

We are not ignorant of the pain and hurt of this world. Perhaps, yes, we can distract ourselves from it, and perhaps that is necessary at times. But it hits us eventually, whether we want it to or not. It may come in rage, it may come in frustration, it may come in depression or despair, it may come in a diagnosis, a sudden accident, in pain. It may come slowly as the daily grind (two steps forward, one step back) seemingly endless work, another problem, another conflict, and for what? Does it even matter at all? It may come as heartbreak, as a betrayal, or when that loved one is taken from you. It may come as things outside of our control, terribly unfair, assault us and the mountains fall into the sea.

And as Christians we may ponder, and we would not be the first to ponder this, “God do you see this? Do you care? And are you going to do something about it?”

The beatitudes are the answer. And the answer is “Yes,” “yes,” and “yes in more ways than you realize.” God, do you see? Yes. God, do you care? Yes. God, are you going to do something about it? Yes, in more ways than you realize.

We know God sees the hurting, and mourning, and afraid because he brings it up. We know he cares because he promises them blessing. And we know from scripture that the blessing of God is not merely “positive thoughts” but rooted in action, namely in his saving action.

Which brings us to that third question: Are you going to do something about it? In the beatitudes we see a resounding, and specific, “yes” to each group of hurting people. “You will be comforted, you will inherit the earth, you will be filled, you will receive mercy, you will see God, you will be called sons of God.”

He will do something about it.

And not just in the future. There are three promises that are present tense in the beatitudes. The first and the last two: “Theirs IS kingdom of heaven” is promised to the poor in spirit and the persecuted. And the persecuted get a bonus present tense blessing – your reward is great in heaven. And you might think I am cheating there – “Well they won’t get their reward until they get to heaven, that’s in the future.”

That’s not how Jesus says it though. He says it in the present tense. Which I think invites us to, as he says, “Rejoice and be glad.” If you had a fund that would mature for a million dollars in 2 years, or 5, or whatever, you’d take it, wouldn’t you? And you’d probably be glad to take it. So why shouldn’t we, when the world mocks and ridicules and memes us, why shouldn’t we rejoice and be glad, we have a trust that is much more sure and costly.

As for the kingdom of heaven that is given now to the persecuted and the poor in spirit: Well, what can we say other than that Jesus in his ministry says, “Repent and believe the Gospel for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand.” It’s standing right in front of them. Jesus, the King of kings, comes then and there. And he comes for the poor in spirit, because the healthy don’t need a doctor, but the sick.

And we might think that well and good for those listening to the sermon on the mount, but what about us? Or the 2k years of Christians after Jesus ascended? Is his kingdom still present tense for them too? For us?

Yes – in more ways than you might realize. Because if, when Jesus is present, the Kingdom of heaven is at hand, well, we must ask – is Jesus present now?

“Where two or more are gathered there I am with them,” Jesus promises. Is the Kingdom ours?

Yes, in His name. “This is my body, this is my blood for the forgiveness of sins.” Yes, it is ours

in the bread and wine – the gifts and work of the Cross come to unworthy sinners like us. “Go and baptize all nations in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And Lo I will be with you always, to the very end of the age.” The kingdom is ours, as we are made God’s children, and therefore heirs, in baptism. “In the beginning was the word, and the Word took on flesh and dwelt among us.” The Kingdom is ours now, in his Strong word. Yes, in these Means of Grace He is with us in very real ways. Which means we possess his blessing and the blessings of his kingdom even now. And we pray his Kingdom would come all the more, that more and more these might surround us and be in our lives, “from the joy of birth to the pain of death, Jesus, be with us! Bless us now, with your Kingdom!”

And he does. He does all the way through. Because there is more present-tense in the beatitudes, in the first two words of each and every one: blessed are... present tense. So because his kingdom comes to the poor in spirit, that means that even when we are still mourning, or rather – Especially when we are still mourning, or when we just fell back into that same stupid sin again and we are thirsting for a little righteousness... even still we are blessed because Jesus is ours. The kingdom is ours.

And should we begin to worry that these blessings, which may seem so hard to see in difficult times, if we should worry that they are for someone else, not us. Well, I think if you have doubts in that regard, well, that immediately means they are for you. Because that doubt, or fear, or acknowledgment of unworthiness means you are exactly who Jesus is talking about. The poor in spirit is not about an emotional state. It is, as the other beatitudes describe: a hunger and thirst for righteousness. Which is a confession that, “God, I don’t deserve the kingdom or the earth, because I have something broken in me that I cannot fix, an emptiness I cannot fill.” Which, by the way, necessitates that something, or rather, someone outside of us, must fill us with His

righteousness. And do we begin to see why he gives us tangible promises rooted in real things like water, or bread and wine, and real language and words – to reassure us that He is with us, that his blessings are ours? Of course they are yours, the water was on your head, the bread and wine – you can taste them in your mouth. The Word is in your ears, who has ears? Let them hear!

So even in the midst of doubt and worry, rest a little here with the beatitudes. The poor in spirit is a mourning of death that we can't prevent or escape for our loved ones or us. It is a mourning and grieving of the brokenness of the world that we see and experience. It is a realization that we aren't going to ever stack enough "wins" or "victories" together to change the brokenness – that's meekness. It's knowing our lowly state as broken people, accepting it – that we aren't strong enough to win this battle against death and the brokenness in us.

Which means then, that the beatitudes are for everyone except those who think they don't need them. "No thanks, I have no sin to shame me. I have no death to fear. I have no loved ones or evil to mourn. That's their problem not mine, I'm fine." The beatitudes aren't for them. They're not for pharisees, or the proud, or those who think God owes them something.

These blessings are for the losers, the sinners, those who have been wounded and hurt by friends, the world, and to all others, seem like lost statistics.

Not to Jesus. Not lost, not a statistic, but the apple of his eye, engraved on the palms of his hands, palms, which, quite literally, would be scarred for them. This is our Savior. A Savior of the lowly, who walks in the broken world, who succumbs to it, who takes it upon himself that he might overcome it on our behalf.

This Savior is the One who Calls out to the poor in spirit and says "I see you, I care, and I will do and have done something about it." And he, for these two thousand years and even before with

the saints in the Old Testament, Shepherds the lowly, the saints, through a great tribulation, and to a place where they are, at last, filled and made rich.

He will see us safely there too. May we be a people who, when life is good and God's earthly gifts abound say, "I am blessed, God is good." And when we lack, and need, and hurt, when we see the world going crazy and when we see the mountains falling into the sea, may God by his Holy Spirit, make us a people who say, "I am blessed, God is good."

May we be a people who cling to his gifts in these times, and see in them his promises to be with us, to see us, by his grace and power, to endless day where we will definitely say, "I am blessed, God is good." As the saints do even now. Alleluia. Amen.