

# **The Beatitudes of Jesus**

Excerpts from "To be Like Jesus" of Fr. P. Ribes, s.j.  
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## **Jessus Value System**

### **Note:**

- ✓ *These notes were prepared for an eight day retreat to a mixed group: "priests, sisters and lay people" at the N.V.S.C. Pune.*
- ✓ *Later on they were used for adult catechesis and other events.*

### **1. The Beatitudes as Jesus Taught them.**

**Slowly, read the text of the Beatitudes: and ponder on them** (*Take your time*)

#### **Matthew 5:1-10 (New International Version)**

Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them saying:

1. Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
2. Blessed are those who mourn,  
for they will be comforted.
3. Blessed are the meek,  
for they will inherit the earth.
4. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
for they will be filled.
5. Blessed are the merciful,  
for they will be shown mercy.
6. Blessed are the pure in heart,  
for they will see God.
7. Blessed are the peacemakers,  
for they will be called sons of God.
8. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

### **Reflect on the following statements and their implications**

- The Beatitudes are “Christ’s manifesto”. They contain the gist of “his programme”.
- The Beatitudes are the “heart of the Gospel”.
- The Beatitudes propose to us a new way of thinking, feeling, evaluating and living.
- The Beatitudes intend to “establish a new kingdom”, a “New World” based on a value system diametrically opposed to the values of our world.
- The Beatitudes are the touchstone of Christianity.

### **Take one Beatitude at a time and Discover the Values Enshrined in it**

*(If possible, put your reflections in writing.)*

**1<sup>st</sup> Beatitude:** Poverty of spirit. Detachment from earthly things, especially wealth and money. Humility. Simplicity. Repudiation of pomp, show and waste. Placing all our trust in God. Acceptance of our total dependence on God.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Beatitude:** Patience: Joy and endurance in suffering, opposition to self-gratification and running away from the hardships of life.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Beatitude:** Meekness: Gentleness as opposed to violence and force.

**4<sup>th</sup> Beatitude:** Obedience: subjection to the will of God. Surrendering oneself to God’s will as opposed to self-exaltation, self-sufficiency and self-will.

**5<sup>th</sup> Beatitude:** Mercy and forgiveness as opposed to revengefulness and to the spirit of just demands

**6<sup>th</sup> Beatitude:** Honesty in action. Not working for ulterior and mixed motives or self gratification and pleasure seeking. Right conscience as opposed to malice and hypocrisy.

**7<sup>th</sup> Beatitude:** Love of peace and of those working for concord and reconciliation. Condemnation of war, opposed to conflict and violent confrontation.

**8<sup>th</sup> Beatitude:** Principles: moral rectitude, conviction as opposed to opportunism, spinelessness, crookedness and deceit. Readiness to lay down one’s life for what is right and just.

## **2. The Beatitudes as Jesus Practiced them.**

### **Jesus the Man who lived the Beatitudes**

- Jesus’ life was a continuous proclamation in action of his beatitudes and programme.

- Jesus not only practised what he preached, but even more, he preached only what he practised.
- Jesus began by living a good and godly life, later on he put his living experience into words, those words became his Gospel, and his Gospel crystallized in the Beatitudes.
- That's why we find in Christ's life absolute:
 

Purity	Integrity	Authenticity
Wholeness	Openness	Authority
Credibility	Truthfulness	Conviction
Congruence	Consonance	Genuineness
- Were the text of the beatitudes to be lost, we could reconstruct it by summarizing Christ's life in eight sentences.

### **3. Questionnaire: Points for reflection and discussion**

- In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus confronts us with an unattainable ideal of morality, which we strive to achieve.
- Can you see this as a healthy or as an unhealthy tension for human life?
- What does actually cause frustration, attainable or unattainable ideals? Reflect. Discuss.
- Jesus does not primarily ask us to observe precepts but to follow him? Can you see the difference this can make in our life? Reflect. Explain. Discuss.
- Jesus gives us a personalized doctrine, not an abstract, notional one. Reflect. Discuss.
- How does this make him a unique teacher and which are the benefits we derive from it? Reflect. Discuss.
- Our growth in the following of Jesus should not be measured quantitatively but qualitatively. Reflect. Discuss.

### **4. The Counter Value System We Practice**

- Our lives are surely not the beatitudes in action such as it was in the case of Jesus.
- The problem with many of us good Christians is that we try to practise what we preach! And we fail!
- In fact, we should start by practising the beatitudes, and only then, preach them. That was the way of Jesus.
- Jesus only preached what he practised! This is why there was such congruity in his life and such convincing authority in his teaching.
- We should practise more and preach less!
- When what we preach is contrary to what we practise, our lives become incongruent and our preaching phoney and unconvincing. We are not "witnesses" of Christ but "counter-witnesses".

- The greatest tragedy of Christianity is that it lost its punch, its credibility by default! Nietzsche said to Christians: “If you are redeemed, show it a little more.”
- We do not intend being insincere and dishonest, far from it! The trouble is that being contaminated by the values prevalent in our society; we have been blinded to the fact that we are living a counterfeit Christianity.

## **5. For Personal Reading, Reflection and Prayer**

### **Texts of Matthew’s Gospel on the Value System of Jesus**

Mt. 5/1-14	The Beatitudes
Mt. 5/13-16	Being Salt and Light; evangelize by our example
Mt. 5/21-26	Forgiveness
Mt. 5/33-27	Honesty
Mt. 5/43-48	Love your enemies
Mt. 6/1-4	Honesty in dealing with God
Mt. 6/19-20	Value of money
Mt. 6/24-34	God and Possessions
Mt. 7/1-6	Kindness in thought
Mt. 4/1-10	Jesus rejects the values of the world. Christ’s Temptations
Mt. 8/18-22	Attachments keep us away from Christ – Would be-followers
Mt. 9/9-13.	Call of Mathew: Give up your wealth and follow Jesus
Mt. 13/53-58	Jesus rejected by his own town people; He was poor
Mt. 15/10-20	What makes a person unclean? Not externals! Only the heart!
Mt. 15/21-23	Jesus and Peter. God’s thoughts are not man’s thoughts.
Mt. 18/1-5	Who is the greatest? The humble and the lowest!
Mt. 19/13-15	Jesus blesses little children. Simplicity and humility.
Mt. 19/16-30	The rich young man. Give up all you have! Follow me!
Mt. 20/20-28	A Mother’s request. Who is great in the Kingdom?
Mt. 21/12-16	Jesus drives the merchants from the temple. God and money do not combine.
Mt. 23/1-12	Jesus warns us against the wrong values of the Teachers of the Law.
Mt. 23/13-28	Jesus condemns hypocrisy.
Mt. 26/36-46	Jesus in the Garden. Submission and faithfulness till the very end.
Mt. 26/57-68	Honesty and courage to stand for the truth.
Mt. 27/11-14	Jesus and Pilate. Greed for Power. Lack of courage.
Mt. 27/32-44	Jesus’ last moments. His courage and compassion.

## **6. Personal Examination**

- What are your ideals, goals and loves in life? In other words what do you want most to get out of life?
- Suppose that the Gospels were lost, by looking at your behaviour would people ever be able to discover - the beatitudes - the values and the attitudes of Jesus? Explain what makes you say so.
- Do you try to practise what you preach? With what success? What does this do to you and to others?
- Could you preach what you practise? Why?
- What things should you change in your life to be more like Jesus? How will you go about it?

### **Sources for Complementary Reading On the Beatitudes:**

*Jerusalem Bible Catholic Commentary*

*William Barclay's 'The Plain Man looks at the Beatitudes'.*