

# A Right Relationship

Wayne Waibel – 02/01/2026

Any sermon based on the beatitudes is a particular challenge if only because of their general familiarity. What new insights can be gained after all these years of absorption into our collective memory? Where are the complexities to reveal in understanding? How do these nine specific blessings resonate today?

We could start at the beginning and revisit the similarities between the Mosaic Torah – the ten commandments, and the Beatitudes as the new covenant, but these blessings are not given as imperatives – they are not issued as a command to perform.

One could compare Jesus ascending a mountain before speaking to the multitudes with the Mount Sinai perch Moses issued the Torah from. Theologians love these sorts of comparisons, but I prefer the simple things. Understanding can be a complicated process that can get clouded further by introducing too many angles and perspectives.

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When we think of the word blessed, we generally assign words like happy or holy. The way that Christ uses the word in His Sermon on the Mount is more as a fortunate state of life.

The poor in spirit, those who mourn, are meek, who hunger and thirst for righteousness or who are persecuted, Jesus tells us, are fortunate. His is a perspective informed by the kingdom of God.

It may seem as though these blessings are entirely designed to address the multitudes that have gathered to hear the Master, but He is instructing His disciples.

He is providing them with the enlightenment of the kingdom of heaven. This is what life is like in the kingdom of God. And while His points seem at first blush to be anything but blessings – they are precisely what constitute a life lived in the pursuit of justice, mercy, and humility.

The minor prophet Micah provides us with a framework of grace that has not only withstood the test of time - it has played right into the fulfillment of scripture Jesus often refers to in defining His purpose in coming.

Fellowship with God is the product of God's decision to come to us. As Christians, we are commanded to love one another, so that the love of God might be made manifest in the world, and we respond to God's love by sharing it with others. That is a right relationship.

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The idea that God’s grace is only for a relative few is insulting to God. He wants us all in His kingdom. Every last one of us. That is why He uses the meek to overcome the strong, and the foolish to rise above the wise. It makes for a far more compelling statement.

Plus, it is His way. I believe that God positively delights in the hotsy totsy of the world being put in their place by those they view as far below their station in life. I know how blessed I feel when the good Lord takes a moment to remind me of how golden I am not.

It’s gotten to the point now that as soon as I start getting a little puffed up with my own accomplishments – I right away start looking around for the hammer to drop. And if I don’t drop it on myself, rest assured it’s coming, and it’s coming down hard.

The key to applying the Beatitudes in the twenty-first century world is to keep them simple, hopeful, and compassionate. We have the capacity for a depth of understanding that runs contrary to the sins of our past. We are indeed able to overcome the folly of our own leaders. Primarily because as Americans, we’ve been blessed with the freedom to rebel.

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And it all starts with that walking humbly with our God passage from Micah. Only when one walks humbly with God will one come to learn and understand how to do justice and love kindness.

I don't know how you can break it down any simpler. Not that maintaining humility is necessarily easy, but it does achieve a simple-ness if you do it right.

There is a certain elegance in a walk of humility. You become more concerned with listening and watching than with pontificating on your own leanings. You rely instead on a more purpose-oriented awareness.

It is in these moments where the poor in spirit become the forerunners of faith unbridled. In order that a more perfect world can evolve, we must all first let go of our flawed belief that we know best. Too many people think that religion consists of worshipping correctly and staying away from those who do NOT.

In the case of the disciples, each of the beatitudes would be almost counter intuitive to anything to which any of them had been exposed. Such a radical shift could only be accomplished through divine intervention.

It's of little wonder how Christ was able to move so many toward a more perfect world when you consider the first century oppressions that were in play.

Between the imperial Roman dominance and the Jewish elite – most of the regular folk fell into one if not all the categories being identified as blessedness.

The truly startling concept in this is the tense being used in His sermon. He was speaking in both the present and future tense. The old ways were not being examined – they were being fulfilled.

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What Jesus is informing his followers of is what a commitment to God looks like. A Christian ethic if you will. Provided, of course, that you are able to view the ethical world not as a threat to unity, but as the place where faith finds its legs.

If we start out on the Christian way, even if we are well aware that our understanding of the Christian doctrine is imperfect and inadequate, it will become clearer to us the more we do the will of God as we know it. We must begin with what we know and as we go on, we will understand more and more.

The ideal is there. The way to the ideal is committal to Jesus Christ; and for that committal we do not need to wait for perfect understanding – we can begin with love. Amen.