

“Blessed Are the Peacemakers”

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1. Prayer and Introduction
 - a. “May the words of my mouth, and the meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, our rock and redeemer.” Amen. (Psalm 19:14)
 - b. “Marked to be Happy and Faithful”
 - c. Story from seminary – how I hated preaching
 - i. Professor – never preach again, but never stop spreading the Good News
 - ii. Amazing the power of specific words – and the need to free ourselves from isolating definitions
 - d. Power of words, and the danger of self-limiting definitions
2. Why Happy, Why Not Blessed?
 - a. Translation of beatitudes -
 - b. blessed are – traditional translation – carries a bit of cultural and theological baggage – blessings are often understood in a material sense in our modern usage
 - i. winning the lottery is a blessing
 - ii. so is getting a good parking spot
 - iii. also implies that it is a momentary thing “I’m blessed today”
 - iv. drifting away from the understanding of the beatitudes
 - v. nor is it a ritual blessing
 - c. Happy is a modern translation, but limited.
 - i. Implies an inner state of being more than outward manifestations
 - ii. As the opposite of happy is unhappy, but for the Beatitudes, the opposite isn’t unhappy, but cursed or woe to
 - d. Some scholars prefer “Honored are” or “favored are”
 - i. Shows the societal importance
 - e. Some scholars prefer to keep it untranslated, keeping to the Greek *makarismos* (greek word, *makarios*)
 - i. I like to think of it as a play on *makar*, Marker-ed. Or marked.
 - ii. Like getting into the club, or ashes upon our forehead on Ash Wednesday
 - f. Set aside, ‘marked’ as different, special, holy
3. “Happy are people who are humble, because they will inherit the earth.”
 - a. Humble \ meek \ weaklings?
 - b. Gentleness of spirit – relying on God rather than their strength to defend against injustice
 - i. Selfless
 - ii. Gentle –
 - c. Example Mr. Rogers – Rev. Fred Rogers
 - i. Not just in his show, but in other public appearances - YouTube
 1. Appearing in the Senate to defend PBS
 2. Defending the use of VCRs to record TV
 3. Emmy - Lifetime achievement award, brought the audience to tears by asking them to remember someone who believe in them

4. Sued the KKK for hiring an impersonator to try and sway kids to their message
5. His final episode aired two weeks before 9/11. I can't help but wonder how his presence might have shaped our world since
4. Happy are people who are hungry and thirsty for righteousness, because they will be fed until they are full.
 - a. Interesting juxtaposition with humbleness – reinforcing that previous verse is not about passivity
 - b. Matthew vs. Lukan – traditional argument is that Matthew is spiritual, Luke is earthly
 - i. My take, Matthew is more inclusive – spiritual yes, but that also encompasses earthly realities
 - c. Example – Martin Luther King Jr. – Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
 - i. Focus was not just on civil rights, but the moral compass of this country
 - ii. Though he acted with discipline
5. Happy are people who show mercy, because they will receive mercy.
 - a. Compassionate
 - b. Examples - Multiple examples of Mosques in US who forgive, bail out, and welcome back their attackers.
 - i. Mosque in Fort Smith, Alabama - Mosque pay fines of man who graffitied its doors with swastika to keep him out of jail - He could have faced six years in jail if he failed to pay the fine
 - ii. Anti-Klan work, anti-radicalization work
6. Happy are people who have pure hearts, because they will see God.”
 - a. “see” God. Discern. Perceive. Know.
 - b. Not a literal understanding – God is Still Speaking
 - c. Examples – all of the above?
7. Expressing the Beatitudes today
 - a. “For some reason, the most vocal Christians among us never mention the Beatitudes (Matthew 5). But, often with tears in their eyes, the demand that the Ten Commandments be posted in public buildings. And of course, that's Moses, not Jesus. I haven't heard one of them demand that the Sermon on the Mount, the Beatitudes, be posted anywhere.
 - b. "Blessed are the merciful" in a courtroom? "Blessed are the peacemakers" in the Pentagon? Give me a break!”
 - c. Kurt Vonnegut quote from his book A Man without a Country published in 2005
 - d. Politics without the rut of the political
8. Being Faithful
 - a. So often, faithful people are misunderstood, or are kept to narrow definitions of words
 - b. MLK good example
 - c. Re-branding - faithful
 - i. Vs. Political or Religiosity
 - ii. Defined both by end goal, and by means to get there
 - d. Beatitudes guide us
 - i. Righteousness

- ii. Compassionate
 - iii. Gentle
 - iv. Stay thirsty, my friends
 - e. Too often, the faithful forget about righteousness and justice, erring on the side of meekness, gentleness, until it turns to silence
 - f. Too often, the political forget about the common humanity of our opposition (too often calling them enemies)
9. Faithful vs. Religiosity
- a. The acts, the ritual, over the faith. The Beatitudes
 - b. Faith led, vs. rule bound.
10. Conservative vs. Right Wing
- a. Called to say why we need to hold on to something
11. Liberal vs. Left Wing
- a. Called to say why we need to try something new
12. UCC Preamble to the Constitution
- a. It claims as its own the faith of the historic Church expressed in the ancient creeds and reclaimed in the basic insights of the Protestant Reformers.
 - b. It affirms the responsibility of the Church in each generation to make this faith its own in reality of worship, in honesty of thought and expression, and in purity of heart before God.
 - c. Balance of conservative and liberal – keep the best, express it in the best way possible.
13. We are ‘Marked’ by Jesus’ teachings and example
- a. We are marked to be faithful
 - i. Marked by baptism, marked by the scriptures, marked by the purity of our hearts that let us perceive God
 - b. Don’t be limited by the word in your head –
 - i. I don’t preach, I spread the Good News
 - ii. Be who you are, led by God’s spirit,
 - iii. expressed in the Beatitudes, hungering for righteousness, embodying humbleness and mercy, and living out of a pure heart.

Readings

Matthew 5:5-8 (pg. 880)

5 “Happy are people who are humble, because they will inherit the earth.

6 Happy are people who are hungry and thirsty for righteousness, because they will be fed until they are full.

7 Happy are people who show mercy, because they will receive mercy.

8 “Happy are people who have pure hearts, because they will see God.”