

There he stood, in the midst of the Golden Corral restaurant, with thousand island dressing dripping from his hair, his glasses, down his face, over his jacket, pants and shoes. I'm not talking about a little bit of thousand island dressing. I'm talking about 2 gallons.

What had happened was that a waitress carrying the 2 gallon container of dressing for the salad bar had paused for a second while coming through the swinging doors of the kitchen and when the doors swung back the force of them hitting her sent her flying forward, launching 2 gallons of salad dressing all over the customer.

The man went ballistic, shouting and cursing at the waitress. "You stupid ...! I can't believe you just did that! You've ruined my brand new \$400 suit!" The man's wife chimed in "It's the first time he's had a chance to wear the suit! We want to see the manager!"

Shaken, the young woman goes to get the manager. The manager comes out to address the situation and, picture this, here's a guy with 2 gallons of thousand island dressing dripping from him and the manager asks "Is there a problem?"

The guy replies, "What do you mean 'Is there a problem?' She ruined my \$400 suit with her clumsiness. The suit is brand new and I want a new suit to replace it. The manager tells the man, "Sir, we'll be glad to pay for the cleaning of your suit. Accidents happen occasionally and we're very sorry about this."

"Not acceptable!" the man shouts. "I don't want my suit cleaned, I want a new suit and I demand a cheque for \$400 right here and now to replace it." The manager, in order to avoid a further scene and more embarrassment to the waitress went to the office and wrote a cheque for the amount to replace the suit. He hands the cheque to the dripping customer who leaves, still fuming.

Sadly, this is a true story that happened at noon on a Sunday. Now why would someone be wearing a brand new suit on a Sunday? Do you suppose he just come to lunch from church? Do you suppose that while at church he heard a sermon on "love your neighbour as yourself" or "do unto others as you would have them do unto you"?

I don't want to be a judge about proper behaviour, but tragic part of this story is that Jesus calls us to be transformed. The world may act crudely and ill-mannered, but not Christians, especially after church on Sunday morning.

A little girl put it very well. She asked her mother, "If God is bigger than us and He lives in us, wouldn't He show through?" If we are Christians, when people see us, Jesus should show through.

If God is a god of joy, shouldn't that show through? If Jesus met all trials with a sense of hope, shouldn't that show through? If temptations were seen by Jesus as an opportunity to show God's glory shouldn't we reflect the same? If God is a god of overwhelming, real, unconditional love, shouldn't our natures reflect that love too?

Jesus stood on a mountainside and gave one of the most unusual and difficult to understand messages people had ever heard. We call it the Sermon on the Mount, and it was a message full of blessings (which people would understand) but the blessings came to those who would have felt the least blessed in their situation (which people would not understand). Those blessings have come to be known as the Beatitudes and thousands of sermons have been written and delivered on the Beatitudes.

Each of the blessings in the Sermon on the Mount is a step on a ladder. I believe Matthew wrote them down in the order that Jesus delivered them because each progressed to the next, just like going up a ladder. And if we proceed up each rung of the ladder we will gain something at the top. Half of the blessings deal with matters that are internal and half with matters that are external.

INTERNAL

1. "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."
Being blessed (The book of James defines blessed as being considered fortunate or joyous) for being poor doesn't seem right. We know what "poor" means and the state of poverty never seems to have any redeeming qualities. What is it like to be spiritually poor? Think of synonyms for poor: broke, destitute, busted, bankrupt. Now put those synonyms after the word spiritually and you get spiritually busted, spiritually bankrupt, spiritually broke, spiritually destitute. You see where I'm going.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is saying that the first step up the ladder to what God has in store for us is to be spiritually broke, bankrupt, busted, destitute. Putting the first beatitude another way, "Joyful is he/she who realizes they can't handle everything on their own." So on the first rung of the ladder we are to come to the realization that we can't handle everything on our own and we need God's help. What we are struggling up this ladder for is to reach joyousness.

2. "Blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted." Whenever something either goes wrong or appears wrong to Charlie Brown he would say "Good grief." What in the world can be good about grief? As Jesus presents this as the second rung on the ladder, He is saying that after you admit you are spiritually bankrupt, you can't do it without God, you will be grieved because of

the sin in your life that has caused the gulf between you and God and you and others. I don't know of anyone who looks forward to being grieved because of those actions and words in their lives that are displeasing to God, but it is necessary to acknowledge them and confess them to God. How long has it been since you took a serious inventory of your life? God doesn't require us to look at the sin in our lives to rub our noses in it, but that we can repent for it and be given a chance to start a new and improved life.

3. "Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth." The usual connotation we use for meek is spineless, wishy-washy or weak. But in its original form, meek had to do with bridling a horse or taming a wild animal. The word meek was a picture of power under control. So when we talk about a meek person we are speaking of someone who is under the influence of the Holy Spirit and God is in control of his/her life. What this rung up the ladder meant was that when we realized we needed God and repented of those things in our lives that are not of God, then we are to move out of the driver's seat and let Jesus take the wheel.

By the way, these first three beatitudes all correspond to the steps we take in becoming a Christian. When we recognize how spiritually broke we are and the awfulness of our sin it breaks our heart and we finally turn our life over and say "Here God, you drive my life."

4. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they will be filled." Generally most of us don't know what it is like to truly be starving or dying of thirst. But in Jesus day, for those who worked the land of sand and dust and burning sun, where water was a precious commodity, real hunger and starvation were realities of everyday living.

When Jesus speaks of hungering and thirsting for righteousness, He want us to reach the point in our lives where nothing will satisfy our souls except knowing God. We are so desperate for God in our lives that we feel like we are dying if we don't find His presence. Jesus is asking us "How much do you want to be right with God? Do you want to know God as much as a starving man wants food or a woman dying of thirst wants water?"

These are the first four blessings that deal with internal things. Inside I begin to realize that I am poor in spirit. Inside I mourn my sinful state. Inside I turn my life over to God. And inside I hunger and thirst after a right relationship with God.

EXTERNAL

1. "Blessed are the merciful for they will be shown mercy." The principle of mercy, forgiveness runs through the whole New Testament. The Lord's prayer says "forgive us our trespasses (sins) as we forgive those who trespass (sin) against us." Or "not an eye for an eye, but love your neighbour as yourself." Forgiveness has to extended by us because God extended forgiveness to us

first. We recognize the preciousness of the gift of mercy that we have to extend it to others.

2. "Blessed are the poor in heart, for they will see God."

In Greek, the word *blessing* meant to achieve the highest state of happiness that was usually enjoyed by the gods and goddesses.

In some circles to say God bless actually is used to end a conversation. For instance you are in a conversation with someone who talks and talks and talks. Your response to something they have said could be, "Wow! That's great! Praise the Lord and God bless you" which translates into "Please stop talking now."

Also use God bless when someone sneezes – though we never respond when some coughs (Robitusson) , hiccups or burps.

To be blessed means to have God's favour rest on one, not necessarily in the form of economic prosperity or by gaining one's heart's desire, but rather:

- a) leading to a deep sense of satisfaction - comes from knowing one is cosmically loved by God.
 - b) feeling at home in one's skin - comes of owning and celebrating one's identity.
- developing an abiding commitment to the well-being of the world - comes of having a cause greater than one's self to live for.

Beatitudes are steps on a ladder and the higher up the ladder we go, the closer to the highest state of happiness we achieve.

Internal :

1. Poor in spirit – people who realize can't do everything on their own and start to depend on God
2. Mourn – people who acknowledge and grieve their distance from God and repent so God can work in their lives
3. Humble/meek – Used in bridling a horse or taming an animal, meaning power under control; allowing Holy Spirit to influence their life
4. Hunger and thirst for righteousness/obey God – to want to have a relationship with Jesus so badly that nothing material matters

External:

1. Merciful – to extend forgiveness
2. Pure in heart – to be authentic, genuine, straight with others, to model life after Christ
3. Peacemakers – Thermostat versus thermometer people. Thermometer people simple measure the temperature of a room, but nothing changes. Thermostat people can change the climate in a room. Don't dwell on negative, concentrate on positive and see good things God is doing

4. Persecuted – top of the ladder because world doesn't know how to respond to people who are living so close to Jesus that everybody sees it; people so close to God that if they walk into a room everyone notices their speech, mannerisms are different from the ordinary and it makes others uncomfortable so they tease, bully, ridicule, persecute them

A little girl put it very well. She asked her mother, "If God is bigger than us and He lives in us, wouldn't He show through?" If we are Christians, when people see us, Jesus should show through. And we will know He does when we start to experience the conditions of the beatitudes. But we also know that we will be blessed for that.

Matthew 5: 11

God will bless you when people insult you, mistreat you and tell all kinds of evil lies about you because of Me. Be happy and excited! You will have a great reward in heaven.