

Beatitude

(Written over twenty years ago and maybe still relevant?)

Some people were no doubt offended when the Monty Python film *Life of Brian* made light of the Sermon on the Mount by having “hard of hearing” persons walk away wondering what Jesus meant by “Blessed are the Greeks” and “Blessed are the Cheesemakers.” But even a correct hearing of what Jesus said would suffer ridicule nowadays, given the kind of environment we live in. Liberals might find issue with any suggestion that poverty and persecution can be a blessing, while tough-minded people might be appalled at statements like “Blessed are the meek” and “Blessed are the merciful.” And of course the “fun” crowd would find “Blessed are they who mourn” absurd.

In an age when athletes and other celebrities and their agents are praised for demanding multi-million dollar salaries; when the media display the rich and famous for our emulation; when corporate “downsizing” is promoted as the profitable and *therefore* logical thing to do (despite its actually meaning lay-offs), who wants to hear anyone advocating poverty of spirit? In an age when pundits shout at each other on TV shows; when the airwaves are loud with boasting, ridicule and even hatred; when the dominant dogma of society seems to be “Look out for #1, push your way to the top and nice guys always lose,” who wants to listen to talk about meekness, simplicity, kindness and compassion? Such values would be laughed off the stage.

No. Christ’s Beatitudes seem really out of date, naive in this “sophisticated” age. The Beatitudes of this age seem to be:

Blessed are the avaricious / Blessed are those whose life is one big party; / Blessed are the arrogant, who take no guff from anybody; / Blessed are those who are fed up with talk about justice; / Blessed are the tough (and cursed be all “bleeding hearts”); / Blessed are the devious; / Blessed are the contentious; / Blessed are they who know precisely who the “bad guys” are . . .

How much more gutsy are those Beatitudes compared to Christ’s which amount to:

Blessed are the poor in spirit (whose happiness depends on something more profound than dividends and limousines); / Blessed are they who know grief and are the wiser for it; / Blessed are gentle and considerate folk; / Blessed are they who will never be satisfied until they are truly just and decent people; / Blessed are the merciful, people who know how to forgive; / Blessed are the simple folk, who look you in the eye and speak from the heart; / Blessed are the peacemakers; / Blessed are they who quietly put up with ridicule for adhering to these beatitudes.

But wait a minute! Christ’s Beatitudes – now that I compare them – seem more like a ticket to a saner world and future than those pugnacious ones. The latter set seem merely to echo “values” that have devastated landscapes and lives since Cain killed Abel and Lamech took pride in avenging himself seventy times seven times. That’s old stuff!

Christ's Beatitudes out of date? On the contrary, they're the only ones that offer us a future worth living for.