Matt 5: 1-12

Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, [2] and he began to teach them.

He said: [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 be shown 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 because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
[11] "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. [12] Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you

As I was dwelling in these verses my dentist asked my a question that I've never been asked before.

'Are you happy with your smile?'

I answered yes- but what would the remedy have been if I had answered no?

A smile is the external indicator of your happiness or joy.

But it's not quite that simple is it?

A smile can a cover or even deceive the observer about the state of your inner world. It can be a fake.

How many of us have ever said ‘Everything is fine’ when we really know it’s not.

If I had answered no - the dentist might have done well to prescribe me time in the beatitudes- rather than some expensive whitening technique.

Prof Anna Fry has a fascinating program on at the moment called ‘The Future’. In a recent episode she explored AI and it’s increasing use of facial recognition technology.

From it, I learnt that the first person to explore this was Charles Darwin in his book ‘The expression of emotion in man and animals’ in which he proposed there are six passive emotions universal across species:

These are:

Anger, happiness, sadness, disgust, fear and surprise.

These have morphed and multiplied into what we today call emoji’s.

The experts admitted that the Ai models will be wrong over 50 % of the time in telling you how someone feels .

One neuro-scientist interviewed says at one point:

‘*Scowling is one expression of anger, but it’s not the expression. It’s not even the dominant expression’*

The lives we project are little help in revealing the health our souls.

A smile can so easily cover the pain and confusion within.

These Beatitudes are seeking to read you and challenge you from the inside out.

They are given to us to beckon and through Jesus into the kingdom.

These aren't single verses to be used alone and out of their context. They are each part of a whole.

It says Jesus began to teach them.

Jesus teaches by revealing to them a picture of a blessed life. A kingdom life.

Note that he begin and end with the kingdom. V 3 and v 10

It's a life that you enter into:

The Greek work for 'blessed' is the word 'Markarios' - which was a early name for Cyprus.

Cyprus was considered to be an island with everything the heart desired. Shelter from night winds, fish-filled sea, great climate and bounteous fruit and produce.

The Beatitudes are a picture of what it means to be a human being in the kingdom of God under the rule of King Jesus.

To be blessed

These are not eight different blessings. They are the riches of God for anyone who has entered the kingdom.

The first four are about how you enter the kingdom. The last four are about how you live out life the kingdom.

We only have time to focus on the first four.

Jesus in John 3 says we must be born of the Holy Spirit but this is not an end in itself it...

It's the gateway into the kingdom of God.

Every week we pray 'Your kingdom come'

What is that?

It's Matt 5:1-12

We begin with:

Blessed are the poor in Spirit for theirs is the kingdom,...

That's where it starts.

Do you remember we looked at that Matthew passage where Jesus says:

It is not the healthy that need a doctor but the sick....I have not come to call the righteous but sinners.

This is the entry point and is arguably the most challenging. This requires you to run out of yourself. You have to come to the realisation that you have problems that you are not able to resolve. You need to get to a place where in effect you run out of your own road.

Poverty of spirit a 'running out' of your own resources and own solutions. Often involves a despair.

The Puritan preacher John Flavel puts it so well:

'When God prepares to fill a soul He first makes it empty. When he intends to enrich a soul he first makes it poor. When he intends to exalt a soul He first makes it sensible to its own miseries, wants and nothingness'

Then spiritual poverty becomes

....mourning

This is getting to the place where you begin to look outside yourself. This is a spiritual mourning. Not grief over a death. It's a need for spiritual comfort. This is about accepting that your problems are actually spiritual in nature. You need to grasp that your bitterness or lack of self- esteem or resentment or competitiveness is, when you get to it at base level, is a sin issue.

To enter the kingdom- you will and have to mourn.

This may not manifest in impurity or dishonesty or other behavioural symptom but the essence is the claim that we have to run our own lives.

I own me.

I'm in charge.

I call the shots

When you say that you are saying you are your own God. It's lostness personified.

You are not your own

You have been bought at a price - You are His.

Every knee will bow.

Which moves us on to meekness.

The meek will inherit the earth. That's worth having.

The word meek - we don't use it much means the humble, the considerate or the gentle.

When was the last time when you came back from a party and said 'they were meek'

The gentle.

The gentle

Inherit the earth....

I thought it was the ambitious.

No - Sharp elbows may lead you to hell.

The believer must yield to others and to God- but it's the path to the new heaven and earth.

John Stott observes this:

I myself am happy to recite the General Confession in church and call myself a 'miserable sinner'. It causes me no great problem. I can take it in my stride. But let someone else come up to me and call me a miserable sinner, and I want to punch them on their nose! In other words, I am not prepared to allow people to think or speak of me what I have just acknowledged before God that I Am. There is a basic hypocrisy here; there always is when meekness is absent.

Imagine the day of the IPO of Anthropic for a trillion dollars.

'Today ladies and gentleman we will inherit the earth.

A hand goes up.

'A point of order the earth has already been allocated'

To who.

It just says The meek

Who are they.

It's a type of person.

Should we hire them.

This is the process of taking your hands off the tiller of your life. It requires a surrender. This is more that admitting your a sinner - it's a letting go.

You say 'Lord you have to take over. Have my life'

My wife likes to drive. She is a far less good passenger in the passenger seat. That might be something to do with my driving.

The fourth dimension of entry into the kingdom

We come to those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.

<u>For they will be filled</u>

This is a yearning. A search for something more. This is a seeking.

The prophet Zephaniah says 2v 3 ‘Seek righteousness - seek meekness

This is what came over me aged 21.

Here’s three words that can change a life.

They are : ‘You should come’

I was invited to church by those words.

You should come.

This week I was chatting to the lady on the till In the supermarket. She works FT in a nursery and then does a 12 shift over the weekend.

I asked about her kids and about her life. I told here where I lived and what I do.

She then said: ‘I was baptised in your church’

To which I responded - ‘you should come’

This Beatitude process is sometimes complex and painful. Running out of yourself is not done lightly.

It’s messy.

What’s inside has to get sorted. Get out. It’s has to come out from its cover.

In my first year as a Vicar three of the people who were poor in Spirit were drawn into the kingdom of Jesus.

One was a Hindu carer in her seventies

One was the daughter of a retired diamond broker

The other was a drug dealer.

I married the daughter of the diamond broker.

Grace is indiscriminate.

Let me end with Isaiah 6.

In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. [2] *Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.*
[3] *And one cried unto another, and said,*
Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts:
the whole earth is full of his glory.
[4] *And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.*
[5] *Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.* [6] *Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar:* [7] *and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.* [8] *Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.*