

Acknowledgement of Land, Seas, Skies and Waterways

As I make my way over the land near to where I live, and my feet touch the ground, I often feel in awe of the First Nations peoples of the land on which I walk. I imagine the footsteps of the Gimuy Walubara Yidinji men, women and children that were etched on this country for millennia before mine, and marvel at their navigation skills – I simply follow the paths that lay before! I wonder what stories, songs and dances were shared to keep their memories and culture alive and honour the ancestors who continue to form the imaginations of the younger generations. I am blessed as guest on your lands. I invite you too now, to acknowledge the land, seas, skies and waterways on which you tread; to acknowledge the Elders past, present, and emerging of the space in which you are sharing this prayer.

Context of the Sermon on the Mount



Helena Bechorakova-Ditrichova
Woodcut

The Sermon on the Mount is also known as the Beatitudes. Did you know that the Beatitudes mirror the Ten Commandments? Really! You see, when the author of Matthew's Gospel wrote for their newly-fledged Christian community, they paralleled the Old Testament, since Jesus was hailed as *the new Moses*. Because Matthew's audience was mainly Jewish, the text reflects similar elements as those from Moses receiving the Law from God: they were both on a mountain where it was believed to be closer to God, and each of them received a new covenant to take to their people. Jesus says that it is God's desire that humans experience joy and fulfillment. It is through this scripture, that Jesus teaches God's new covenant, potentially for the gift of God's blessing.

Scripture – Gospel reading from [Matthew 5:1-12](#)

One day as he saw the crowds gathering, Jesus went up on the mountainside and sat down. His disciples gathered around him, and he began to teach them.

“God blesses those who are poor and realise their need for him,
for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

God blesses those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

God blesses those who are humble,
for they will inherit the whole earth.

God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice,
for they will be satisfied.

God blesses those who are merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.

God blesses those whose hearts are pure,
for they will see God.

God blesses those who work for peace,
for they will be called the children of God.

God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right,
for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.



Laura James, Sermon on the Mount

“God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers. Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted in the same way.



Otto Dix
Lithograph
From Das Evangelium nach Matthäus (Kaethe
Vogt Verlag, Berlin: 1960)

This image of Jesus instructing his disciples on the Beatitudes evokes many fond memories of times spent with young people for me. In early childhood classes, it is common for students to sit together at the feet of their teacher and share in conversation. Here, when there is trust and security, students can discuss their understandings and form new learnings by examining different viewpoints. It is an intimate setting, where deep respect for one another can be cultured, and norms and assumptions challenged. In such a nurturing environment, the capacity for growth is vast, and opportunities to form and shape each other to be more loving and compassionate beings are presented. This is my imagining of what Jesus was to his disciples – patient and understanding, yet a revolutionary teacher who confronted popularist views.

This text may be familiar, and seem quite gentle and unobtrusive; however at the time it radically challenged First Century Jews. I am certain Jesus would not have been popular, particularly among the pious! And even today, what this text requires of us, in terms of moral actions and dispositions to live a Christian life of love, is profoundly challenging.

To provide a contemporary context for this Scripture, Pope Francis has proposed six ‘modern Beatitudes’, which were delivered on All Saints Day at Malmo, Sweden, in 2016:

- *Blessed are those who remain faithful while enduring evils inflicted on them by others and forgive them from their heart.*
- *Blessed are those who look into the eyes of the abandoned and marginalised and show them their closeness.*
- *Bless are those who see God in every person and strive to make others also discover him.*
- *Blessed are those who protect and care for our common home.*
- *Blessed are those who renounce their own comfort in order to help others.*
- *Blessed are those who pray and work for full communion between Christians.*

These Beatitudes are unsettling to hedonistic lifestyles; they are slightly uncomfortable principles for living that catapult us beyond attitudes to actions of virtue. But they can give us a new lens through which to view our responses to world issues concerning conflict, poverty, human rights, dignity, freedom and inequality. Just like the disciples, sitting at the feet of Jesus, if we listen deeply to the needs of our brothers and sisters with a pure heart, we can grow ourselves and allow ourselves to be transformed through education, advocacy and prayer. When we enact the attitudes-to-be, or rather, *actions*-to-be we are living in communion with God and open ourselves to receive God’s blessing as a source of happiness and joy.

Prayer

Creator God,
Give us a hunger and thirst for righteousness;
Fill our hearts with love, overflowing with mercy;
Make our hearts pure and give us a vision of your glory.
We make this prayer through Christ our Lord,
Amen.

Call to Action

- Listen to Andrew Chinn’s song “Beatitudes” (Spotify).
- Assume ‘good intent’ from others.
- Resist the urge to believe that happiness is found in wealth or fame.
- Think about situations from other people’s perspectives.
- Consider how you may be able to support different charity groups.
- Champion for justice in your social circles – call out unjust attitudes by modelling the attitudes that Jesus taught.



Fernando Bimonte
Mixed media on panel

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