

Avedis

Աւետիս The Good News

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on the Armenian Church

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THE BEATITUDES

Happy are those who know they are spiritually poor; the Kingdom of heaven belongs to them.

Happy are those who mourn; God will comfort them.

Happy are those who are humble; they will receive what God has promised.

Happy are those whose greatest desire is to do what God requires; God will satisfy them fully.

Happy are those who are merciful to others; God will be merciful to them.

Happy are the pure in heart; they will see God.

Happy are those who work for peace; God will call them His children.

Happy are those who are persecuted because they do what God requires; the Kingdom of heaven belongs to them.

Happy are you when people insult you and persecute you and tell all kinds of evil lies against you because you are my followers. Be happy and glad, for a great reward is kept for you in heaven. This is how the prophets who lived before you were persecuted.

Matt. 5:3-12 (GOOD NEWS)

The Sermon on the Mount, Jesus' most famous sermon "collection," begins with the Beatitudes, or series of blessings. These form a preamble to Jesus' teaching, effectively pointing up the essentials needed to understand His message. This style of speech was known to Jesus from the Old Testament. Deuteronomy 27-28 strings together "Blessings" (happy are...) and "Woes" (cursed are...) which describe the good or bad fortune which follows from keeping or breaking the Law. The

"woes" Jesus taught are found in Matt. 23, the negative counterpart to the Sermon on the Mount.

The first four Beatitudes sometimes seem more difficult to understand than the second group. The spiritual poverty Jesus notes goes hand in hand with spiritual childhood, that is, becoming as innocent and believing as a child (Matt. 18:2). Jesus is also requiring actual poverty of His followers, indicated by His other statements about amassing wealth (Matt. 6:19) and sharing one's material goods with others (Matt. 25:35-40). Jesus is promising spiritual calm and comfort to His followers, NOT economic or material compensation, as some of our modern day preachers (e.g. Jerry Falwell and others) would have us believe. One's material achievements in this life are not necessarily indications of God's favor. To be a true follower of Jesus, one must be concerned with others' needs. Each of the blessings noted here is attainable by any and all of Jesus' followers who believe His words, "Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is close at hand." (Matt. 4:17)

The next four Beatitudes illustrate the changed heart and attitude to which Jesus' call to repentance leads. Those who are "Merciful to others" will receive mercy—certainly a most important theme in Jesus' teaching, illustrated again in the Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:12). The "pure in heart" will see God, they whose actions are marked by absolute integrity in words (Matt. 5:37), in judgments (Matt. 7:1-5), and even in our personal prayer life (Matt. 6:1-6). Those who "work for peace," who refuse to accept the violence our society finds a normal way of life, are promised the most breath-taking of the blessings: to be called

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