

# Covenant of Love

Group Outlines from Schoenstatt

The Beatitudes # 7 [Part II]

## The Beatitudes (Part II)

*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.* We don't know any more what it means to be really hungry or thirsty. In the ancient world it was very different. The hunger that this Beatitude describes is no genteel hunger, which can be satisfied with a mid-morning snack. It is the hunger of someone who is starving for food, and the thirst of someone who will die unless given something to drink. In other words, how intense is your hunger for goodness and holiness in your life?

*Blessed are the merciful for they will receive mercy.* It means empathy. To put yourself in the shoes of another. It means the ability to get right inside other people until we can see things with their eyes, think things with their minds and feel things with their feelings. It is a deliberate identification with other people. It means that we are prepared to go through what they are going through.

*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.* This is a Beatitude that invites us to stop and think and examine ourselves. The basic meaning of the Greek word *katharos* is unmixed, unadulterated, unalloyed, i.e. pure. The pure in heart are those whose motives are always entirely unmixed. They have no hidden agenda, they have an undivided heart. They are transparent. It is seldom indeed that we do even our finest actions from absolutely unmixed motives. This beatitude demands from us the most exacting self-examination.

*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.* We know the word in Hebrew for peace "shalom". Peace here doesn't only mean the absence of war or trouble or conflict. It means everything that you need to ensure a person's highest good. Peace with God, in a special way, makes for a person's highest good. The blessing is on the *peacemaker*, not necessarily on the *peace lover*. It means, blessed are those who make this world a better place for everyone to live in. Abraham Lincoln once said: "*Die when I may, I would like it to be said of me that I always pulled up a weed and planted a flower where I thought a flower would grow*".

*Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* The eighth Beatitude is the martyr's beatitude. One of the outstanding qualities of Jesus was his sheer honesty. He never left people in any doubt what would happen to them if they chose to follow him. He was clear that he had come "*not to make life easy, but to make us great*". In the beginnings of the Church, the penalties which a Christian had to suffer were terrible beyond description. Everyone knows about Christians who were flung to the lions or burned at the stake, but these were kindly deaths. The Roman Emperor Nero wrapped the Christians in pitch and set them alight, and used them as living torches to light his gardens. Confronted with the choice, "Caesar or Christ?", the

early Christians uncompromisingly chose Christ. They utterly refused to compromise. The only crime of which Christians were guilty was that they set Christ above Caesar.

Life in the Covenant calls for heroism, where no compromise is admissible. Either one stays true to Jesus Christ whatever the cost in terms of reputation, life or possessions, or one denies him.

Jesus' audience at least partly includes "disciples" (5:1-2). Having described the appropriate lifestyle of disciples, Jesus now explains that a professed disciple who does not live this lifestyle of the kingdom is worth about as much as tasteless salt or invisible light-nothing.

When Jesus talked about Christians being the *salt of the earth* it made way for a compliment that even today stresses someone's worth and usefulness. We still say: "People like that are the salt of the earth". Salt was the commonest of all preservatives. It was used to keep things from going bad. Salt lends flavour to things. Christianity is to life what salt is to food. Christianity lends flavour to life. Robert Louis Stevenson once entered in his diary, as if he was recording an extraordinary phenomenon: "I have been to Church today, and am not depressed." Just as tasteless salt lacks value to the person who uses it, so does a professed disciple without genuine commitment prove valueless for the work of the kingdom.

Jesus pays us another great compliment here. He asks us to be the *light of the world*. He asks us to be what he himself claimed to be. He said: "I am the light of the world" (John 9:5). We should shine with the reflection of his light. A light is something which is meant to be seen. We should be seen as Christians. Jesus did not say: "You are the light of the Church"; he said "You are the light of the world". The light of Christ should shine through us everywhere. A light is also a guide. It makes the way clear.

### Questions for Reflection

1. Place each Beatitude beside your own life. Have I grown in this area? Do I feel closer to Jesus when I try to be like him?
2. How can we keep our Covenant life so alive, that we remain "salt of the earth" and "light of the world"?

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