

Thoughts from the Mount

Readings: Micah 6:1-8, 1 Cor 1:18-31, Matt 5:1-12

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Introduction to Corinthians

Paul creates a view here at the start of Corinthians, that human wisdom and the gospel are mutually exclusive. Paul explains that the recipients of the gospel at Corinth are far from "wise" or influential in the sense understood by the world. So, in this passage the conflict between human wisdom and the foolishness of the cross is illustrated in the origins and composition of the Corinthian congregation. "The act of God in Christ has brought about a reversal of human evaluations concerning status, achievement and success"

In first Corinthians chapter 1 verse 30, the apostle Paul describes four substantial qualities that are ours through our relationship with Jesus. Because we believe in Jesus there is a sense where we are united with him and so share qualities which are rightly his.

- **Jesus is our wisdom.** true wisdom is not found in eloquence or intellectual speculation, but in God's plan for broken humanity, realized through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- **Christ is our righteousness.** Through our faith in Christ we are counted as possessing righteousness.
- **Christ is our sanctification.** We can only come near to God if we are holy, not in ourselves, it is through faith in Christ that we possess a holiness which is not our own
- **Christ is our redemption.** Freedom, and all that it entails (including, wisdom, righteousness and sanctification) have been purchased on our behalf through the payment of Christ's life.

Let us not be proud in our own achievements, but rather in what Jesus has done for us.

Thoughts from the mount

“There is a trap hidden in the Beatitudes that I know I have fallen into countless times, and perhaps you have, too. The trap is as simple as it is subtle: believing that Jesus is setting up the conditions of blessing, rather than actually blessing his hearers.” The Sermon on the mount speaks to its hearers with recognition.

Richard Rohr, (adapted from [Jesus’ Plan for the New World](#)) –

“The Eight Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3 - 12) offer us a more spacious world, a world where I do not have to explain everything, fix everything, or control anything beyond myself, a world where we can allow a Larger Mystery to work itself out through us and in us. These things are done to us more than anything we can do. The Beatitudes are about changing me, not changing other people. Wonderfully, it is not about being right anymore. Who can fully do the Beatitudes “right”? It is about being in right relationship, which is a very different agenda.”

- Eight Blessings:

1. Poor in spirit-is- kingdom of heaven

Literal poverty and a lack of arrogance and sense of one’s own need rather than endless desires. The poor in Spirit are those who find their identity in true relationship with God, not in material possession or self aggrandizing.

2. Mourn - will be - comforted

Not personal grief, but those who lament the current state of the world and how far we are from the fullness of God’s kingdom.

3. Meek - will - inherit the Earth

Right out of Psalm 37:9, 11

Not about being a holy doormat

Meekness identifies “those who are aware of their identity as the oppressed of God in the world, those who have renounced the violent methods of this-worldly power.”

4. Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness - will be filled
Righteousness - actively doing the will of God
Not a foolish hope- their desire to see the Kingdom of God will be satisfied

5. Merciful - will be - shown mercy
Mercy- seems to refer to acts of mercy, not an attitude of mercy
Example of mercy includes 1:19- Joseph's merciful act

6. Pure in heart - will - see God
Psalm 24:3-4
Purity of heart is not in response to being impure, but rather pure as in refined and focused and undiluted - single minded devotion to God

7. Peacemakers - will be - children of God
In History, Peacemaker and Son of God was given to Roman Emperors who established the pax romana through brute force and domination
This is a new peacemaker and son of God who works through acts of mercy, devotion to God and anticipation of the Kingdom for acts of reconciling justice and grace.

8. Persecuted for righteousness - is - kingdom of Heaven
What about vs. 11-12? Perhaps they are not to be considered a separate blessing but a commentary on the eighth beatitude

- **Eschatological:**

- The first and last of the beatitudes are historical declarations of the culminating, emerging kingdom of God - the middle six are eschatological vision of what that Kingdom will (not could, but will) be.

The Beatitudes “do not describe nine different kinds of good people who go to heaven, but are nine declarations of blessedness, contrary to all appearances, of the eschatological community living in anticipation of God’s reign. **Like all else in Matthew, they are oriented to life together in the community of discipleship, not to individual ethics.**”

- Justice or charity or politics?
- What does it mean to do justice?

- This is an important question that we must face squarely. Charity alleviates suffering, but does not get to the disease. Charity should and must be undertaken, but the purpose of justice work is to make charity obsolete. Justice is about building communities of caring, where all lives matter to one another as much as they do to God. Politics may be a means to working for justice, for government yields much power, but the politics cannot be the end. Winning a political battle does not mean justice has been reached. Working for social justice in political realm without also doing the work of building relationships with those whom you advocate for is a recipe for replacing one unjust system with another.

Where does the Micah reading fit in to this reading from Matthew

There is a word in the original Micah text, Darash...

“The verb darash has undertones of affection, or the healthiest sort of dependency, as in “the child requires his mother’s love,” or “the flower requires rain and sunshine.” There is a mood of seeking in darash; lovers seek each other out, and a shepherd seeks his lost sheep—and in the Old Testament, both situations use darash. So when the Lord “requires” justice, kindness and mercy, it isn’t that the Lord “insists on” or “demands” these things. God seeks them, yearns for them, and frankly needs them from us as intimate partners in God’s adventure down here.”

It is here that we see connection between ‘required’ in Micah and ‘blessed’ in Matthew. God calls, beckons, yearns both in the old testament and the new for us to connect with others in compassion. To act and to allow others act in such care and love for us.