

Intro . . . Sermon the Beatitudes

He passes from the healing of bodies to the curing of souls.

When this sermon was preached the 12 were already appointed as apostles - many others had become His disciples. The sermon is addressed to them. The multitudes who also heard it are secondary.

We have here a complete and rounded exposition of the Christian ideal of character, of the perfect human life. The sermon was spoken to the Church, not the world. - Spoken into the ear of the Church & overheard by the world.

Characteristics -

1 - we have here the description of one ideal character, not of a group of individuals, a composite portrait.

2 - they are practical

3 - they are incumbent on all - Do not say, "Excuse me from this program."

Poets, philosophers & religious teachers in all generations have asked that question in varying phrase & have offered their answer. Who is the happy man? who understands the secret of true living? what kind of life is most worth living. We may think of the Beatitudes as the answer Jesus gave.

— Problem of the change in meaning of words. "Blessed" has become a sanctimonious, musty, remote word. "Happy" suggests a state too superficial

& lighthearted to convey the idea. Happiness depends on the things that happen to us. Blessedness is deeper, it is a matter of character, it can transmute what happens. The word μακαριος, is not the usual word for happiness, used in classical Greek for the attainment of εὐδαιμονία. Jesus is offering congratulations. The man who lives like this, He says, is getting the best out of life, living the kind of life that is really worth while.

The Beatitudes seem at first sight to offer a consolation prize for the defeated, a comfort for the heart-broken, a message for those who have failed in the struggle of life. —

This is not a message for men in general. It only makes sense in the setting of Jesus' teaching about God & His Kingdom —

This picture of the true citizen of God's Kingdom is in striking contrast to the popular dreams of a political rebirth of the nation & of a Kingdom of God erected on the necks of the conquered Roman oppressors. To the enthusiastic revolutionaries the Beatitudes would come like a dash of cold water.

Jesus spoke these words first to his disciples, a historical setting —

Characteristics of Beatitudes

- 1- Inwardness - rightness of heart or spirit - The Christian is to be free from hate as well as murder. He is to flee lustful thoughts as well as adultery.
- 2- Enthusiasm, earnestness, ~~perseverance~~ perseverance. - It is not the peace lover but the peace maker who is blessed. - the end of the sermon praises the man who acts upon the teaching & not the man who merely hears it with approval.
- 3- Detachment from the world's prizes & honours for the sake of allegiance to Christ
- 4- Love, not self-regard - it is possible to do the right thing in a wrong way

These are unattainable but not useless or impracticable - creates aspiration - lures us on - the greater the pain the more conscious he is of coming short.

The real question about any man is not so much what he has achieved as what he is aiming at. Jesus bids us seek God's approval, not man's.

The Sermon is not a set of rules. It is a series of illustrations. Show a man who has the spirit described in the Beatitudes will act. The real troubles & joys of life have their source in what we are.

Some think that Xianity goes out to do the work of salvage on the red fields of battle, picking up the wounded & helpless & giving them for the future a quiet alms-house of the spirit where they can take their rest & recover a certain measure of happiness - these were not offered by way of solace to for the defeated.

They were spoken to a group of strong, virile men whom Christ was sending out to turn the world upside down in His name —

Beatitudes are indispensable preface to rest of sermon, to its practical commands. - key to the Kingdom - that which follows is a closed book till we have mastered this opening page.

Jesus is describing the kind of man needed for his kind of world.

[It is not a question of how much is given up, but what is given up & on what altar the sacrifice made]

Christianity is a new atmosphere & it takes new men to live it

Jesus came not only to cultivate this new type of life but to produce it, Jesus imparting himself.

He was showing to men the real nature of the universe - He was revealing on what lines it was planned to run. Sin & selfishness are not truly natural.