

Handout 1: Matthew Lesson 6

Blessing #2: *Blessed are they who mourn ...*

- *True, I was born guilty, a sinner even as my mother conceived me (Ps 51:5).*
- *I acknowledge my guilt and grieve over my sin (Ps 38:19).*
- *So submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you of two minds. Begin to lament, to mourn, to weep. Let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy into dejection. Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will exalt you (Jam 4:7-10).*

The first call to confession and repentance is in found in Genesis 3:9-13 where God asked Adam and Eve four questions:

1. “Where are you?” (Gen 3:9)
2. “Who told you that you were naked?” (Gen 3:11)
3. “Have you been eating from the forbidden tree?” (Gen 3:11)
4. “Why did you do that?” (Gen 3:13)

The first question called Adam and Eve to an examination of conscience.

The second question was a call for an admission of sin.

The third question was a call to bear the accountability for the sin committed.

The fourth question was an invitation to repent their sin in an act of contrition and in turning away from sin to turn back to God.

Promise #2: *For they will be comforted.* The English word “comfort” is derived from the Latin word *cumfortare* (com-for-tar-ay). It is the root of the word ‘fortitude,’ which means *that strength or firmness of mind or soul which enables a person to encounter danger or to bear pain with coolness and courage (The New Webster Dictionary).*

The International Critical Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew makes three interesting points concerning this promise (page 448-49).

1. The passive tense used in the Greek text is a “divine passive.” It is God who will comfort those who mourn.
2. The comfort God will offer is not a comfort that can be known in a worldly sense, but it is instead a supernatural comfort in that it will be fulfilled only by the coming of the Son of God into His Kingdom.
3. It is not mourning for mourning’s sake that will receive this divine consolation, but it is instead God’s divine grace that will come to those who mourn the suffering that sin causes in their lives and in the collective force of mankind’s sin in world.

Access to that comfort is made possible through the grace of God extended to believers in the Sacrament of Reconciliation (see CCC 1470). Our Savior gives us the same assurance in John 5:24: *Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes in the one who sent me has eternal life and will not come to condemnation, but has passed from death to life.*

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Blessing #3: *Blessed are the meek* The Greek word *praus*, [pronounced prah-ooce'], means "mild, humble, or meek" and is only found four times in the New Testament (see below). It is another Greek word to which Christians gave a uniquely Christian character. To the pagan Greeks the word often implied condescension, but to the Christian "meekness" became the symbol of a higher Christian virtue, implying submission of the human will to the will of God.

Matthew 5:5	<i>Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land.</i>
Matthew 11:29	<i>Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves.</i>
Matthew 21:5	<i>Say to daughter Zion, 'Behold, your king comes to you, meek and riding on an ass, and on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.</i>
1 Peter 3:4	<i>...but rather the hidden character of the heart, expressed in the imperishable beauty of a gentle [meek] and calm disposition, which is precious in the sight of God.</i>

Christian "meekness" is based on humility which is expressed in the New Testament as the supernatural quality that is the outgrowth of a renewed nature. This renewal can only come when we surrender our lives to God and seek His divine will in our lives.

The first beatitude places us before the throne of God. The second purifies us and the third places us in the hands of the Master as we submit in meekness and humility to His will and His plan for our lives.

Our promise for submitting in meekness to God's plan for our lives is Promise #3:
... for they will inherit the land.

Bible scholars both ancient and modern have seen in this blessing and its promise an allusion to Christ's victory in breaking of the power of Satan's dominion over the earth. Satan no longer has the power to dominate us because we have been reborn through our baptism into the family of God. We belong to the God who created and dominates the earth, and as His children and co-heirs with Christ, we inherit the earth/land: *...for God willed creation as a gift addressed to man, an inheritance destined for and entrusted to him* (CCC # 299).

This interpretation of the "land" is supported by passages in the Old Testament where the blessing of "the land" usually refer the land of Israel (i.e., Gen 12:1; Ex 3:8; 6:8; 20:12; Lev 25:18-19; Num 14:8; 20:12; Dt 30:20; etc.). In this interpretation, the children of God and the co-heirs of Jesus Christ receive the renewed promised blessing of dominion over the earth (see Gen 1:28) through the authority of God's vehicle of salvation on earth—the "new Israel" of the universal Church.