look at those who thirst for holiness, who show compassion; look at people motivated by the Gospel; look at the peacemakers among us, they are the real hope of the world. They are "instruments of the kingdom." In a world of scandals, there is good news among us.

From the mountain of the Beatitudes, Jesus calls us to look beyond the scandals to see that the energy, the hope, the power of the kingdom are also at work in our world often in places and people we don't notice. These are the remnant of whom Zephaniah speaks in the first reading, who are doing God's will and God's work every day.

The Beatitudes are also promises of where God will be for us. There are many sacred places in our world that people visit and to which they do pilgrimage. These Beatitudes describe moments in every

human life that are blessed, where God is present and where salvation comes near to us if we have the faith and trust to see it.

When we realize we are poor in spirit, when we sorrow over sin, when we are humble and honest about ourselves and about others, when we hunger for holiness, when we show mercy, when we are motivated by the Gospel, when we are peacemakers and when we absorb hurt and insult and not just pass it on, at these moments the Lord promises us the graces and peace of the kingdom.

Through the Beatitudes, we glimpse the places where the kingdom of God is at work around us that should give us hope for our world. Through these Beatitudes, we also see the places where the kingdom can be at work in our life with the promise of spiritual power and grace.

The Beatitudes are an important teaching. They show that the Kingdom is not a spiritual fantasy. It is alive and growing around us and maybe within us.