

# THE PURSUIT OF happiness

10 Days to Discover  
Jesus' Path to the Good Life



Church of the Resurrection



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# INTRODUCTION

What does it take to really be happy?

In her book *The Illumined Heart*, writer Frederica Mathewes-Green says that the central question of life is "why none of us feels really at home in this world."

"For some," she explains, "there's a vague, haunting feeling that we're always disappointing others; for others, it's that everyone else is always disappointing us. A lot of us feel like the whole rest of the world is in on a joke we're not getting, and we just smile awkwardly and pretend to go along. Some of us are burdened throughout our lives with guilt for a severe and genuine evil we committed. Others feel peppered daily by twinges over a host of minor offenses, pursued as by a cloud of mosquitoes. For all of us, I think there is a recurrent sense of loneliness."

What do we do with that?

We pursue happiness. We try to find that right someone, a great achievement, a higher salary, a worthy cause, a home or child or career that will finally soothe the loneliness and make us happy. We look to people who seem to have it all together. We hope they will answer our questions, "Is happiness possible? What does it look like? And how do we achieve it?"

We invite you on a 10-day journey to discover more about happiness. Each day you'll have the chance to consider a famous saying of Jesus, whose teachings on happiness have inspired billions of people around the world.



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# DAY ONE



## WHAT JESUS SAID

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

## WHAT EARLY CHRISTIANS SAID

One who is poor in spirit and humble of heart has a meek spirit and does not think great things of himself. On the other hand, one who imagines himself to be rich in spirit will imagine great things of himself. He is proud and does not fulfill the commandment of Christ that “unless you become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” Only one who has repented and become like a child is poor in spirit.

--Anonymous, in Homily on Matthew (fifth century)

God is above all things; if you lift yourself up, you do not touch him, but if you humble yourself, he comes down to you.

--Augustine of Hippo (fifth century)

We must inquire just who are these blessed of whom the Lord says, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Jesus means that those persons are truly blessed who, having spurned the riches and resources of the world to become rich in God, desire to be poor in the sight of the world, but they are rich in God, needy in the world but wealthy in Christ.

--Chromatius (fifth century)

Not all the poor are blessed, for poverty is neutral. ... Blessed is the poor man who is like that poor Man [Jesus] who, although he was rich, became poor for our sake. Matthew fully revealed this when he said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” One poor in spirit is not puffed up, is not exalted in the mind of his own flesh. This beatitude is first, when I have laid aside every sin, and I have taken off all malice, and I am content with simplicity.

--Ambrose of Milan (fourth century)

## **A LIFE OF WORSHIP**

I take comfort in Christ's calling to be poor in spirit, not only for the promised harvest, but also for the simple permission—invitation even—to be empty. When I am at my worst, my most desperate, it is then that I collapse and say, "Here, Lord. I have no resources for this. Here. I am spent."

We seem to run ourselves into this condition of emptiness, fighting it all the way until our legs give out and we don't know where else to go. But Jesus set for us such a different example: though he was rich, he willingly became poor (2 Corinthians 8:9). This does not mean simply that Jesus left piles of rubies for a goat-hair tent; rather, he left his equality with God to take on the form of a servant—to serve us (Philippians 2:6-7).

In what ways do you find yourself kicking against your own weaknesses? How have you been blessed by God and provided for in your most helpless times? Consider how your sustaining Father is most honored by your choice to depend on him rather than by your efforts to live otherwise.

## **A LIFE OF MISSION**

The humility of being poor in spirit—choosing the poverty of servanthood and dependency—is antithetical to the natural pursuits of human beings, even economically poor human beings.

So what greater message can we take to the world? "Cease striving!" we can shout. "He is God, and He has done it all for us. Thanks be to God!" We can bring this good news both to those who toil in their own strength and to those who have given up. No one is beyond the hope of this promise.

What are some times in your life when your own spiritual poverty has opened up avenues by which to connect with other people? How does your life reflect to those around you a faith and true belief in this promise of God?

## **WANT TO LEARN MORE?**

Father Stewart spoke on this subject at Church of the Resurrection on September 5. You can listen to his message or read notes from it at:

[www.churchrez.org/sermons/](http://www.churchrez.org/sermons/)

# DAY TWO



## WHAT JESUS SAID

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”

## WHAT EARLY CHRISTIANS SAID

He calls blessed even those who mourn. Their sorrow is of a special kind. He did not designate them simply as sad but as intensely grieving. Therefore he did not say, “they that sorrow” but “they that mourn.” This beatitude is designed to draw believers toward a Christian disposition. Those who grieve for someone else – their child or wife or any other lost relation – have no fondness for gain or pleasure during their period of sorrow. They do not aim at glory. They are not provoked by insults nor led captive by envy nor beset by any other passions. Their grief alone occupies the whole of their attention.

--John Chrysostom (fourth century)

Purify yourself with your tears. Wash yourselves with mourning. ... One who is a sinner weeps for himself and rebukes himself, that he may be righteous, for just people accuse themselves of sin... I have put aside sin. I have wept for my transgressions.

--Ambrose of Milan (late fourth century)

Those who mourn receive comfort when the pain of mourning ceases. Those who mourn over their own sins and have obtained forgiveness shall be comforted in this world.

--Anonymous, in Homily on Matthew (fifth century)

We weep only until that morning of resurrection gladness, looking up to the joy that blossomed in advance in the early morning resurrection of the Lord.

--Augustine of Hippo (early fifth century)

## **A LIFE OF WORSHIP**

Gregory of Nyssa says, "It is impossible for one to live without tears who considers things exactly as they are." It is precisely for this reason that we sometimes refuse to really look at the condition of the world around us and the condition of our own hearts.

But to be comforted—to be calmed and soothed in our deepest pain—can come only after grief, after an admission of the truth. In order to gain, there must first be loss of wholeness, loss of naivete, loss of self-righteousness. Christ longs for us to see and mourn this loss, because he longs to comfort us with what he has won on the cross! John Stott put it like this: "Those who bewail their own sinfulness will be comforted by the only comfort that can relieve their distress, namely the free forgiveness of God."

Think of a time you mourned over the condition of your heart. Have you known the comfort of Christ's forgiveness? If so, what was that like?

## **A LIFE OF MISSION**

When we are able to consider things "exactly as they are," we will not only be mourning our own brokenness; we will mourn the brokenness of others. In this state we pray. We pray for the Lord to open people's eyes to see and mourn what has been lost in themselves and in this world. Then, as recipients of Christ's own comfort, we are able to participate in the fulfilling of this promise for others. Paul says in 2 Corinthians that "we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God." Though the fullness of our comfort will come when we are one day with Christ, we can now serve those who mourn with the testimony of Christ's forgiveness and consolation.

How can you offer to others what you have gained in Christ's comfort? Given your personal experiences, in what specific areas might you be a soothing voice to those around you? Submit your own scars to the Lord to be used for the comfort of others.

## **WANT TO LEARN MORE?**

Father Stewart will be speaking on this subject at Church of the Resurrection on September 19. For service times and directions, see:

[www.churchrez.org](http://www.churchrez.org)

# DAY THREE



## WHAT JESUS SAID

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”

## WHAT EARLY CHRISTIANS SAID

The meek are those who are gentle, humble, simple in faith and patient in the face of every affront. Imbued with the precepts of the Gospel, they imitate the meekness of the Lord, who says, “Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart” (Matthew 11:29). Moses found the greatest favor with God because he was meek. It was written about him: “And Moses was the meekest of all people on earth” (Numbers 12:3).

--Chromatius (early fifth century)

A gentle person neither provokes evil nor is provoked by evil. ... The meek one is more content to endure an offense than to commit one. For even as weeds are never lacking in a field, provokers are never lacking in the world. Therefore that person is truly gentle who, when he has been offended, neither does evil nor even thinks of doing it.

--Anonymous, in Homily on Matthew (fifth century)

“Inherit the earth, “I believe, means the land promised in the psalm; “You [Lord] are my hope, my portion in the land of the living” (Psalm 142:5). It signifies the solidity and stability of a perpetual inheritance. This is the peaceful life of the saints. The meek are those who ... do not resist evil but overcome evil with good. Let the haughty therefore quarrel and contend for earthly and temporal things. But “blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the land.” This is the land from which they can never be expelled.

--Augustine of Hippo (early fifth century)

## **A LIFE OF WORSHIP**

When I'm honest, "meek" is not a word that I get excited about. In my mind it brings up ideas of weakness, but Chromatius reminds us that some of the toughest men in Scripture have been called meek. My connotation of meek is usually "weak" but the truth is that we worship a meek God so it cannot mean "weak."

Meekness requires incredible strength that willingly gives itself for others. Take a minute to praise God for being truly meek for us. Thank you, Jesus, for your meekness in strength!

## **A LIFE OF MISSION**

When you're honest, what comes to your mind when you think about meek? Would you consider it a compliment to be called "meek"? Why or why not? Living in meekness challenges us to find our strength in Jesus and then humbly give ourselves for the sake of others.

What would change for you this week if you decided to let Jesus be your strength and gave yourself up for others? Lord, help me to find my strength in you and to give myself for others as you did for me.

## **WANT TO LEARN MORE?**

Father Stewart will be speaking on this subject at Church of the Resurrection on September 26. For service times and directions, see:

[www.churchrez.org/](http://www.churchrez.org/)

# DAY FOUR



## WHAT JESUS SAID

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”

## WHAT EARLY CHRISTIANS SAID

To hunger and thirst for righteousness is to desire God's own righteousness. People should hear and do God's righteousness, not as though they hear or do it unwillingly, but from their heart's desire. ...Whoever hungers for righteousness wants to live actively according to God's righteousness; this is proper for the person with a good heart. One who thirsts for righteousness wants to acquire the knowledge of God that one can gain only by studying the Scriptures. This is fitting for the person with an attentive heart. “For they shall be satisfied.” They are filled with the abundance of God's reward. Greater are the rewards of God than even the most avid desires of the saints.

--Anonymous, in Homily on Matthew (fifth century)

Note how drastically Jesus expresses it. For he does not say, “Blessed are those who cling to righteousness” —not in a superficial way, but pursuing it with their entire desire. By contrast, the most characteristic feature of covetousness is a strong desire with which we are not so hungry for food and drink, as we are for more and more things. Jesus urged us to transfer this desire to a new object, freedom from covetousness.

--John Chrysostom (fourth century)

Christ was born as wisdom from God for us, and as righteousness and sanctification and redemption. He is the “bread that comes down from heaven” (John 6:50) and “living water” (John 4:10-11) for which the great David himself thirsted. He said in one of his psalms, “My soul has thirsted for you, even for the living God; when shall I come and appear before the face of God” (Psalm 42:2) and also “I shall behold your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied in beholding your glory” (Psalm 17:15).

--Origen (early third century)

## **A LIFE OF WORSHIP**

One thing that I have been aware of my whole life is that I have a deep desire, or hunger, for something I do not currently possess. It hits me as an intense longing or deep dissatisfaction with my current situation—most often in lonely places, late at night when I cannot sleep or after returning to mundane life after a mountain-top experience. The experience doesn't feel like a blessing, but it actually is.

God has made me for Himself and all my hungers find their satisfaction in Him. Some of my hungers are connected to my deepest pains, but I know that God is the bread I need. I can praise Him all the more knowing that He is my food! Father, we praise you for not leaving us empty and incomplete but instead giving us your Son, Jesus, so that we might be filled. We look forward to the complete filling we will experience in your heavenly kingdom!

## **A LIFE OF MISSION**

What are some of the areas in your life where you experience the deepest “hungers” or the most longing? What would it be like if Jesus came in and filled your hunger? Take a minute and think about a friend that you know and ask Jesus what longings and hungers he or she may be experiencing.

One of the mysteries of God is that we often find our own hungers satisfied as we seek to help others satisfy their longings. Take a minute to pray: Holy Lord, you promise to provide all our needs and give us good gifts. I pray that you would satisfy the hunger of my friend, [name], and fill them with your satisfaction.

## **WANT TO LEARN MORE?**

On October 3, we're helping people who literally thirst. Many people in Africa and Asia do not have clean water to drink; their contaminated water sources cause bacterial infections and even deaths in children under 5.

When we learned that \$1 could bring clean water to 1 child for 1 year, we launched the THIRST 1-1-1 Campaign: we're asking everyone at Resurrection to give \$1 (or more) on October 3, which we will donate to the clean-water fund of humanitarian organization World Vision. To learn more:

[www.churchrez.org/thirst](http://www.churchrez.org/thirst)

# DAY FIVE



## WHAT JESUS SAID

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy."

## WHAT EARLY CHRISTIANS SAID

Jesus speaks here not only of those who show mercy by giving worldly goods but also of those who demonstrate mercy in their actions. There are many ways to show mercy. ... What reward can people expect if they obey the commandment? They obtain mercy. The reward at first glance appears to be an equal reimbursement, but actually the reward from God is much greater than human acts of goodness. For whereas we ourselves are showing mercy as human beings, we are obtaining mercy from the God of all. Human mercy and God's mercy are not the same thing. As wide as the interval is between corrupted and perfect goodness, so far is human mercy distinguished from divine mercy.

--John Chrysostom (fourth century, Constantinople)

The kind of mercy referred to here is not simply giving alms to the poor or orphan or widow. This kind of compassion is often found even among those who hardly know God. But that person is truly merciful who shows mercy even to his own enemy and treats the enemy well. For it is written, "Love your enemies and treat well those who hate you" (Luke 6:27).

--Anonymous, in Homily on Matthew (fifth century)

"Blessed are the merciful, for God will have mercy on them." Do this, and it will be done to you. ...You hear the voice of a beggar, but before God you are yourself a beggar. Someone is begging from you while you yourself are begging from God. As you treat your beggar, so will God treat his. You who are empty are being filled. Out of your fullness fill an empty person in need, so that your own emptiness may again be filled by the fullness of God.

--Augustine of Hippo (early fifth century)

## **A LIFE OF WORSHIP**

John Chrysostom said, "Human mercy and God's mercy are not the same thing. As wide as the interval is between corrupted and perfect goodness, so far is human mercy distinguished from divine mercy."

The blessedness of the fifth beatitude is not simply the fact that we will receive mercy if we show it, though that is blessing, indeed; rather, the abundance of this promise is in the utter imbalance of it. We show mercy—we pour our cup of self out for someone else in whatever way we might know how—and in that tiny space left from our self-offering, God's mercy flows to us, filling and spilling over our meagerness and need.

Recall a time when you have received mercy from someone else. Did that experience feel difficult or unnatural for you? How conscious are you of your need for God's mercy?

## **A LIFE OF MISSION**

A life of extending mercy is most powerfully sustained when it results from our own experience as beggars. "As you treat your beggar, so will God treat his," said St. Augustine. He is saying that, despite any material discrepancies that may exist between people, we are all in the same boat, so to speak, in God's eyes. This reality has huge implications.

In showing mercy, we are not deigning to serve a lesser. Instead, we are coming alongside a fellow beggar and offering what we have, precisely because Jesus promised his great mercy to us in return.

Being merciful does require our sacrifice, meager as it may be in light of what Christ has done for us. Within the last week, when have you withheld mercy from someone else? What were you trying to preserve in that situation? When have you been blessed in choosing to make the sacrifice of mercy?

# DAY SIX



## WHAT JESUS SAID

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

## WHAT EARLY CHRISTIANS SAID

Those he here calls “pure” are either those who have so fully filled their lives with goodness that they are practically unaware of evil within themselves, or he may be referring to those who live a moderate, simple life, for there is nothing that we need so much in order to behold God as a self-controlled life. In the same vein Paul wrote, “Pursue peace with everyone and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14).

--John Chrysostom (fourth century)

The pure in heart are those who have gotten rid of sin's filth, have cleansed themselves of all the pollution of the flesh and have pleased God through works of faith and justice. As David testifies in a psalm, “Who will climb up the Lord's mountain, or who will stand in his holy place? The one with innocent hands and a pure heart, who has not received his soul in vain” (Psalm 24:3-4). So the Lord shows that it is pure-hearted people like this who are blessed. They are those, who living by faith in God with a pure mind and unstained conscience, will win the right to see the God of glory in the heavenly kingdom to come....

--Chromatius (fifth century)

When the text says, “blessed are the pure in heart,” it refers to those who have been made clean within, “for they shall see God.” To behold God is the end and purpose of all our loving activity. Whatever we do, whatever good deeds we perform, whatever we strive to accomplish, whatever we laudably yearn for, whatever we blamelessly desire, we shall no longer be seeking any of those things when we reach the vision of God. Indeed, what would one search for when one has God before one's eyes? Or what would satisfy one who would not be satisfied with God? We strive to see God. We are on fire with the desire of seeing God.

--Augustine of Hippo (early fifth century)

## **A LIFE OF WORSHIP**

"...for they will see God" is one of the most hopeful verses in Scripture. We live in a world that believes that it is impossible to see God or to even know Him in any reliable way. Yet, the truth is just the opposite! We can see God. Christians know that God has made a way for us to get to know who He is.

Most of us probably won't see Him with our physical eyes this side of heaven, but we do get to know Him and see Him in our surroundings. Our God wants to be known! Praise the True God who has moved toward us and made Himself known in Jesus. Thank You!

## **A LIFE OF MISSION**

Gregory of Nyssa once asked, "Is it even possible to be pure in heart?" If anything, it seems the more I see God the more I see how impure my heart really is. Perhaps the problem is that I too easily forget about the forgiveness of the cross. My purity is based on my confession of my need for Jesus—He washes me clean through His blood.

Purity and, therefore, the ability to see God is impossible without the cross of Jesus but because of the cross my heart can be made pure when I focus on Him instead of myself. Living with a pure heart is attainable as we remember where and how we receive that purity. Lord, keep us at the foot of the cross where we can continually be washed in your Holy Spirit. As we see you, may we direct others to your cross as well.

# DAY SEVEN



## WHAT JESUS SAID

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”

## WHAT EARLY CHRISTIANS SAID

The peacemakers are those who, standing apart from the stumbling block of disagreement and discord, guard the affection of fraternal love and the peace of the church under the unity of the universal faith.

--Chromatius (fifth century)

Here Jesus not only responds that that they should not feud and become hateful to one another, but he is also looking for something else and something more, that we bring together others who are feuding. And again he promises a spiritual reward. What kind of reward is it? “That they themselves shall be called sons of God.” For in fact this was the crucial work of the Only Begotten [Jesus]: to bring together things divided and to reconcile the alienated.

--John Chrysostom (fourth century)

People who cherish peace are children of peace. But some may be thought to be peacemakers who make peace with their enemies but remain heedless of evils within. They are never reconciled in heart with their own internal enemies, yet they are willing to make peace with others. They are parodies of peace rather than lovers of peace. For that peace is blessed which is set in the heart, not that which is set in words. Do you want to know who is truly a peacemaker? Hear the prophet, who says, “Keep your tongue from evil, and let your lips not speak deceit. Do not let your tongue utter an evil expression” (Psalm 34:13-14).

--Anonymous, in Homily on Matthew (fifth century)

## A LIFE OF WORSHIP

In acting as peacemakers, we imitate the Son of God, who is himself our peace and whose mission it was to unite all things in himself (Ephesians 2:14 and 1:10). Christ has reconciled us to God, so that even now in this world we can rest in his effective sacrifice on the cross.

We worship God through the passing of this peace on Sunday mornings. We don't merely greet the people sitting next to us; we remind them in an audible, human voice that they are forgiven and their peace has been won—that they, too, can rest in the reality of God's love. This claiming and proclaiming honors the God who brought us near to him at no small cost to himself and who binds us together under his headship.

Does your peace with God have direct bearing on your relationships with other people? If there's any lack of peace in your life, what exists in its place, and how does that affect the people around you?

## A LIFE OF MISSION

The passing of the peace on Sundays is just a taste of how we can proclaim peace and even help to make peace in the world. We bring the peace of heaven into life on earth when we bring this news to the restless and wandering: "You who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ" (Ephesians 2:17).

Chromatius said peacemakers are those who stand "apart from the stumbling block of disagreement and discord" and "guard the affection of fraternal love and the peace of the church under the unity of the universal faith."

Making peace with or between other Christians seems a clear enough mandate, as difficult as it may sometimes be. But what about our calling to be peacemakers in the world? Where are some areas beyond the walls of the church in which you see a need for peace and reconciliation? What role can you as an individual or the church play in bringing about peace in these areas?

# DAY EIGHT



## WHAT JESUS SAID

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

## WHAT EARLY CHRISTIANS SAID

You have a great and important ministry for which you will require courage in large measure. The same persistence you have shown in discovering the truth you must now show in proclaiming the truth. Your task is to tell people the commandments of God...and then to assure them that if they follow these commandments they shall be happy in this life. Many will try to destroy you, both with evil words and with violent acts. The reason for their antagonism toward you will not be because of their addiction for worldly pleasure; it will be because they know in their hearts that this addiction is wrong. So your words will stir their consciences, setting their consciences and their desires at war with each other; and they will imagine that by destroying you, their consciences will rest easy again...But you must stand firm and speak the truth regardless of the consequences; and God will protect you.

--“The Shepherd of Hermas,” paraphrased (early second century)

“For the sake of righteousness.” This addition clearly distinguishes the martyr from the robber. For the robber too in return for evil deeds suffers at the law’s hand and doesn’t receive a prize or garland, but instead pays the due penalty. It is not the penalty as such but the basis of the penalty that makes the martyr. Let us choose the right reason and let us endure the penalty without anxiety.

--Augustine of Hippo (early fifth century)

He [the Lord] instructs us so to thirst in our desire for righteousness that for its sake we should despise the world’s persecutions, the punishments of the body and death itself. The martyrs above all are the epitome of those who for the righteousness of faith and the name of Christ endure persecution in this world. To them a great hope is promised, namely, the possession of the kingdom of heaven.

-Chromatius (fifth century)

## **A LIFE OF WORSHIP**

There is a Kingdom of Heaven and we are invited to become a citizen of that Kingdom. While we may suffer during this lifetime as we live according to our new Kingdom's values, we have a King who has conquered death and evil. One day, He will take away all sadness and pain.

We serve the God who will be victorious! We can take great joy in knowing that we are on the side that wins the day. Hallelujah! "God, you are the mighty and victorious King. We praise you for triumph on the Cross!"

## **A LIFE OF MISSION**

I still remember the first time it was explained to me that there is a spiritual enemy, the devil, who opposes those who are working for the sake of the Kingdom. It makes sense: why would the devil "waste" his time on those who weren't doing anything productive? Now I try to remind myself that the places where I am facing the most difficulty are often the places God is about to do the most amazing things.

Where are you facing difficulty in your life right now? What might be the good thing that God is trying to bring about? "God, open my eyes to see the good thing that you are doing that I can't see right now. Strengthen me to stand in the midst of struggles and pain."

# DAY NINE



## WHAT JESUS SAID

“Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

## WHAT EARLY CHRISTIANS SAID

Many people become our enemies because of our belief in God, but they do not persecute us openly. Nevertheless they go all about and slander us and say deplorable things about us. The Scripture says “You will be blessed when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.” ... If somebody wrongs us, even with a single, slight word, your soul will not be lacking a reward.

--Anonymous, in Homily on Matthew (fifth century)

But to keep you from supposing that being slandered of itself makes people blessed, he has added two qualifications: first, that it happens for Christ's sake, and second, that what is said is false. Do not expect to be blessed if you are being reviled for something evil and what is being said is true.

--John Chrysostom (fourth century)

We are not to suppose that this refers only to those who suffer persecution from alien nations for not worshiping their idols. This refers also to those who are blessed for not abandoning the truth when they suffer persecution from heretics. They too suffer for the sake of righteousness. While the heathen nations deny Christ, the heretics deny Christ's truth. ... there is no doubt that a person who suffers something for God's cause today, even if one suffers it at the hands of one's own people, receives an eternal reward.

--Anonymous, in Homily on Matthew (fifth century)

## **A LIFE OF WORSHIP**

Of all the beatitudes, this one is the most baffling at the outset. Jesus has taken us through a list of qualities befitting his children, and though they all clearly run contrary to the world's ways, these qualities seem benign enough in nature. At least compared to the graphic darkness of this.

But I don't think it's a mistake that these last two beatitudes fall at the end of the line. They are not qualities to seek but are, perhaps, the result of such cultivations. What do poverty of spirit, mourning, meekness, hungering and thirsting for righteousness, mercy, purity of heart, and peacemaking add up to in this world? Likely? Some very rough pushback.

The good news is, if we're at the place of experiencing such persecution, it must be that we are also experiencing the abundant blessing Jesus has been promising all along. So, he says, rejoice. Be glad—receive all of this blessing! The world will not understand it, but you are no longer subject to the world; you are a servant of Christ.

## **A LIFE OF MISSION**

The ninth beatitude proves to us that Jesus wants us out in the world bearing his name. The beatitudes are not a code of personal development or piety; rather, the beatitudes give us a framework by which to engage the world.

And why would the attacks of the world be cause for rejoicing? Because being reviled would not happen if we were not making true, effective efforts under the Lord's leading to show the world a new way—the way of creatures rightly dependent on their loving Creator.

Something to be mindful of in light of this beatitude: there is no need to look for persecution; it is a measure of obedience to God inasmuch as it happens to us as we seek to follow him, not in our pursuit of it.

In what ways have you experienced disdain from people because of your obedience to God? How have you experienced the presence of Christ amidst even the most subtle persecution?

# DAY TEN



## WHAT JESUS SAID

Seeing the crowds, he [Jesus] went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

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

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

## A LIFE OF WORSHIP

When you read Jesus’ words above, which stand out to you most? Why? Over these ten readings, what have you learned about the pursuit of happiness and the meaning of a good life? Turn your thoughts into a prayer.

## A LIFE OF MISSION

Is there someone you’d like to talk with about happiness or the good life? Pass on the happiness: Is there someone you could serve or encourage this week?

## **WANT TO LEARN MORE?**

Church of the Resurrection has many classes, groups, retreats, and events to help you grow in faith. Find out more at:

<http://www.churchrez.org/article/formation/>

## **THANKS TO:**

Barbara Gauthier, for compiling readings from the Early Church

Sarah Scherf, for writing the worship & mission applications for Days 1, 2, 5, 7, 9

Johnmark Smith, for writing the worship & mission applications for Days 3, 4, 6, 8

Cindy Kiple, for designing the "Pursuit of Happiness" logo.

Meghan Robins, for copyediting.

Trevor McMaken, for editorial and design.

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Scripture references from the English Standard Version (ESV)  
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