

Sermon: The Beatitudes: Standing on the plain level. Luke 6:17-26

Prayer: Gracious God, thanks be to you for the blessing that enlightens our faith. Open the doors wide to welcome the strangers, friends, families and children into your kingdom. Amen.

Introduction: Photos of the Mount of the Beatitudes known as the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5. Luke 6, Jesus descended the mountain and stood on the same level with the people. Jesus' sermon on the plain took place in Galilee, around Capernaum. Jesus ascends an unnamed mountain V 12 and Jesus descends V 17 to teach a crowd of people on the shores of Galilee.

Today it is known as the Mount of the Beatitudes, a hill in Northern Israel, in the Korazim plateau. Jesus' actions on the Sabbath and the difference between the Religious Leaders teachings on the Sabbath led to ongoing conflicts between Jesus and the Religious Authorities.

Jesus sat down with his disciples and taught them the secret to being "blessed." Some would say this is the sermon of '**be-attitude.**' Jesus enlightens our minds to finding deep joy, happiness, hope and gratitude on life's journey.

The Beatitudes make it quite clear that joy is not in fame, fortune and material pursuits. These gifts we received or accomplished through hard work and we are thankful for all of it. We are thankful for work, home, family, food security, education, health and all that we have. We learn to live with an attitude of gratitude. Jesus wants us to embrace the attitude of gratitude and invites us to share this good news with others.

Jesus teaches that with all of that true happiness comes through surrendering to God. Jesus is healing our griefs, gives us strength in our weaknesses, brings justice to suffering or helps to release suppress anger that takes away true joy.

An attitude of gratitude helps bring comfort to our fears and doubts. Jesus sermon is a reminder that our peace, love, grace and true happiness comes from God. "Rejoice, and be glad for your reward is in heaven." Jesus descends the mountain and stands on the same level with the people. It is a sign of strength in unity with God. Jesus is a true example of humility and offers compassion for the poor and care for those in need of food, shelter and a warm place to rest.

It is living with commitment to God through the obstacles of life that we grasp the sense of God's blessing. We come to realize that we are not alone. God is with us through every situation life throws at us. The Spirit is here with you helping you to feel as close to God. We learn to look beneath and beyond the ordinary surfaces and discover the extraordinary love of God. We learn to embrace the people we meet on life's journey. These ordinary places like your family, friends, co-workers and strangers are opportunities to see the face of God.

When I am challenged with a situation somewhere in surrendering to God I pray God help me to fall in love with this task and the people. God gives me the strength to do the task in God's time. There are numerous unexpected channels through which God's blessings keep flowing. Jesus is redefining power with the BeatitudesThe crowd includes the rich, poor, homeless, stranger,

political and religious leaders among others. Jesus is giving the same teaching to everyone. We are here because we are living with the conviction of faith in Jesus Christ. We believe in the power of the Spirit who reigns over all things. It is a shift of spiritual power to be in right relationship with God.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.” Living in relationship with Jesus and sharing the love with others is an upside nature of God’s kingdom. It is a place where all are welcome. It is a place where God ask of us to make room for the stranger, to accept people of other religious beliefs as part of God’s Kingdom. The Beatitudes reverses the power structure model that seems to dominate our world of material things. Jesus taught his disciples to walk humbly with God. Real power is with the Spirit connecting relationships that are life-giving.

Jesus opens our eyes to the values of the Kingdom. The disciples learn that true power is with God’s Word. We learn to live with hospitality, generosity, kindness, forgiving, love and care for neighbour. We do little and simple things that are multiplying with the blessings of God. Some examples are sharing food items, space for numerous activities for healthy living, social gatherings, and worship, among others. “Rejoice and be glad for yours is the Kingdom of God.”

My great-grandmother-Matilda was married to a colonial English planter and the seed of the Christian faith was planted in our ancestral history. My grandmother-Olga had eight children and they were all baptized. I was the first grand-child born in her home and she made sure I was baptized too. This is an ancient practice of the faith community to which Jesus belonged and taught his disciples to do same.

The church stands a symbol that God is among the people here. It reminds the community of God’s gifts of faith, hope and love for all. Our purpose is to keep telling the story of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection. God’s grace is saving. It stands as a life-giving message amidst the challenges we face. Jesus stands on a plain level with the people seeking answers to the needs for housing, healthcare, education, economic and spiritual growth and the general welfare of humanity. The church remains a symbol of the promise of abundant life for all. We give gratitude to God for this space to worship. Jesus is the teacher who enlightens our mind and builds the foundation of faith. We are the channels through which the Spirit strengthens the relationships with the wider community.

The “Canadian Foodgrains Bank” Fall 2024, has a Christian response to humanitarian needs. *“Canadian Government will provide \$25million a year until 2028 to the Foodgrain Bank supporting the provision of emergency food assistance to communities experiencing humanitarian crisis.”*

The renewed funding will contribute to programs in areas such as Afghanistan, South Sudan and Syria as they grapple with the reality of hunger. These crisis situations arise out of conflicts,

natural disaster, climate impacts among others. You are living examples of the Beatitudes through your gifts to mission and service. The United Church is one of the numerous partners with our government helping to meet the needs around the world. Your work is not in vain. Walk humbly with God and be faithful to your ministry.

Jesus invites us to hear the Beatitudes again. Listen deeply. Pray sincerely to see this ministry with new eyes evolving to something God reveals. Perhaps take a leap of faith and stand in the place that might possibly be thin. Hold on to the possibility of hope. God is there too as we are discerning the signs of our time. Here Jesus is at the centre of our worship. Real power is embracing the Spirit who can do all things through Jesus Christ who strengthens you.

And with God our Creator, the source and all that we can be: we sing, **“Rejoice and be glad for yours is the kingdom of God.”** Amen

Rev. Margaret MacDonald