

Before going through the Beatitudes one by one, this week we're going to take a step back and learn more about the Beatitudes as a whole. Each Beatitude contains two parts: a state of life or way of being followed by a promise. On the surface, this structure might seem like Jesus is saying, "If you do *x* on earth, God will give you *y* in heaven." While this is not incorrect, I want to invite you into a deeper call of the Beatitudes.

Each Beatitude begins, "Blessed are..." which is an English translation of the Greek *makarioi*. A more accurate translation of this word is "joyful." Therefore, the Beatitudes exclaim, "*Joyful are the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, and those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Joyful are the merciful, the clean of heart, the peacemakers, and those persecuted for the sake of righteousness.*" Last week I shared that the Beatitudes offer a biography of Christ; who could be more joyful than Him? In Christ, we see that the Beatitudes together create an integrated person. We cannot pick and choose which Beatitude to live into. We are called to embrace them all. The Beatitudes begin and end with the promise, "For theirs is the kingdom of heaven."¹ This repeated promise creates a sort of bookend around the Beatitudes; the promises in the middle further describe the kingdom of God. The promises do not mean that some people get to see God when they die while others are called children of God; these are all different faces of the same promise. God gives us the kingdom of heaven when we are people of the Beatitudes, and that kingdom is a place where we will be comforted, satisfied, shown mercy, see God, called children of God, and inherit the land. When we live out the Beatitudes, our hearts are full of joy because we live as we were created to live and, in doing so, become more united to Christ. When we live out the Beatitudes, we live a holy life.

We don't have to wait until heaven to experience the joy or promises the Beatitudes bring. Although we cannot fully experience the promises of the Beatitudes on this side of heaven, we are already able to taste the fruits. How? This is due to what theologians call the "already/not yet" dynamic, and it is found all over our faith. For example, we believe Christ has *already* conquered sin and death by dying on the Cross and rising from the grave. Yet we are still living in a fallen world; the world has *not yet* been fully redeemed. We believe we *already* experience the fullness of Christ in the Eucharist, but we have *not yet* seen the face of God. Christ has *already* come back to earth in His Eucharistic Body, but He has *not yet* made his Second Coming. We believe the kingdom of God is *already* reigning here on earth, but the fullness of the kingdom has *not yet* come. Along the same lines, we can *already* taste the promises of the Beatitudes even though we *cannot yet* experience them fully.

This is very good news! We must trust that God is already fulfilling His promises to us, even if we cannot see it. He is always working for our good. He is always offering us more graces than we could ever know. This week, I challenge you to be a person of the Beatitudes and open your heart to the joy to be found there. In the coming weeks, I will spend some time reflecting on each Beatitude so that together you and I may grow into more joyful images of Christ.

In Christ,
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¹ Matthew 5:3, 10