

## **“Getting It Right”**

Rev. Brian Henderson • November 6, 2011

Text: Matthew 5:1-12

Today’s gospel reading marks the start of a series of sayings attributed to Jesus. Within the context of Matthew, these sayings take place on a mountain. Throughout Matthew’s gospel whenever something happened on a mountain...people were to pay attention...something significant was taking place.

So...we’re to pay attention today. Don’t tune out...don’t fall asleep...reflect with me for just a few moments.

Further the opening of our text tells us a few more things...there is a crowd within Jesus’ hearing as well as Jesus’ disciples. This text prompts us to imagine Jesus instructing his disciples who in turn will eventually go out to share what they’ve learned with the crowds and communities of their day.

I believe our challenge today is to share with others—the crowds of our day—a faith that is rooted in a love for God, a love for others and in a commitment to peace, justice and mercy.

Verse one tells us that Jesus sat down. This too is significant. When a rabbi sat down...folk knew that something deep and meaningful...something significant and substantial was about to be spoken.

The attention of first century folk reading or hearing Matthew's gospel would have been heightened... Jesus has climbed a mountain and he has sat down...

They would have been thinking... "We better listen to what's coming..."

And what comes are words to remind people of all time, including us, that God's way of being and God's way of love turns the world's values upside down.

*Blessed are the poor...in spirit...folk who are pushed to the margins, folk who haven't a penny to their name, folk who no longer have a stable mind or even a sturdy frame...*

*Blessed are those who mourn—those who see and feel the pain of all that is not right in our world...our world needs more mourners...*

*Blessed are the meek—people who are gentle, humble, considerate and tender...*

*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for all that is right...blessed are those who are willing to stand up and speak out about something or someone that does not reflect values of justice or equality for all...*

*Blessed are the merciful...or as Marcus Borg might say,  
Blessed are the compassionate...*

*For you see...true compassion is a deep awareness of the suffering of another coupled with the wish to relieve it—and then to do something about it. Heaven knows our world needs more compassion and more folk to be compassionate. As a church too often we don't do well in this department...we're usually too quick to point out who's in and who's out and we fail to listen to people's stories and realities and why things really are the way they are.*

*Blessed are the pure in heart... those who are genuine and sincere...or as someone else has said, those whose outward deeds match their inner commitments... doesn't it seem that too often the folk who succeed, succeed with poor and selfish motives?*

*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be children of God. This is a tough one. We tend not to like peacemakers...or at least...what peacemakers do. We often fail to overlook the reality that the world in which Jesus lived was a world ruled by religious and political and military and social powers.*

Kind of sounds like today, doesn't it?

In his attempt to introduce people to peace, Jesus challenged through everyday conversations the religious, political, military and social powers of his day. About this....Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., said...

“The church at times has preserved that which is immoral and unethical....called to combat social evils, it has remained silent behind stained-windows....how often the church has been an echo rather than a voice, a taillight behind the Supreme Court rather than a headlight guiding [people] progressively and decisively to higher levels of understanding.”

Jesus, the peacemaker, preached about and against the unfairness and injustice of powerful structures. Ought we not to do the same? Peacemakers, Jesus said, are children of God.

Jesus also said, “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake...Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you on my account.”

When we seek to tell the story of Jesus...when we seek to emulate the life Jesus lived, when we strive *to be a Christ-like community that experiences and shares God’s love*, we can count on the fact that not everyone will like what we do...everyone didn’t like what Jesus did...

As we move from one year to the next here at Calvary, will you commit with me to helping this place reflect more and more *a Christ-like community that experiences and shares God’s love*? Let’s not let the world’s values be ours...and when necessary...let’s not let the “Church’s” traditional values determine or dictate how best we can emulate Jesus’ way of love and being for today.

As we move closer to Commitment Sunday, as we move closer to 2012, may we do together what none of us can do on our own. Amen.