

At the beginning of our church year...  
We used sparkling clear crystal on the altar.  
The chalices... patens... ciborium... candlesticks... book stand...  
Directing us to the theme of Advent...  
***New light is coming into the world...***

At Christmas... the sanctuary was bedazzled with lights!  
Directing us to the theme of Christmas...  
New light has come into the world

At Epiphany... we hear stories of light  
Directing us to the theme of Epiphany...  
***New light is revealed to the world***

Light from a star... led the wise men to Jesus

The voice of God cries out to Jesus...  
***You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.***

Jesus ***revealed*** his power... turning water into wine

Jesus revealed his identity... saying...  
***Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.***

Jesus revealed authority...  
passing through a murderous mob... unharmed

Jesus revealed his purpose...  
By overfilling boats with fish... and asking people to follow him

Today... Jesus sheds *new* light on an *old* subject.  
 Revealing the true nature of God...  
 Through *The Beatitudes*...

But revealing their meaning... takes effort.

But we must be cautious... or miss what is truly revealed

James garret wrote this response to the Beatitudes

Jesus took his disciples up the mountain and gathered them around.

He taught them saying:

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

Blessed are the meek.

Blessed are they that mourn.

Blessed are the merciful.

Blessed are they who thirst for justice.

Blessed are you when persecuted.

Blessed are you when you suffer.

Be glad and rejoice for your reward is great in heaven.

Then Simon Peter said, "Are we supposed to write this down?"

And Andrew asked, "Are we supposed to know this?"

And James asked, "Will we have a test on this?"

And Phillip said, "I don't have any paper."

And Bartholomew asked, "Do we have to turn this in?"

And John said, "The other disciples didn't have to learn this."

And Matthew asked, "Can I go to the boys' room?"

And Judas asked, "What does this have to do with real life?"

Then one of the Pharisees who was present asked to see Jesus' lesson plan and inquired of Jesus, "Where is your objectives and lesson plan?"

And Jesus wept.

First of all... The Beatitudes are *not*... about *us*.  
They are *not* commands for how we *should* live or what we *should* do.

Jesus is *not* saying...  
*Go out there and get poor...*  
*Learn how to weep more...*  
*Get yourselves persecuted...*

Advice like that... from *anybody* ...  
Creates *more* frustration... and *more* guilt.  
We might think that people should be weep *more* for Jesus  
But making it a goal? Not very likely!

Bedsides...  
Striving at being poor, or weeping, or being persecuted...  
Just to obtain greater blessing... Does that sound right?  
Bring about personal suffering... Just to get something back from God?  
*That can't be right.*

The *harder* you try... to turn these words into marching orders  
the *less* sense they make.

What's more...  
Jesus *didn't* ask us... or *anybody else*... to actually *do* any of this...  
He gave no orders... set no requirements.  
He simply described *reality*...  
That people were missing... a reality they *needed* to see.

So if The Beatitudes are not about us  
What *are* they about?

Well... another possibility...

*It's a way to help people make the world a better place.*

If we would only be spiritually poor or hungry, or persecuted...

It could bring out the best in others...

and *they* will become the *better*... *because* of it.

People will realize how valuable we are...

and give us what we want.

and the whole world will be a much better place for all...

and everyone will come out on top.

and the beatitudes become a tool... to win friends... influence people...

and clean up the neighborhood.

*That's just plain silly.*

Things don't work like that.

Turn the other cheek you end up with *two* sore cheeks.

And being poor... spiritually... or physically... means...

you won't get far in the real world of business, politics, or industry.

That's the way it is... and how it's always has been... Jesus was no fool.

He knew that.

Jesus wasn't shining light on how the world works.

Besides...

It doesn't make sense... to crucify the Lord... for giving sensible...

*or silly*... advice for getting ahead.

If there is a point here about the world... It's this...

As far as the world is concerned, the beatitudes make no sense at all.

There is nothing rational about living the beatitudes with the hope that it will result in a more successful or prosperous life.

The beatitudes shine light, but *not* how the world works.

The Beatitudes are not about the world  
They are not about how to act.

*The Beatitudes are about God...  
They are about who God is...  
and who God blesses...  
and what the kingdom of God is actually like.*

*They tell us what matters to God...  
They tell us who is especially important to God...  
They tell us what God pays attention to.*

Jesus gave us this surprising information about God...  
Hoping... no doubt...  
that this knowledge would have a valuable effect on us.  
But *that...* is up to us.

In the beatitudes... and the entire Sermon on the Mount,  
Jesus reveals God's values and God's priorities  
He offers them as an alternative...  
to the vision of life we usually carry around.

We can only act on what we can see  
and Jesus is giving us the opportunity  
to see farther...  
clearer...  
deeper...  
than ever before.

If we can see... *really* see...  
whom God considers blessed...  
Then we will at least know the road to blessedness  
and maybe... use that knowledge.

The beatitudes are a glimpse into the heart and mind of God.  
They *don't* tell us what our world is like.  
We already know *that* so well. We assume... anything of value...  
will work really well... in and with this world.

Jesus is shaking us loose from that assumption...  
giving us a different vision of life...  
with its foundations, not in the world, but in the very nature of God.

Jesus tells us...  
the world's insignificant players, the losers,  
are blessed of the Father,  
and he tells us... *so we can know a little better who the Father is.*  
He gives us a bit more *light*... so we can *see* the Father... a little better.

Now... what we *do* with this... is up to *us!*

Remember, we are not getting a bunch of moral laws here.

A new vision of our world... and our lives...  
Is revealed with the light of Christ

And by this light...  
we can look at the mind of God...  
and discover all sort of new possibilities.

So we have a new light on God.  
And that light reveals a question!

If God *is* really like this...  
If God *truly* has these preferences and priorities  
Then what could *that* mean?

With that knowledge...

How could lives be different?  
How could I be different?  
How could you be different?  
That's the issue...

And that is the question Jesus leaves us with.  
It's an excellent question...  
Well worth consideration...  
for all of us.