

THE BEATITUDES AND THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

INTRODUCTION

The Sermon on the Mount in both Matthew and Luke provide a summary of the whole moral message of the Gospel and thus serves as an important source to the Catholic intellectual tradition. It has been one of the chief sources for moral and spiritual renewal throughout the history of the Church. As Servais Pinckaers wrote, the Sermon on the Mount's "fruitfulness is amply attested by its constant reappearance. There are few passages in Scripture that touch the Christian heart more surely and deeply, or that have a greater appeal for nonbelievers. The Sermon on the Mount was one of Ghandi's favorite text; he reproached Christians for their neglect of it."

Within the Sermon on the Mount we find the beatitudes. A beatitude is often seen as a declaration of happiness or blessedness on the ground of some virtue or good fortune. Yet, Jesus' beatitudes consists in declaring not good fortune, but ill fortune – poverty, hunger, sorrow, and persecution. The beatitudes are a declaration that the opposite of these things – wealth, status, power – are not the source of one's true happiness. Blessedness or happiness is to be found only in the kingdom of God. Another thing to note about the Beatitudes is that they are not specifically concerned with certain particular rules of behavior as you might find with the Ten Commandments. Rather, they speak of basic attitudes and dispositions in life, an interiorization of the moral life, not out of duty or law, but out of desire and happiness.

SERMON ON THE PLAIN ACCORDING TO LUKE¹

CHAPTER 6

THE GREAT DISCOURSE

¹⁷ Coming down the mountain with them, he stopped at a level stretch where there were many of his disciples; a large crowd of people was with them from all Judea and Jerusalem and the coast of Tyre and Sidon, ¹⁸ people who came to hear him and be healed of their diseases. Those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured; ¹⁹ indeed, the whole crowd was trying to touch him because power went out from him which cured all.

²⁰ Then, raising his eyes to his disciples, he said:

“Blest are you poor; the reign of God is yours.

Blest are you who hunger; ²¹ you shall be filled.

Blest are you who are weeping; you shall laugh.

²² “Blest shall you be when men hate you, when they ostracize you and insult you and proscribe your name as evil because of the Son of Man, ²³ On the day they do so, rejoice and exult, for your reward shall be great in heaven. Thus it was that their fathers treated the prophets.

²⁴ “But woe to you rich, for your consolation is now.

²⁵ Woe to you who are full; you shall go hungry.

Woe to you who laugh now; you shall weep in your grief.

²⁶ “Woe to you when all speak well of you. Their fathers treated the false prophets in just this way.

LOVE OF ONE’S ENEMY

²⁷ “To you who hear me, I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you; ²⁸ bless those who curse you and pray for those who maltreat you. ²⁹ When someone slaps you on one cheek, turn and give him the other; when someone takes your coat, let him have your shirt as well. ³⁰ Give to all who beg from you. When a man takes what is

¹ The American Catholic Bible, 1970.