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*"Christ caring for People
through People"*

July 4, 2010

Matthew 5 (New International Version)

¹*Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down.*

His disciples came to him, ²and he began to teach them saying:

³*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

⁴*Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.*

⁵*Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.*

⁶*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.*

⁷*Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.*

⁸*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.*

⁹*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.*

¹⁰*Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

Imagine if you can, taking a sabbatical with Jesus. Sometimes in the midst of our too full lives we need a break. A sabbatical, a holiday, some time off, to go on retreat. That's what I want to suggest we do this summer. For the next two months, let's find (make) the time to spend with Jesus. Let's set aside a specific time each day to focus on what he might say to us as we meditate on this wonderful part of his teaching. Jesus recognized how valuable this kind of experience could be for him and for his disciples. As you and I are also his disciples (followers), we need to go to the mountaintop with him; to sit down and be taught. As we listen to him let's try to hear how he might express it today. For this purpose I want to listen with you to this account as told in two different translations: The New International Version as quoted above, and the Message, a very modern 'everyday language' version.

***When Jesus saw his ministry drawing huge crowds, he climbed a hillside. Those who were apprenticed to him, the committed, climbed with him. Arriving at a quiet place, he sat down and taught his climbing companions."* (The Message)**

To get away from the crowds, to get to a quiet place with Jesus, that is our first goal. As apprenticed and committed to him we need to create such a place and such a time. To sit down with him: to listen and absorb as he teaches. To think about his words; to ask questions, to let his answers as they come, soak in and become a part of our very being.

As we begin to listen may I suggest we read the account from Matthew at least two or three times? Read it from the versions I quote here. Read it from your own favourite translations. Read it slowly. Read one verse at a time and reflect on it. Ask yourself, "What did this mean to those first disciples on that mountaintop?" Ask yourself, "How does this verse add meaning and understanding to my situation today?" Pray to God that through his Holy Spirit he will answer these questions for you in a personal way that meets your need. Take time to listen for his answers. They may come from the words themselves. They may come as new understandings and thoughts, ('I never saw it that way before' moments.) They may come as memories, feelings, and ideas about previous experiences that return to your thinking. And don't forget to give God thanks and praise for the word that comes. May we receive his blessings during this time.

Amen.

(Rev.) John McGurrin