



THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Formation in the Christian Contemplative Life

64: The Beatitudes: Healing the Emotional Programs, Part 2 (cont.)



Photo by Diane Walker

*You have heard it said,
"Love your friend, and its unwritten companion,
'Hate your enemy.'
I'm challenging that.
I'm telling you
love your enemies
and pray for those who persecute you,
that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.
He causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good
and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.
If you love those who love you, what reward will you get?
Are not even the tax collectors doing that?
And if you greet only your brothers [and sisters],
what are you doing more than others?
Do not even pagans do that?
Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect."*

- Matthew 5:43-48 (The Message)

And thus, does Matthew's seminal work on the Sermon on the Mount conclude. Fr. Thomas ends his commentary on the Beatitudes in this way:

"The Beatitudes are an assimilation of the values of Christ and of the Gospel. And thus, they become one's own and one understands them – the Gospel and the teaching of Jesus – from inside by personal experience. And not just spiritual consolation, but the even greater experience of struggling with the difficulties of life with dependence on Christ but without necessarily feeling his encouragement or consolation – standing on one's own two feet, in other words, and believing in God's help without demanding that it be felt.

"...Don't take too passive or give too passive a meaning to some of these wisdom sayings of Jesus in which he urges us to accept what is. He always wants us to be ready to do something about the situation once we've accepted it. So the choice, then, or the discretion that has to develop as we gain freedom of choice from our compulsions and can decide what to do, is to listen carefully to the inspirations of the Spirit to see if we are called simply to endure something for the love of God; or, not only to endure it, but to do something about it.

"...The ultimate project of Jesus is to engage us in the redemption of the world and in sacrificing ourselves for that redemption after his example. So that to love more greatly, to be more concerned, is the way that the Beatitudes are imparting the happiness of God which is to show his love and to make the sun shine on the good and the not so good and on those who respond and those who do not respond.

"[And ultimately,] the big "I" of Jesus Christ becomes our "I"; that is, our identity is now in Christ and no longer in our own interests alone. And if we have interests, we're always ready to give them up at the prompt request of the One with whom we are in union and who is the senior partner, so to speak, of the firm."

-Thomas Keating, from the Session 63 video

A Meditation

"God sees all that he has made, and it is very good. It is good because he sees it, because he sees it as good. God's vision is not a response to beauty, it is its cause. In our own small way, we, too create by our seeing, as we can sometimes discover in our moments of artistic creativity. The painter does not merely see and record a scene of beauty, he creates it. What he has seen is enriched by his seeing, it comes into its own in his vision of it.

"The Christian is the artist in creation, the poet, the painter, the musician, and he knows this, he discovers his vocation in the world, when he comes to be haunted by a vision... I am not saying that all Christians must become artists; most of us do not have the talent to paint or write poetry or compose music...but we are all called to something not unlike the artist's way of life: to be haunted by something that will not let us go, to be dragged, almost unwillingly at times, in quest of a vision we have glimpsed. Because of this we must, we cannot help ourselves, we must take one more look at things, in case, in case... We may be prudent men and women, able to make all kinds of calculations; but what we have seen cannot be confined within prudence and calculation. There is a power of life, of light, of beauty, of truth, welling up within us and almost forcing us to surrender ourselves to it, to become its vehicle of expression.

"...I was drowsy, but my heart was awake. Listen!
My lover beats at the door.
 'Sister, my love,
open and let me in
 my dove, my perfection,
my head is soaked with dew
 hair drenched with the drops of night.'
-- 'I am already undressed,
 why should I get dressed again,
I've washed my feet
 and why should I get them dirty?'

He took his hand off the bolted door
 And my heart sank...
I got up to let him in,
my hands sticky with myrrh (Canticle 5:3-5)."
- Simon Tugwell, *The Beatitudes: Soundings in Christian Traditions*

To Practice

- As we conclude our study of the Beatitudes, what are you called to take with you? Perhaps a new insight, a new way of looking at the world, however small.

Resources for Further Study:

You may wish to read Chapter 18 in *Invitation to Love* (20th anniversary edition, Chapter 17 in older editions).

You may wish to read *The Beatitudes: Soundings in Christian Traditions*, by Fr. Simon Tugwell, O.P.

Notes and Reflections: