

“BE STILL AND KNOW”

Based on Matthew 5:1-12

In ancient days, Moses came down the mountain, carrying the Ten Commandments on heavy stone tablets. While we know it as a list of “Do Not’s”, it was much more than that. The commandments built a framework about how to live, as people, and as communities. While the frame of society was built around things one should ‘not’ do, it also implied that there were things one ‘should’ do. So while one should not ‘covet’ or be envious of things your neighbor had, there was an equal expectation that one should ‘share’ things with a neighbor if they were in need. One honoured their mother and father, but understood also, a responsibility to care for the elderly, or those who no longer had family to support them. This implicit understanding of the commandments ensured that everyone in the village was cared for, fed, and had a place to sleep. At least in theory.

Jesus, we are told, walked up a similar mountain, sat down, and began to teach His disciples. Today we call this passage, “The Blessed’s”. Like the commandments, these words too, gave light and voice to those of the world who were voiceless, invisible to the powers that be, and often considered unimportant. Like much of Jesus’ teaching, He rattled the cages of many, by insisting that the Good News was not just for the rich, or the well positioned, or the

politically correct of His day. The Good News was for everyone. The Good News was a matter of the soul, not a reflection of your Savings Account!

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. (v2-4)

“Special blessings and prayers,” Jesus might have said, “For those who struggle to see the some of the glorious light the day has to offer, and not only the dark shadows that lurk at the corner of their vision. Walk gently with those who are grieving: the loss of a partner, friend, child, or dreams and plans that must be now be set aside. They are overwhelmed with loss, and need us to hold them up until they are strong enough to stand tall again.” And so on, down the list of ‘Blessed’s’, Jesus taught.

These same words have journeyed with our soldiers and their supports through the wars and conflicts of our history. Many have marched with the words, “Blessed are the peacemakers,” believing their efforts, and perhaps their sacrifice was in the name of peace, for justice (v6), against persecution (v10), and to bring mercy (v7) where possible. Those who remained at home and worried and prayed, I

suspect, clung just as tightly to these same words.

“But we are not at war, anymore” you might say. I would disagree. We are in the midst of a different kind of war these days. Setting aside for a moment the fact that our military remains engaged in various activities around the world, and that we know very well from the evening news, there are places around the world deep in the turmoil of civil conflict and terrorist activities, we here, in our relatively safe and comfortable place in North America, wage a different kind of war: a war against indifference; a war against aggressive language and tactics designed to divide us, rather than unite us; a war against a society that fears its neighbor, instead of lending them a cup of sugar; a war against the continual look for conspiracy and malicious intent; a war against that attitude that, “It’s all for one, and I’m the one!”

These things are not new. There has always been indifference by some, and a bad attitude by others. But it would appear these days, a growing tolerance and backhanded encouragement of these behaviours. “Who cares?” you might be quietly saying to yourself. “We should care. As a society, we should care. As a church, we most definitely need

to bring voice to the fact that we care. Why? Because Jesus said, “Don’t forget about the timid people of the world. Don’t forget about the hungry children. Don’t forget about those who aren’t getting a fair chance. They are important too. And somebody needs to speak up for them.”

A few things to consider:

1) In a world that seems to have forgotten it’s manners, if the church doesn’t remind people how to look after one another, who will?

2) There are people in our community who are frail, and frightened, and need a safe place to land once in a while. There are people in our pews who are frail and frightened and

need a safe place to land once in a while. We are that place.

3) Each of us, somewhere deep within ourselves, grieves, or cries out for justice, or walks the line of un-peaceful situations, or is hurt from insults we feel have been directed our way. Each of us is fragile in some way and needs to feel cared for by someone else. Each of us is thirsty to be blessed in some way.

One final thought. While the word ‘blessed’ is most often translated from the Greek into the word ‘happy’, it sometimes can mean ‘happier’. Imagine how our thinking about people and the world might change if we were to switch the ‘Blesseds’ up a little. The meek and the timid are ‘happier’ than the rest of us. Those who make

‘peace’ in situations of conflict are ‘happier’ because they see people getting along once again.

Those who are struggling are ‘happier’ when they find a solution before them.

Why?

Because they see God. (v8). Because they have relied on God. Because they have trusted God. And in the end, brothers and sisters in Christ, are we not all supposed to rely and trust on Him?

Be a blessing to others.

Know that you are blessed.

Be still and know; you are a child of God.

Amen.