

Rev. Derek Fairman

4th Sunday in Ordinary Time A

In the Gospel, the Lord teaches us the Beatitudes. The Gospel According to Matthew presents the Lord Jesus as going up the mountain, much as Moses climbed up Mt. Sinai to receive the Law from God. Instead of Ten Commandments that tell us what not to do, the Beatitudes teach us what to do, but more importantly who to be.

The Beatitudes are familiar to us, but how much do we really think about them? Think about the Beatitude, “Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.” We understand that the Lord is declaring those who are merciful to be blessed, but what about the other part. Who will show mercy towards the merciful? God certainly will, but what about other people? Also, when will they receive mercy, in this life or in the next life?

The Lord does not guarantee that the merciful will receive mercy from others in this life. For some people, mercy is a sign of weakness. So, others will not automatically show mercy to someone who is merciful to them. We cannot guarantee that in our dealings with others we will be treated with mercy or respect in this life. What we can be sure of is that the Lord will show us mercy. In this life, we know that the Lord shows us great kindness and mercy. He takes us back in the sacrament of Confession. Of course, all this is but a prelude to the glory that the Lord has in store for us in Heaven. The Lord’s kindness and mercy are fulfilled in the next life.

So it is with other Beatitudes: those who mourn will be comforted, but there is no guarantee that other people will provide comfort, only God; the peacemakers will be called children of God, but not necessarily by others; the meek will inherit the land, but not necessarily from others. God will provide comfort and will give the meek their inheritance, partially in this life but fully in the next life. That helps us to understand the communion of saints in Heaven: they are the ones who are filled with mercy, comfort and meekness.

Think also about the Beatitude, “Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God.” As we know, we cannot see God face to face in this life. However, that does not mean that we are totally blind to God’s presence in our lives. No, in some ways we can know that He is present and that He is at work. Even if we do not see Him face to face, in many ways we can still see Him despite His presence being hidden from us.

So it is with other Beatitudes: the poor in spirit and those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness will inherit the Kingdom of Heaven; they receive the Kingdom partially in this

