Rejoice and Be Glad

Week Three | Wednesday, July 25

[Matthew 5:3–12]

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. 2 Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying: 3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. 5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. 6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. 7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. 8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. 9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. 10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

REVIEW

- What is **holiness**? Have your views on it changed so far?
- What is **gnosticism**?
  - *a subjective view of faith characterized by a narcissistic elitism or an obsession with intellectual knowledge or experience*
- What is **pelagianism**?
  - *a heresy that claims that salvation is earned primarily through efforts and works of the human will*

In the Light of the Master

The Beatitudes

- "If anyone asks, 'What must one do to be a good Christian?' the answer is clear. **We have to do, each in our own way, what Jesus told us in the Sermon on the Mount**" (63).

- "**The word 'happy' or 'blessed' thus becomes a synonym for 'holy.'** It expresses the fact that those faithful to God and his word, by their self-giving, gain true happiness" (64).

- "Let us allow [Jesus's] words to **unsettle** us, to **challenge** us, and to **demand a real change** in the way we live. Otherwise holiness will remain no more than an empty word" (66).

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

- "The Gospel invites us to peer into the depths of our heart, to see **where we find our security in life**" (67).
- "How happy you would be," Jesus says, "if you were poor in spirit," that is, if you put your trust in God rather than in possessions or other symbols of security (Keating, 105).

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

- "Much energy is expended on fleeing from situations of suffering in the belief that reality can be concealed. **But the cross can never be absent**" (75).

- "If we accept the loss of what we loved, we experience freedom from what we formerly depended on excessively and we enter a new relationship with it, based on the **new freedom that does not try to squeeze absolute happiness from passing pleasures**" (Keating, 105).

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

- ". . . if we regard the faults and limitations of others with tenderness and meekness, without an air of superiority, **we can actually help them and stop wasting our energy on useless complaining**" (72).

- "Happy are the meek," addresses the drive for power, as if to say, "**How happy you would be if you did not want to control situations, other people, or your own life**, and if you possessed the freedom to accept insults and injustice without being blown away" (Keating, 206).

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

- "How many people suffer injustice, standing by powerlessly while others divvy up the good things of this life. Some give up fighting for real justice and opt to follow in the train of the winners. This has **nothing to do with the hunger and thirst for justice** that Jesus praises" (78).

- "We try to improve unhealthy or unjust situations in our family or community instead of **clinging to a naive loyalty that refuses to see defects** or fails to suggest improvements or corrections that should be made" (Keating, 107).

Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

- "Mercy has two aspects. It **involves giving, helping and serving others,** but it also **includes forgiveness and understanding**" (80).

- "At this level **we become fully human**. Our response to life is cooperative, nonjudgmental, and accepting of others. This beatitude fulfills Christ's new commandment, 'Love one another as I have loved you' (John 15:12)" (Keating, 109).

Blessed are the pure of heart, for they will see God.

- "The Bible uses the heart to **describe our real intentions,** the things we truly seek and desire, apart from all appearances" (83).

- "They will not see him with their bodily eyes, of course, but with the eyes of the spirit purified by faith … **faith penetrates beyond appearances to the hidden reality**" (Keating, 111).

Blessed are the pure of heart, for they will see God.

The heart is the dwelling-place **where I am**, where I live; according to the Semitic or Biblical expression, the heart is the place "to which I withdraw." The heart is our hidden center, beyond the grasp of our reason and of others; only the Spirit of God can fathom the human heart and know it fully. The heart is the place of decision, deeper than our psychic drives. It is **the place of truth, where we choose life or death**. It is the place of encounter, because as image of God we live in relation: it is the place of covenant (CCC, 2563).

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

- "**It is not easy to 'make' this evangelical peace**, which excludes no one but embraces even those who are a bit odd, troublesome, or difficult… We need to be **artisans of peace**, for building peace is a craft that demands serenity, creativity, sensitivity, and skill" (89).

- "Peace is the great gift of Jesus on the day of his resurrection. The peace that Jesus offers us is not sentimental. **This peace transcends joy, sorrow, hope, and despair**… Our house is built on rock, and the rock is Christ" (Keating, 111).

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

- "Jesus himself warns us that **the path he proposes goes against the flow**, even making us challenge society by the way we live and, as a result, **becoming a nuisance**. . . . Unless we wish to sink into an obscure mediocrity, **let us not long for an easy life**, for 'whoever would save his life will lose it'" (90).

- "Those who have experienced this beatitude have moved beyond self-interest to such a degree that they no longer have a possessive attitude towards themselves. **Their identity is rooted in Christ and the unique identity he wants them to have**. If their vocation requires suffering, they perceive that they are serving him more effectively" (Keating, 112).

[Final thoughts on the **RIGHT PATH OF HOLINESS**]

- "Christianity is meant above all **to be put into practice**" (109).
- The "best way to discern if our prayer is authentic is to judge to what extent our life is **being transformed in the light of mercy**" (105).
- So, rather than "swooning in mystic rapture," we must "**recognize [Christ] in the poor and the suffering**" (96).
- This practice "involves a **constant and healthy unease**" (99).
- But, we must "be **single-minded and tenacious** in [our] practice of the works of mercy" (107).

[Homework for 8/01]

- Read **Ch. 4** ("Signs of Holiness in Today's World")
  - Link for *Rejoice & Be Glad* can be found on OMOStoday.com!
- Choose *at least one* Beatitude and incorporate its challenge and call to holiness **in your daily life**!