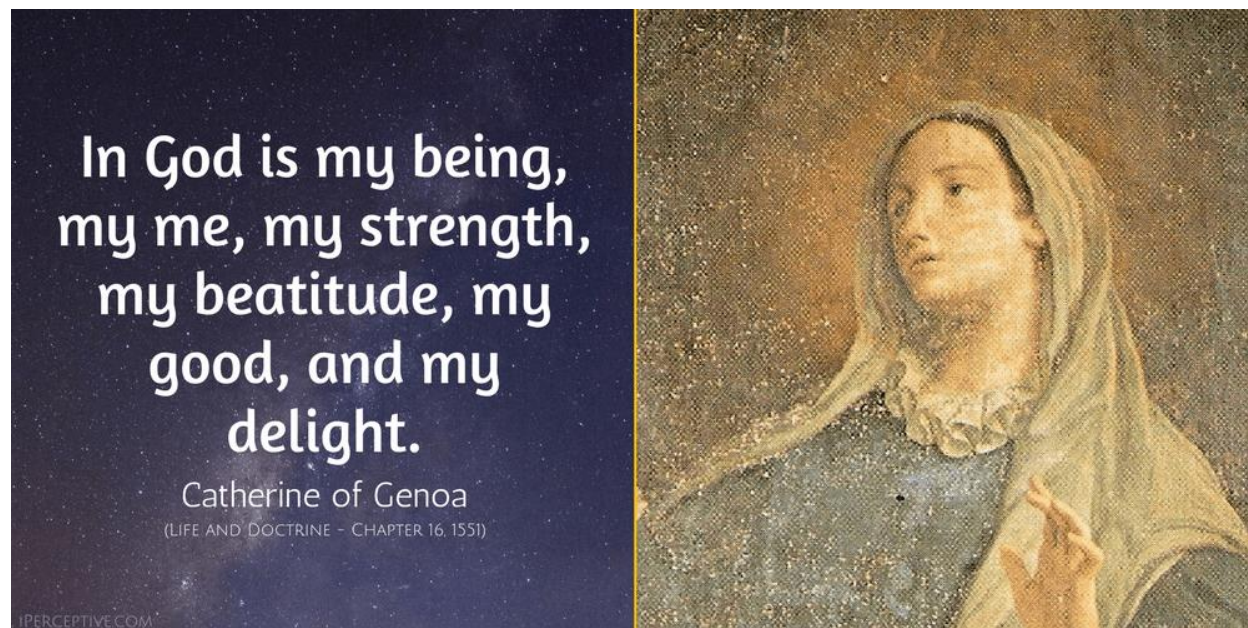


FROM FATHER JOHN: *"Our help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth!" ~ Psalm 121*



"When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he had sat down, his disciples came to him. He began to teach them, saying: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you falsely because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven. Thus they persecuted the prophets who were before you.'" (Matthew 5:1 – 12)

Our Lord Jesus gives us the beatitudes in Matthew's gospel but before He does the gospel gives us a couple of things to pay attention to. The first thing to pay attention to is that Jesus goes "up the mountain." If we remember our scripture, Moses received the Ten Commandments on a mountain. Our Lord Jesus' transfiguration takes place on a mountain. When Jesus commissions the disciples at the end of Matthew's gospel, it too takes place on a mountain. A mountain is a place of revelation. When Jesus went up the mountain in today's passage, we are being warned that revelation is about to happen; that Jesus is going to reveal something to us that is essential to our faith.

The second thing to pay attention to is that Jesus sat down; "After he sat down." This is an important detail. In ancient Israel, Rabbi's would sit down whenever they taught officially, whenever they were teaching something about the Law of Moses, they sat down. The fact that Jesus sits down tells us He is about to teach authoritatively, prophetically and that He is going to share something important to us.

In the beatitudes, Jesus says “Blessed are the poor in spirit... Blessed are they who mourn... Blessed are the meek... Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness... Blessed are the merciful... Blessed are the clean of heart... Blessed are the peacemakers... Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness... Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you.”

He specifically chooses to use the word “Blessed” over and over again. He does not use the word “happiness”. Happiness is random. It comes from the words *happen and perhaps*. It’s a relative term that is hit or miss. Happiness is all about how we feel emotionally.

Blessed on the other hand is objective and has nothing to do with our feelings. We can be Blessed and not even know it. Or, we can be blessed and not even appreciate it. Someone once said, “When you have a toothache, you realize how wonderful it is not to have a toothache.” These past few weeks, since I broke my back, have made me truly appreciate the days when I didn’t have any back pain. It seems the more that my back hurts, the more that I appreciate those days before I broke my back. It is when we are sick that we most appreciate the blessing of good health.

Our Lord Jesus is telling us that we are Blessed which is much more than merely being happy. He tells us that we are Blessed whether we know it or not, whether we appreciate it or not. Being Blessed is an objective state of *Being or Existing* in the world. Being Blessed does not come from a changing world but rather comes from the objective love, mercy and grace that our Lord Jesus shares with us each day. It is based on aligning our lives with the way of our Lord Jesus. The Beatitudes describe how Blessed we truly are, how our Lord Jesus lived in the world and how we are called to embody his way of life in our own lives.

“I lift up my eyes toward the mountains; whence shall help come to me? My help is from the LORD, who made heaven and earth. May he not suffer your foot to slip; may he slumber not who guards you: Indeed he neither slumbers nor sleeps, the guardian of Israel. The LORD is your guardian; the LORD is your shade; he is beside you at your right hand. The sun shall not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD will guard you from all evil; he will guard your life. The LORD will guard your coming and your going, both now and forever.” ~ Psalm 121

May God Bless you and all those who love the Lord.