



**BECOMING THE CHURCH OF THE POOR  
BECOMING THE CHURCH OF THE BEATITUDES**

*A Lenten Study*

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# INTRODUCTION

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Lent 2026

My dear siblings in Christ,

As we enter this sacred time of preparation and repentance, I invite you to include this personal study in your observance of a holy Lent. In this booklet, you will find short, prayerful reflections on one or two of the Beatitudes for each week of Lent, along with a set of questions to help you reflect on your own. Even though this is a personal exercise, I hope that doing it together will help us grow closer as one diocese. The Beatitudes help us to see Christ in one another and clarify our common mission.

The New Testament records two different lists of Beatitudes. One is found in Matthew chapter five, part of the Sermon on the Mount. The other, a shorter list, is part of the Sermon on the Plain in Luke chapter six. They have different contexts and emphasize different things. Yet it is the same Jesus, the same Good News, relevant in every time and place. This guide is an invitation to consider how these ancient words are speaking to you now.

The Beatitudes tell us about who Jesus is, and about who we are meant to be. They are both description and promise. The Beatitudes tell us what it is like to be a citizen of the Kingdom of God, what principles govern God's reality. They comprise a constitution of sorts; an invitation to experience now what God has promised to accomplish. My prayer for each of you is that you draw closer to Jesus and hear God's call to be the Church of the Poor and the Church of the Beatitudes.

Bishop Daniel

# THE BEATITUDES

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## MATTHEW 5:1-12

<sup>1</sup> Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, <sup>2</sup> and he began to teach them.

He said:

<sup>3</sup> “Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>4</sup> Blessed are those who mourn,  
for they will be comforted.

<sup>5</sup> Blessed are the meek,  
for they will inherit the earth.

<sup>6</sup> Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
for they will be filled.

<sup>7</sup> Blessed are the merciful,  
for they will be shown mercy.

<sup>8</sup> Blessed are the pure in heart,  
for they will see God.

<sup>9</sup> Blessed are the peacemakers,  
for they will be called children of God.

<sup>10</sup> Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>11</sup> “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

## LUKE 6:17-22

<sup>17</sup> And he came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, <sup>18</sup> who came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. And those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. <sup>19</sup> And all the crowd sought to touch him, for power came out from him and healed them all.

<sup>20</sup> And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said:

“Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

<sup>21</sup> “Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied.

“Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.

<sup>22</sup> “Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! <sup>23</sup> Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.”

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## **BLESSED ARE THE POOR**

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**Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.** (Matthew 5:3)

**Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.** (Luke 6:20)

The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew) emphasizes spiritual dependence. The Sermon on the Plain (Luke) names material vulnerability. Jesus inhabits both. Poverty is not only economic. It is also spiritual, relational, mental, and physical. We all suffer some poverty. We have to be the church of the poor because, from this perspective, we become the church for everybody. If we are all poor, then we are all blessed. The spiritual journey is about opening our eyes to discover both the depth of our need and the breadth of God's blessing. The Kingdom of God is ours; we are citizens of it, and we must live it every day.

### **Reflection Questions**

- When you hear Jesus say, "Blessed are you who are poor," what stirs in your heart? Do you think of others or of yourself?
- Where in your own life do you see poverty? Can you trust that Christ meets you tenderly there?
- In what ways have you tried to hide your need, even from God? What would it mean to stand honestly before the Lord and say, "I need you"?
- How might our diocese become more fully the church of the poor — a place where vulnerability is not weakness, but holy ground?

## THE WEEK OF THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT | *March 1-7*

# BLESSED ARE THE MEEK & PURE IN HEART

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**Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.** (Matthew 5:5)

**Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.** (Matthew 5:8)

Meekness and purity of heart describe who Jesus is, and who we are called to be. Meekness is proximity, standing alongside each other, instead of trying to be “better than,” above, “superior,” or distant. Meekness does not mean weakness. Our greatest example of meekness is Jesus on the cross. There, we see the strength to be present to the world’s pain without bitterness or despair. It is the power of love in action. We are called to stand at the foot of the cross with the poor and learn meekness. Together, we learn also what it means to have a pure heart that sees God. This comes from living together in an authentic community. Our hearts are purified when we learn to see Christ in the face of another person, and when they see Christ in ours.

### Reflection Questions

- When you hear, “Blessed are the meek,” does your heart resist the word, or rest in it? How can you reframe meekness in light of the true power of love?
- Where in your life is Christ inviting you to practice meekness, not by shrinking back, but drawing closer in love?
- In what subtle ways do you try to stand above, apart from, or “better than” others? What would it mean to stand alongside instead?
- Can you recall a moment when you chose presence over control, compassion over superiority? What did that teach you about the power of love?
- As we stand together at the foot of the cross, whose pain are you being asked not to turn away from?
- Where might your heart need purification—not through perfection, but through deeper honesty, deeper forgiveness, deeper community?
- This week, how will you practice seeing Christ in the face of another? How will you allow someone to see Christ in you?

## BLESSED ARE THE HUNGRY

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

(Matthew 5:6)

**Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied.** (Luke 6:21)

Hunger is a universal experience. We've all been hungry. Fewer of us consistently experience the inability to satisfy our hunger. Jesus speaks in the Sermon on the Mount of spiritual hunger, that God-shaped hole in all our hearts. Righteousness is a right relationship to God. It is the inescapable yearning of every human. Jesus promises this hunger will be satisfied in the Kingdom of God. He tells the woman at the well that he is the living water that quenches our spiritual thirst (John 4:5-42). In the Sermon on the Plain, Jesus speaks of physical hunger. This, too, shall be satisfied in the Kingdom of God. As the Church of the Poor, we are called to feed the hungry, not just because it is a nice thing to do, but because it witnesses to and participates in the coming Kingdom of God.

### Reflection Questions

- When Jesus says, "*Blessed are those who hunger,*" how is this a word of comfort for you? How is it a word that convicts you to change?
- What hunger is stirring most deeply in you right now — a hunger of the body, of the heart, of the spirit — and have you named it before God? What would it mean to let Christ be your living water?
- Where do you see physical hunger in your community, and how is the Spirit inviting you not just to notice it, but to respond?
- What does it look like for our diocese to witness to the Kingdom of God not only with words, but with bread shared and dignity restored? How does your presence give food to the hungry and drink to those who thirst?

## BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO MOURN

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**Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.** (Matthew 5:4)

**Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.** (Luke 6:21)

We all mourn sometimes because we all suffer. This is part of the universal poverty of being human in a broken world. By taking on humanity, Jesus entered fully into this situation. When his friend, Lazarus, died, Jesus wept. Sometimes it feels easier to shy away from those who are mourning. We don't know what to say, or we are afraid we will say something wrong. As the Church of the Beatitudes, we must not turn away from those who weep in sorrow. In those moments, it is not about what is said. What matters is proximity and presence. It is our quiet, gentle presence that speaks to the fact that no one is alone. Proximity and presence bear witness to who Jesus is and to the blessing and hope of the Kingdom of God. Revelation tells us the future God intends for everyone: "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with mortals...He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:3-4).

### Reflection Questions

- When Jesus says, "*Blessed are those who mourn,*" can you hear him speaking to your grief, and to the grief of those around you?
- Where are you carrying grief today? Have you allowed yourself to mourn in the presence of Jesus, who weeps with you?
- In what ways have you avoided another's sorrow because you feared saying the wrong thing? What would it mean simply to show up?
- Who around you is weeping now, perhaps quietly or unseen? How is the Spirit inviting you to draw closer rather than step away?
- What would it look like for our diocese to become a diocese of proximity and presence, where we do not shrink away from pain or grief, but see it transformed by the power of love?

## **BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL & THE PEACEMAKERS**

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**Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.** (Matthew 5:7)

**Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.** (Matthew 5:9)

In this world of division and violence, the Beatitudes of mercy and peacemaking are truly radical. We learn their deepest meaning at the foot of the cross. From the cross, in the moment of his greatest pain, Jesus had mercy on those who were crucifying him (Luke 23:34). Jesus is the Prince of Peace, and through him God reconciled all things, whether in heaven or on earth, making peace through the blood of the cross (Colossians 1:20). The peace Jesus made was not accomplished through intimidation or violence. True peace is accomplished through the self-giving power of love, which is stronger than all violence, suffering, and death. When we follow the Son of God, when we love as he does, when we are merciful like he is, we will be called children of God.

### **Reflection Questions**

- When you hear, “*Blessed are the merciful... Blessed are the peacemakers,*” does your heart feel ready, or does it feel resistant?
- Where do you need mercy or forgiveness in your life?
- As you stand at the foot of the cross and hear Jesus pray for those who crucified him, what stirs within you? Who do you find hardest to forgive?
- In what places in your life are you tempted to seek peace through control, avoidance, or force, rather than through patient, self-giving love?
- What situations around you need reconciliation? How might the Spirit be calling you to take the first step toward peace?
- What would it mean for our diocese to become the diocese of the merciful and the peacemakers?
- This week, how will you live more fully as a child of God, loving as Christ loves, extending mercy as you have received it, and trusting that the power of the cross is stronger even than death?

## **BLESSED ARE THE PERSECUTED, HATED, EXCLUDED, AND REVILED**

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**Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matthew 5:10–12)**

**Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets. (Luke 6:22-23)**

We naturally want to be liked and admired, to avoid insult and persecution. Being the Church of the Poor and the Church of the Beatitudes will not always mean being the church of the popular and admired. Living the Beatitudes, moving in this world as citizens of God's Kingdom, will challenge the status quo and disrupt the structures of this world, which perpetuate conditions of poverty and profit from division and hatred. It is risky business. There is no resurrection without the cross. And yet, even here, there is a blessing and joy that is impossible to explain. When we respond to God's call and take up our cross, we find that Jesus is already there, bent under its weight, holding it for us, walking with us, never leaving our side.

### **Reflection Questions**

- When you hear Jesus say, "*Blessed are those who are persecuted...*" do you feel fear, courage, or both? What might the Spirit be saying to you through that response?
- Where do you find yourself longing to be liked or affirmed? How does that longing shape the way you live your faith?
- Can you recall a moment when faithfulness cost you something?
- What would it mean for our diocese to measure success not by popularity or praise, but by fidelity to the way of the cross?