

THE BEATITUDES

***"Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.***

***Blessed are they who mourn,
for they shall be comforted.***

***Blessed are the meek,
for they shall inherit the earth.***

***Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for
righteousness,
for they shall be satisfied.***

***Blessed are the merciful,
for they shall obtain mercy.***

***Blessed are the pure of heart,
for they shall see God.***

***Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they shall be called children of God.***

***Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake
of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."***

Gospel of Matthew 5:3-10

The Very Word

The first part of the Lord's Sermon on the Mount consists of the Beatitudes. This word 'beatitude' is from the Latin. The actual Greek word used for 'blessed' in each sentence is μακάριοι which is plural. The singular is makarios which means 'happy' or 'blessed.' There is another word used in the New Testament which is translated 'blessed.' It is Εὐλογητός. This word means 'to speak well of' and the difference can be seen when it is used in passages like Lk. 1:68 and Eph. 1:3. With the use of makarios in these sentences we see that Christianity is a religion of joy and of paradoxes. The joy is expressed in the word makarios over the outcome of following Christ, an outcome that the world could not in its reason prophecy or foretell. Such is our religion that the Lord overcomes the world for us. Furthermore He remains with us to bring us through to joy. There is a parallel in part to this Matthew section in Luke 6:20-22.

With each of the beatitudes or makarisms we will look at: at examples of each, how the words mirror our Lord and the results.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom on Heaven.



Amid the many parables our Lord taught the publican in the Pharisee and the Publican exhibits the idea of a humble spirit, or poor in spirit. He would not even lift up his eyes in the Temple realizing how sinful he was and undeserved of God's mercy. Luke 18:9-14 The publican or tax gatherer knew he was sinful and exclaimed, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" The idea of "spirit" means that it is above an inward thing that then shows itself outwardly. The hypocrite is only concerned with appearances. The publican looks into his own heart and sees how he has cheated people and been part of a network of cheaters. He knows how God should punish him, but does not. Punishment fell on the Messiah for all mankind.



And when it comes to tax gatherers, think of that short man who climbed the tree. Zacchaeus was certainly a rich, proud, crooked man. But he sought to see Jesus. (Lk. 19:1-9) And that day he saw, salvation came into his house. It had to be with a lowly spirit that he climbed that tree. He felt the need within him, the empty soul. His lowly spirit showed when he said he would then give half his goods to the poor and if he had defrauded anyone that he would pay it back four times over. The kingdom is more important than money. The Son of man came to seek and to save the lost. V. 10 And Zacchaeus was a lowly lost.

Another example of this lowly spirit is in Mary's words in the magnificat, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden." Lk. 2:46-47 Mary was picked simply by God's grace to be the mother of our Lord. She was a sinner like each of us. So she from deep within her soul realizes this and rejoices in what God has done for her and to her. He truly has exalted those of low degree. V. 52

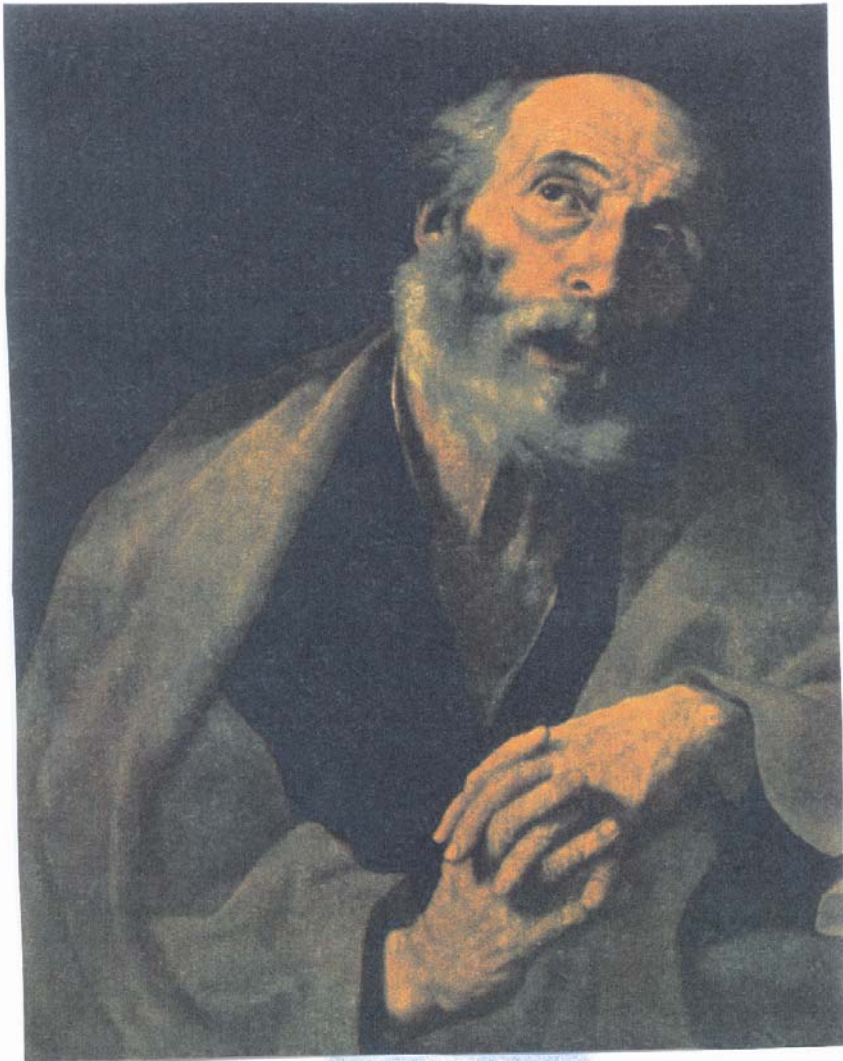
When it comes to our Lord, He had nowhere to lay His head on this earth. He displayed His willing lowliness to the point even of the death on the cross. Here in Him is the humble servant of the Most High doing all and exactly what He must on earth as a servant of eternal God. He laid aside His powers, left His glorious throne and walked among men. This humility our Lord now beckons us to seek in our lives.

The reward for those who seek Him in this spirit is the kingdom of heaven. Of course it is not on this earth for His kingdom is not 'of' this world. The new heaven and the new earth is to those who here bow low and look to that which is to come. Appealing to God "Be merciful to me a sinner," we will receive our exaltation to heaven just as Jesus was exalted and gained for us the place with Him.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

There is a godly grief that brings repentance (2 Cor. 7:10), which means we mourn over our sins. This is not a mourning over lost wealth or health or any earthly thing. This means we look inside our selves and see a black heart (Jer. 17:9) that is in need of God's mercy and forgiveness. Peter's denial of his Lord was as grave a sin as there could be. If we deny Him before men, He will deny us before the Father and the holy angels. If we confess Him before men, He will confess us before the Father. When Peter realized what he had done, "He went out and wept bitterly." Mt. 26:75 This kind of mourning over our sin will bring us happiness because we have forgiveness for our sin. Peter was reassured by our Lord on the shore of the Sea of Galilee and given his tasks to perform. Jn. 21:15-19 The comfort came to Peter in the words of our loving Lord as He spoke to him.

It is the same for us. The loving words of God in His Word comfort us above what anything or anyone can do. It is our Master speaking to us what we need to hear. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes in the morning. Ps. 126:5



Of course our Lord had no sins to mourn over, but He mourned over man's. Think of Him weeping over Jerusalem which faced the judgment. As a hen gathers her chicks in her brood so the Lord reached out, but Jerusalem rejected Him. Mt. 23:37-39 "And when He drew near and saw the city he wept over it, saying 'Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace!'" Lk. 19:41-42

He alone is the one who can comfort. Foolish people look for comfort everywhere except where it is to be found – in Him, in simple child-like faith.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

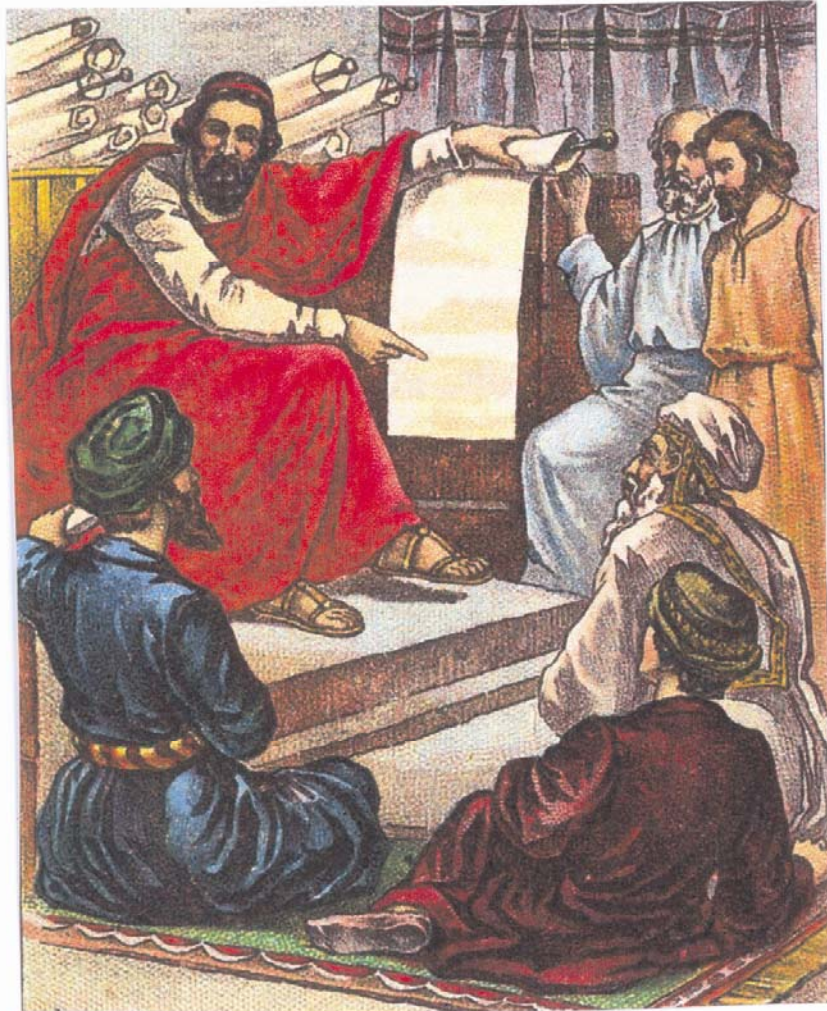
Ah, yes, simple child-like faith. "... Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." Mk. 10:15



The word 'meek' means to be humble and mild. Tell a child something and he will believe it. He will not argue and fight you about it.

Or think about the Bereans who "received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so." Acts 17:11 They did not examine the Word to argue over it. They were amazed and joyful over the message Paul brought. And they wanted more. The meekness involves a readiness of mind to accept. Some people go to the Bible with their own ideas and try to fit them in. They even twist Scriptures as Peter said.

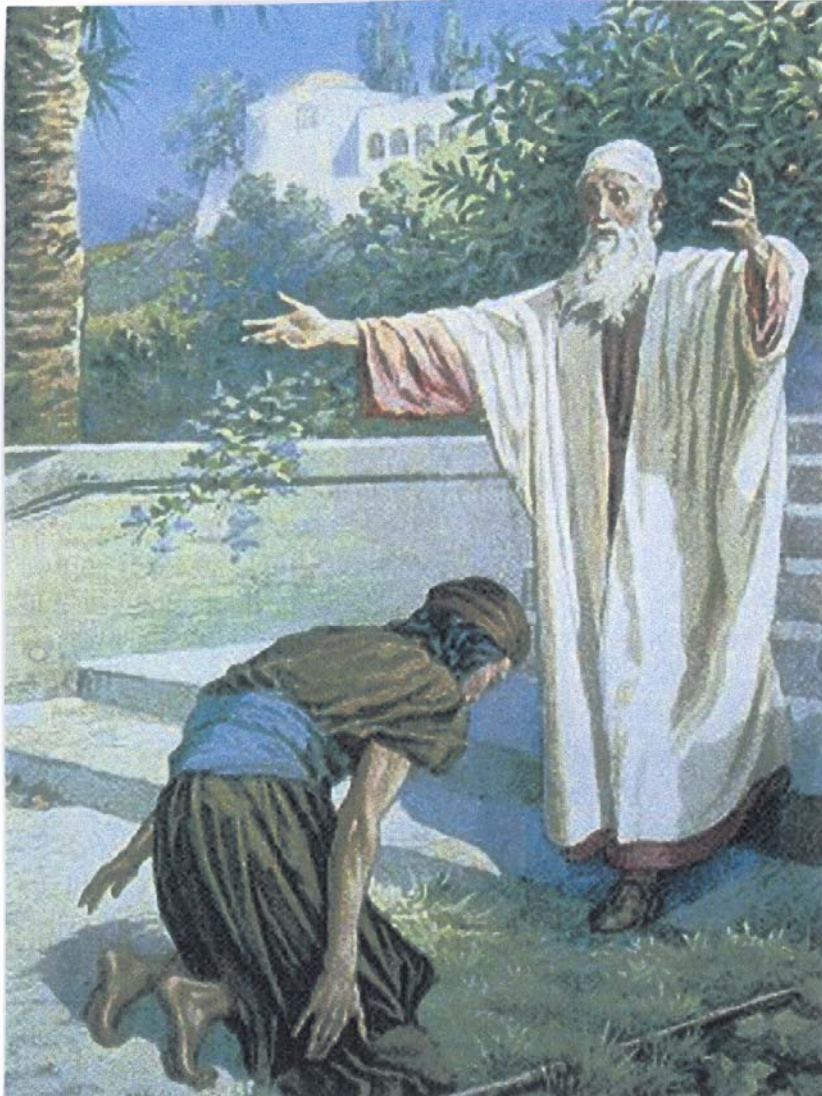
Of course above all we think of our Lord when he came to earth so meek and so mild as the little child in Mary's arms. As a tender baby He came. Even when He entered Jerusalem (Mt. 21:5) to offer Himself as the sacrifice for the world's sins, He came meekly, humbly riding on a colt the foal of an ass.



To 'inherit the earth' does not apply to this one for it will be destroyed by fire as Peter clearly states. 2 Pet. 3:10-13 The new heaven and new earth will be the exalted home of those who here are meek. Rev. 21:1-2 And seeing that one in all its glory who would want this one with its veil of tears and shadow of death. Tears and death are no more in the new. Rev. 7:15-17

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

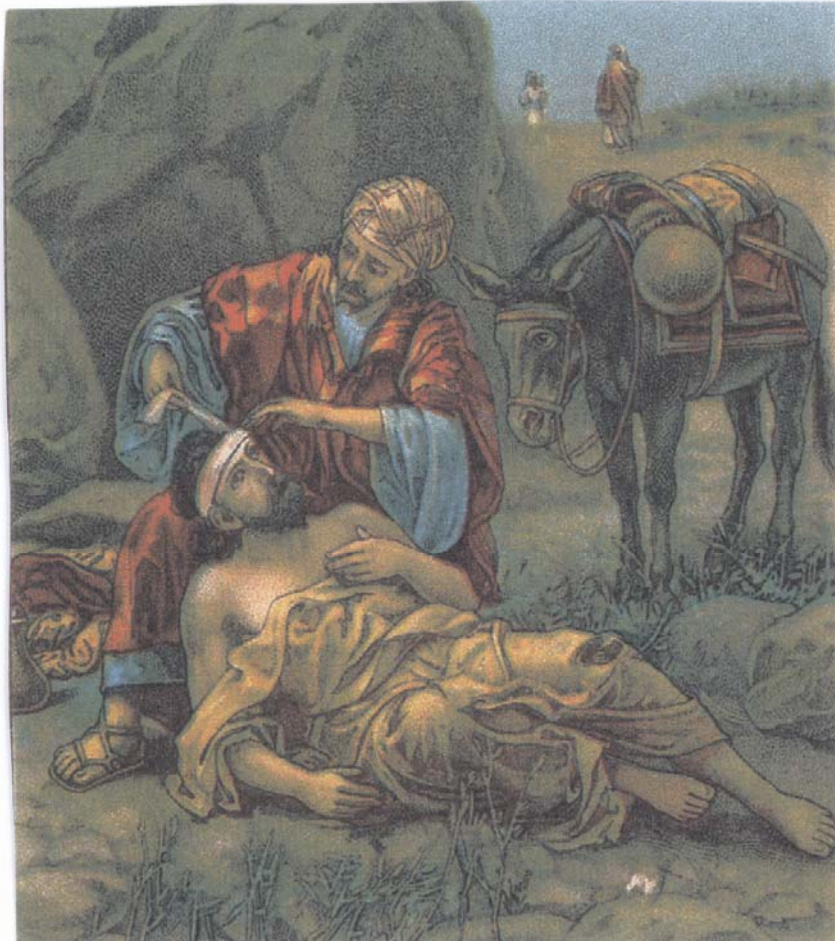
Sometimes it takes people a while to feel this hunger and thirst. With bodily hunger and thirst we feel it in a matter of hours or a day. But with spiritual hungering and thirsting after being right with God because of our sinful flesh it may take some time. The example in the parable of the prodigal son reminds us of this. Lk. 15:11-32 The lost son had to take all his inheritance, squander it and live worse than the pigs he tended before he learned. But then it came, "I have sinned against heaven and before you," he says to his father, who welcomes him with open arms. This touching scene reminds us how our dear Lord satisfies spiritual hungering and thirsting. Forgiveness in Christ is what we need.



Jesus tells us He is the bread of life. Jn. 6:35 To believe in Him is to spiritually feed on this grace of God in the person of Jesus. The Lord Jesus when He walked on earth demonstrated the righteousness of God. No sin was found in Him. Because of this he has become for us the righteousness that allows us entrance into the holy of holies above, our eternal home. The Lord is our righteousness. 1 Cor. 1:30 The robe of His righteousness covers over our sin such that the Father sees not our sin, but His Son's righteousness.

We all know what hunger pangs feel like. It is something the body naturally does to alert us to the need. But the hungering after righteousness is not as natural, for the sinful flesh substitutes our own righteousness to try to satisfy. But all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. Is. 64:6 There may seem to be a satisfying, but it is temporary and fleeting. The gnawing feeling returns sooner or later. That which can alone satisfy guilt is the knowledge of what He has done for us to guarantee us a place in heaven. "By this we shall know that we are of the truth, and reassure our hearts before Him, whenever our hearts condemn us: for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything." 1 Jn. 3:19-20 The daily question for us individually is – Are we living to show forth this righteousness.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.



If ever there was a parable our Lord taught that many people remember it has to be the Good Samaritan. Lk. 10:25-36 And this parable teaches us what 'mercy' really is. It is not alone a feeling sorry for somebody. It carries into action. The man in the parable did what the Priest and Levite would not do, and they should have known better, for they used the Word. The Samaritan risks his life to help the beaten man. He gives immediate help; takes him to an inn; gives money for his needs; promises to pay more if needed. The question for us is, "But if any one has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?" 1 Jn. 3:17

Our Lord's walk on earth was mercy in the morning, mercy in the afternoon and mercy in the evening to people. He continually did things for people and they were not only His followers. He healed all. Mt. 8:16, 9:35 This is our merciful God whose heart goes out to all in need. The list of the evidence in the Gospels is endless. He is the same God. Though risen and exalted, He remains who He is with us. "For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sinning. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Heb. 4:15-16

There are warnings in Scripture to us that what goes around comes around. "He who digs a pit will fall into it, and a stone will come back upon him who starts it rolling." Prov. 26:27 And the other side of the coin is this that when we show mercy, God will show mercy to us. "So whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them; for this is the law and the prophets." Mt. 7:15

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

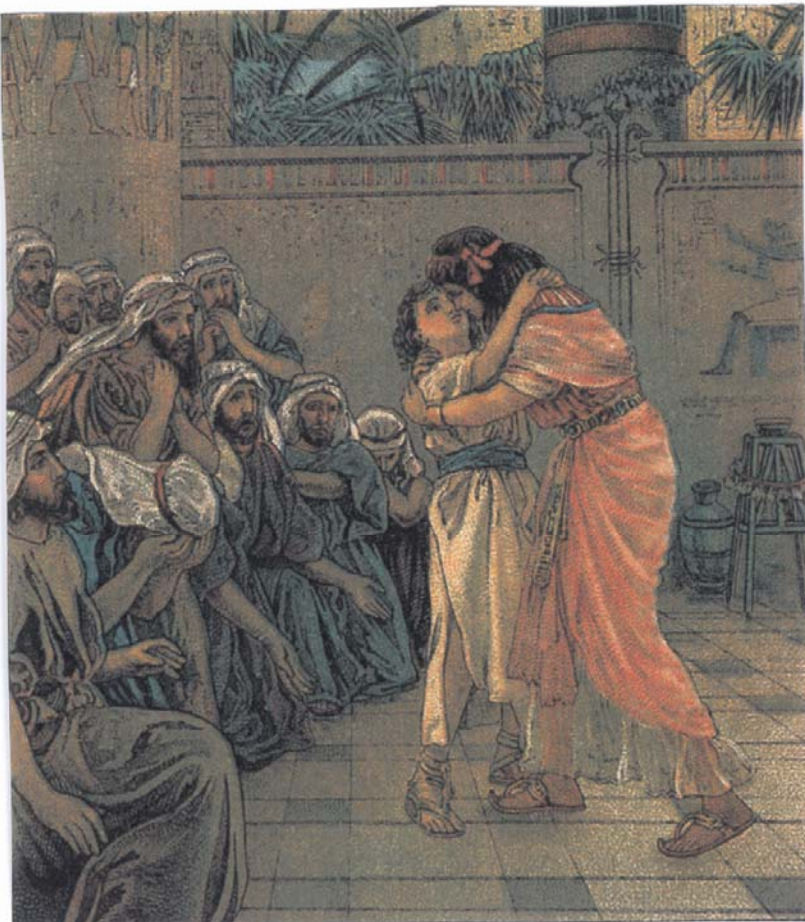


Our Lord could look into hearts and could also see when He had not yet laid eyes on someone. He used this power at times in His walk on earth. When Nathanael was beckoned by Philip to "Come and see," this Jesus, Nathanael got up and went. "Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and said of him, 'Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!'" Jn. 1:47 This evidently is a quality that the disciple had to not harbor intrigue and deceit. It is a matter for us of a daily cleaning house in our heart. When we go to bed at night we must turn all over to Him who can cleanse and who has forgiven. A root of bitterness must not spring up. Daily contrition and repentance are called for among Christians. It is only by appeal to our Lord that the Spirit cleanses us. Otherwise the sin would build up and block our vision of God. "He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy." Prov. 28:13

It was alone our Lord who was PURE. He knew no sin and as such became the righteousness of God to us. 2 Cor. 5:21 No one could convict Him of sin and the challenge could not truly be accepted by any who saw and heard Him. Jn. 8:46

The same could not be said of us. And that is why He came, for us. What a joy to look forward to the time when we shall see God face to face with no fear, for that and all else that we don't need or want, He drives from us in His love. 1 Jn. 4:18

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.



When Joseph invited his father and brothers down to Egypt, it was a gesture of a peacemaker. Gen. 46-47 Instead of bearing a grudge toward his brothers who were so cruel to him, he loved them and sought reconciliation. What a lesson for us toward our enemies, that Jesus beckons us to love. "...Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven..." Mt. 5:44-45

Jacob had not treated his brother Esau well and could have expected vengeance from him even after some years had passed. The heart of a peacemaker knows its sinfulness and the grace of God that comes so full and sweet. Jacob prayed prior to meeting his brother Esau, "...I am not worthy of the least of all the steadfast love and all the faithfulness which Thou hast shown to thy servant, for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan; and now I have become two companies." Gen. 32:10 Jacob came to make peace with his brother, and what a blessed scene it was. Gen. 33:4-11 While Jacob had cheated his brother before, now making peace he gives Esau part of his wealth.

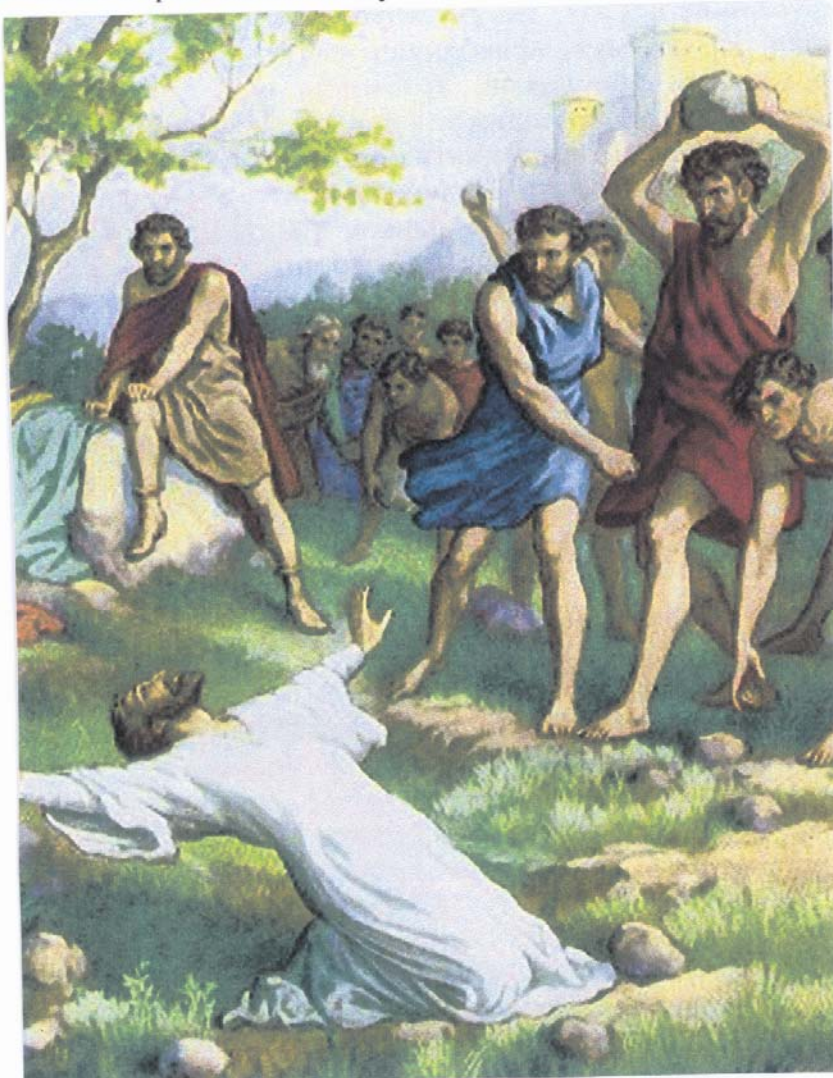


Our Lord Jesus was THE peacemaker having made peace between holy God and sinful man. And now He as the great Redeemer and Mediator works by His Spirit to unite all in His church putting the peace the world cannot give into their hearts. The Master is the Prince of Peace and entrusts us with the message of reconciliation. 2 Cor. 5:18-21 He is our Shiloh, the bringer of peace. Gen. 49:10 As the mass of angels proclaimed Him at Bethlehem's fields so He remains in each believer's heart.

This message of peace is so prominent and important that if we know a brother has anything against us we should go off from our worship and bringing our gift to God and be reconciled to our brother. Then we can come and give our gift to God with a grateful heart knowing we have done what the sons of God should do. Mt. 5:24

Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

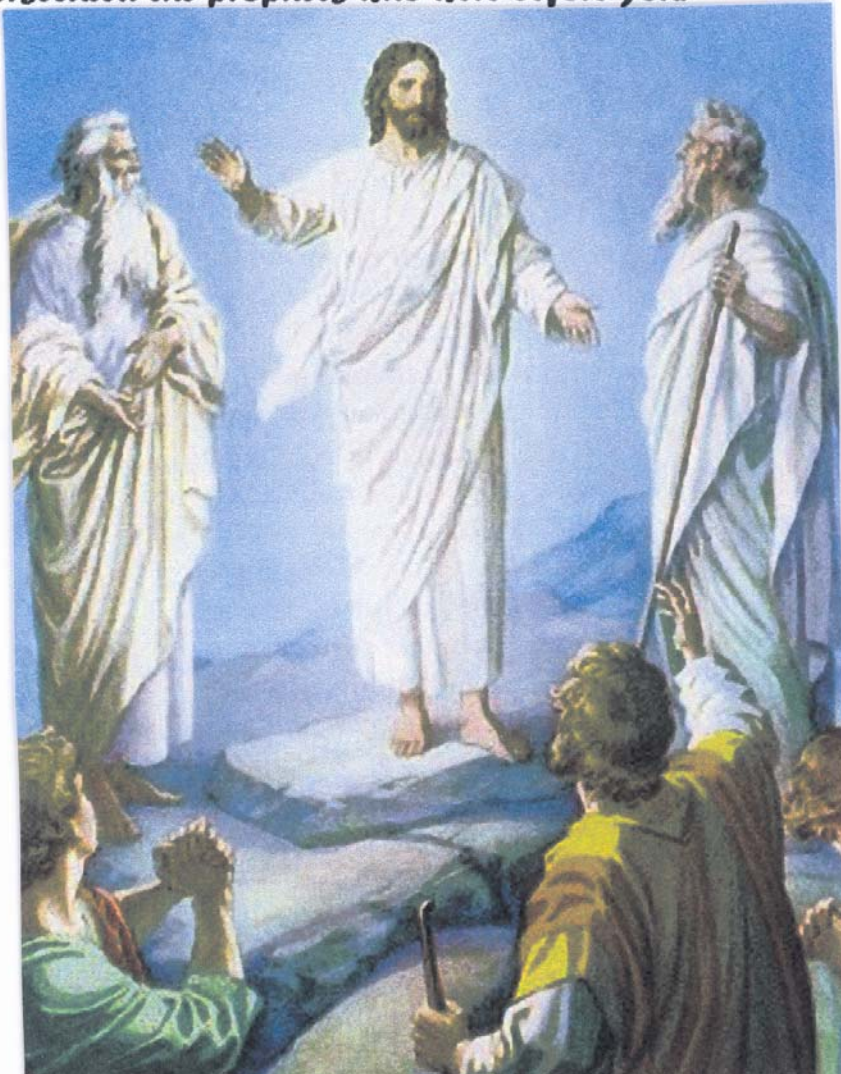
Stephen spoke exactly what the people needed to hear, that they might have the righteousness of God. They chose to rely on their own 'filthy rag' righteousness and got that bothersome Stephen out of their way. Acts 7



Stephen says very similar words to those of our Lord as He was put upon the cross for death. Stephen, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." Acts 7:60 Jesus, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Lk. 23:34 When His enemies finally had Him crucified, it was not the first attempt on His life. Even in Nazareth where He grew up they sought His death. They tried to stone Him there. Lk. 4:29 Again later they took offense at him. Mk. 6:3 As the hatred grew in Jerusalem among the Jewish authorities, it finally did its vile devil inspired work. During Holy Week they sought to destroy Him (Lk. 19:47) and finally did. But He rose from the dead and in their wicked deed He won for His enemies and all mankind the forgiveness of sins.

Should we expect anything different in our days. And as the end of the world approaches the violence against those who by faith have the righteousness that avails will grow in intensity.

Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on My account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you.



This expansion in verses 11-12 on verse 10 reminds us of the two men who were on the Mount of Transfiguration with our Lord from Old Testament times. Moses faced the people of Israel over and over again as they murmured, complained and rebelled. He could have been killed if the people had their way so that they could go back to the fleshpots of Egypt. And then there was Elijah who was chased King Ahab and his vile queen. He was so hunted that he thought he was the last of God's people. Elijah's life was in danger over and over again. Now though both of these men are in heaven blessed/happy enjoying the bliss of His presence.

The Lord doubles up on the 'blessed' at the beginning of verse 11 by then saying in verse 12 "Rejoice and be glad." This is really our lot as we follow Him through this life. These beatitudes even in their extremity of these last mean for us joy that lasts. We are following Him.

In Revelation where the judgments of God are clearly prophesied to warn of the last judgment from which there is no escape our God comforts us as we see these judgments with seven beatitudes using the same word 'happy' are you.

Seven Blessings -

1:3 Blessed is he who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written therein; for the time is near.

14:13... "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth." "Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!"

16:15 "Lo, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is he who is awake keeping his garments that he may not go naked and be seen exposed!"

19:9 ... "Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." ...

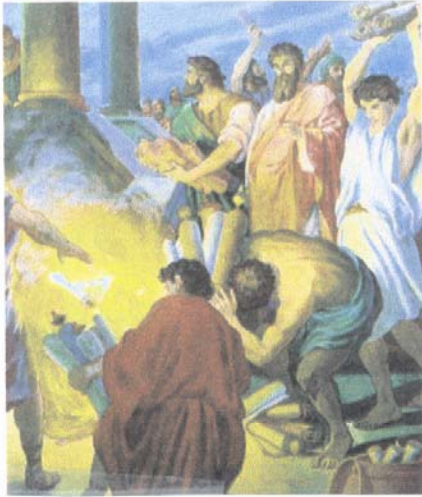
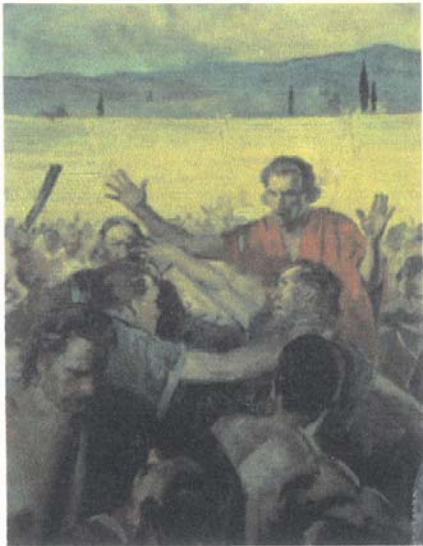
20:6 Blessed and holy is he who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and they shall reign with him a thousand years.

22:7 ... Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.

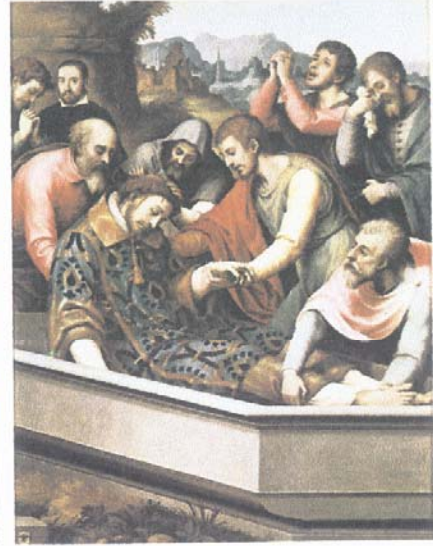
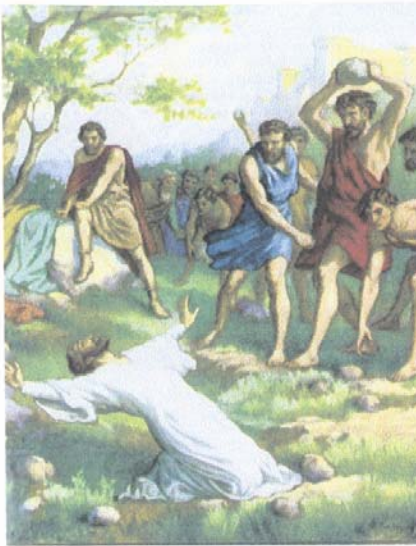
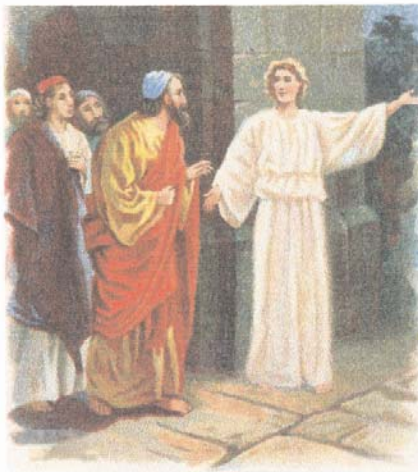
22:14 Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates.

We have the kingdom. We sow in tears, but reap with shouts of joy. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes in the morning. Ps. 126:5, 30:5

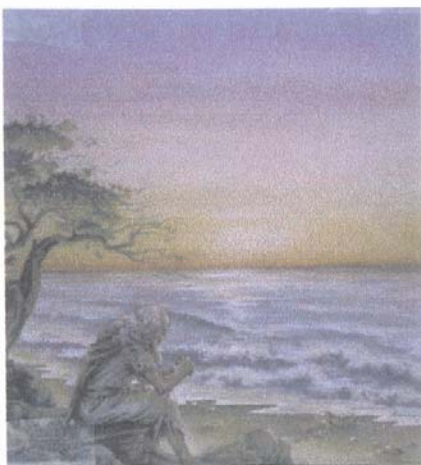




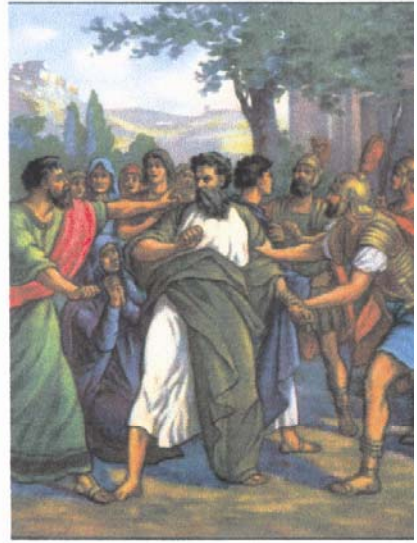
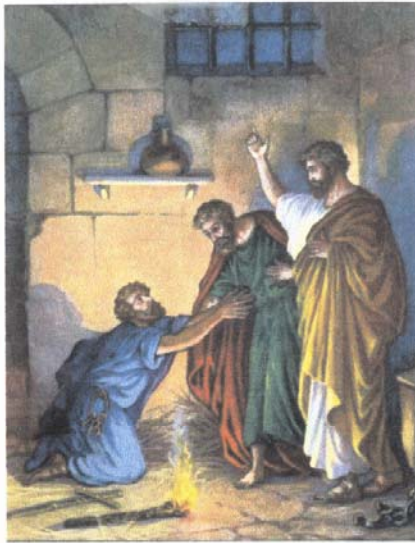
Then they will deliver you up to tribulation,



And put you to death;



You will be hated by all nations for My name's sake.



And then many will fall away, and betray one another,

And hate one another.

And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray.

And because wickedness is multiplied,

Most men's love will grow cold.

But he who endures to the end will be saved.

Matthew 24:9-13