

"Blessed"

Matthew 5:1-12

3 February 2008

The Rev. Todd R. Goddard, pastor
Zion West Walworth United Methodist Church

Matthew 5:1-12

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

- "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
- "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.
- "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.
- "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.
- "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
- "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
- "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- "Blessed are you when people 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 in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Prayer.

Too often we throw around words
As if they are unbreakable,
With little or no regard for their use;
As if they had
no origin, history, or precedence.
We carelessly insult one another
(sometimes unintentionally)
Employing phrases or words
That are often disproportionate
To the issue at hand
In a stake of one-upmanship,
A fit of rage,

Or an unsightly surge of testosterone.

"Choose your words carefully"
Our mothers rightly taught us.
Do not bring shame to your family,
Or provide evidence of a poor
education,
Or an undisciplined life.
What would Jesus do?
Postmodern Christians beg to question
(ad nauseum);
What is Jesus saying?
Is probably the better quest to
embark,
For this leads us from

"Blessed"

Matthew 5:1-12

3 February 2008

© The Rev. Todd R. Goddard, pastor
Zion West Walworth United Methodist Church

What did Jesus say?

- Past -

to What is Jesus saying?

- Present -

leaving us with the question

What are we going to do about it
in the future?

Jesus is teaching the crowds

Preaching a well worn

And repetitively familiar sermon;

Choosing his words very carefully,

Making every word sing,

As my Homiletics professor once

encouraged.

"Blessed,"

He says.

What does blessing mean?

If I, as your friend, say to you,

"Blessings to you,"

You know that you have

my approval

my hope for all things good

to come to you

and those you love.

It is a wish,

A desire,

Filled with goodwill and kindness.

If I, as your pastor, say,

"Blessings to you,"

(as bishops, priests, and deacons have
done

for over 2,000 years)

then it means something more:

It is a formal blessing of the Church

To be given the special status

As being favored by God.

Being favored by God;

Allow those words,

For a moment,

To sink in.

This does not mean that we should

Go on a quest to win God's favor

For what we are already doing.

That would be a reflection of

Our will

Trumping God's will.

(Not a good thing)

What it does mean

Is that we must

Seek first the Will of God

Then,

Submit ourselves to God's Will

Completely.

When our submission

Intersects with God's Will

The Christian life experiences

Blessings,

An infusion of holiness,

The fulfillment of the Divine hope.

We are transformed

From mere observers

Of current events

To faithful disciples laboring

On Christ's behalf.

We become active participants

In the conversion of the world.

And, isn't that where we

All seek to be?

Divine holiness and

God's personal hope

Are given through

the carefully chosen

words of Jesus:

Blessed,

He says,

are the poor in spirit.

Blessed,

He says,

are those who mourn.

Blessed,

"Blessed"

Matthew 5:1-12

3 February 2008

© The Rev. Todd R. Goddard, pastor

Zion West Walworth United Methodist Church

He says,
are the meek.
Blessed are the hungry and thirsty.
Blessed are the merciful.
Blessed are the pure in heart.
Blessed are the peacemakers.
Blessed are the persecuted.
And blessed are you,
when you make a stand,
and take the stand
for me.

I see and hear a lot of people
Who wave their hands in the air
And say
they want to be more holy,
or
they want to be more like Jesus every
day.
Nice words,
I think to myself.
But it is only superficial talk
If those waving arms are not put to
work
Reaching out to those
Most vulnerable
And those
Most in need;
People like those
Listed in these beatitudes.
We give Jesus
Only lip-service
If we continue to accumulate wealth
And leave our brothers and sisters
Further and further behind
Living in poverty,
Fighting over our table scraps.
We fail to be an obedient people
And an obedient Church
If we give a stone
to those who hunger for bread
Or polluted drink
To those who thirst for living water.

We condemn ourselves
When we fail
To search under every rock,
behind every tree,
And to the depths of every cave
For peaceful solutions
To the turmoil and violence
that fills our globe.

In this era that lifts high
The value of self-promotion
And super-sized ego,
We Christians are called
to journey the road less traveled.
We are called to substitute out
The world's values
And to import
and put to use
The values of Jesus Christ:
Peace and justice,
Charity and forgiveness,
Protection and safety
For the least, the lost, the most
vulnerable.
The Holy Spirit infuses these values
Deep within our soul
At our baptism
... this is my blessed son or daughter ...
when we share the bread and the cup
... this is my body, this is my blood ...
and when our souls leave our worn out
bodies
ascends into heaven,
to be greeted by Christ himself
with words of blessings,
"Well done, good and faithful servant,
Enter now into my heavenly kingdom."

Adieu
Is the word the French have chosen;
Adios,
Or *A Dios*,
Is the Spanish contraction

Of *Vaya con Dios*,
Which is
a fond or tender
Blessing.

It is a blessing
Meaning

Go with God.

When we leave this table
When we leave this place,
Let us bid each other Adieu:

Go with God

That we might take God
into the world.

Amen.