

I. Revolution 9

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A. *Matthew 5:1-12 (NRSV) When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. {2} Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying: {3} "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. {4} "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. {5} "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. {6} "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. {7} "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. {8} "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. {9} "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. {10} "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. {11} "Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. {12} Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

II. Attitude redefined!

A. If Jesus could have just stopped at blessed are the peacemakers, everything would have been so simple.

B. Think about it; what's not to love about people who are:

1. Poor in spirit, humble, selfless people.
2. People who mourn and show compassion; the world needs more of that attitude.
3. We value meekness in others, even though we might not fit the mold.
4. We all have an inner hunger and thirst that only a higher power could satisfy.
5. I can see how mercy produces mercy.
6. When I see the innocence of a child's heart, I can understand that purity of heart is a good thing. The world would be a better place if our hearts were pure.
7. Who can argue with peace? Actually that is a bit of an oxymoron, and people do argue over peace, but we all want it.

C. Nobody crucifies you for writing words like these.

D. Without the final two statements of Jesus, he might as well be writing greeting cards. Nothing He said up until this point would get you into any trouble.

E. But now the trouble begins, now the die is cast: *{10} "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. {11} "Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. {12} Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

F. Rarely are people persecuted for virtue, but when you claim that virtue is based not just on your actions, but on a right relationship with God, people get offended.

G. When you begin to claim allegiance to a king who rules another kingdom, separate from the kingdom in which you are living, you make people uneasy, even angry.

H. Jesus warns His followers that He didn't come into the world to be popular, to be acceptable, to be politically correct, but to let people know that they worship false gods and that He is the Way, The Truth and The Life.

I. His warnings proved to be true.

J. Jesus' early followers would be accused of cannibalism as the words of the Lord's supper, "This is my body....This is my blood... eat and drink" were misinterpreted.

K. Their meetings became known as Love Feasts because of the love they discovered in their new community based on their common love for Jesus, but soon it was rumored that they met for orgies.

L. Jesus had warned that when people followed Him families often would be divided because of religious ritual and religious practice that broke from tradition, so Christians were labeled anti-family.

- M. Because Jesus taught that one day He would return and the world as it was known would cease to exist, they became known as doomsday prophets; and often their words and actions were misinterpreted and The Revolution was thought to be an attack on the Roman Empire instead of an attack on the human heart.
- N. To top it off, at this time in history, the Roman rulers had deceived themselves into thinking they were divine. It wasn't enough to just be a loyal citizen of Rome, a tax payer, but you also had to worship the Emperor.
- O. It was a severe clash for followers of Jesus who confessed only Jesus as Lord, to live in a culture that demanded that Caesar was Lord, and your life was threatened if you didn't follow the Nationalistic Pledge.
- P. It was Kingdoms in Conflict.
- Q. For several centuries, the church of Jesus Christ would come under a lot of persecution until Constantine made it the church of the Roman Empire, the Roman Catholic (Universal) Church
- R. When I spoke with Thomas Gilmore, who was a part of the Civil Rights movement of the 60's he told me that he had begun reading Fox's Book of Martyrs, that chronicles the sacrifice and pain that many of the early followers of Jesus endured while proclaiming Jesus is Lord. I was touched by this leader and former sheriff who kept the peace without wearing a gun, now a retired pastor who would be reflecting on the persecution, torture and death of our spiritual ancestors.
- S. Unfortunately, The Christian Church, hasn't always practiced the virtues of the Beatitudes, and has been found guilty during several times in history of its share of persecution throughout history.

III. Jesus defines Greatness.

- A. Donald Trump has a book out with a set of values that he uses in order to be successful, his own Beatitudes of a sort.
- B. The book is titled, *Think Big and Kick_____*. You can fill in the blank.
- C. Some of them are good.
1. *Be as tough as nails and willing to kick.....*
 2. *Never do anything for money. Do it for love.*
 3. *Develop solid gut instincts, and act on them every day.*
 4. *Work so hard you end up creating your own luck.*
 5. *Be intensely paranoid and never stop watching your back.*
 6. *When wronged, fight back with a vengeance. Always get even.*
 7. *Try to maintain your momentum in business. Don't lose it.*
 8. *Focus. Never, ever rest on your laurels or believe your own PR.*
 9. *Be a realist and anticipate problems. Always sign a prenuptial.*
 10. *No matter what, think big. What you dream about is what you do.*
- D. I sort of like Donald Trump, but achieving greatness in the world, having worldly success, is not the goal of the Gospel.
- E. Charles Colson in his book *Against the Night*, (p32,33) Warns of the real danger that faces the Church in America, and I think may be the great reason that Jesus delivered this message to His followers: For when people care only about themselves, they are not easily motivated to care about their neighbors. When relationships are based on mutual gain and people elevate their own needs above the needs of others, community life devolves into the survival of the fittest. The weak become prey for the strong. And in the end, rank individualism destroys even the best of societies.
- F. Last week some of us participated in an offering for Myanmar, Burma. We gave \$2739.55 to help with relief there and in China.

1. This note was written on one of the offering envelopes and placed in the basket: Thank you for donating to my country.
2. The Gospel of Jesus Christ compels us to live outside ourselves.
3. Not by our virtue, but by the virtue of Jesus Christ.

G.12} *Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

H.William Barclay: "One of the outstanding qualities of Jesus was his sheer honesty. He never left men in any doubt what would happen to them if they chose to follow him. He was clear that he had not come to make life easy, but to make men great."

I.Many people interpret the message of the Gospel that Jesus came to make our lives easy.

J.Jesus describes greatness on His terms. People who pursued the Kingdom of God, who called on Jesus as Lord, would find a new definition for greatness.

K.(*Mat 20:20-28 NRSV*) *Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to him with her sons, and kneeling before him, she asked a favor of him. {21} And he said to her, "What do you want?" She said to him, "Declare that these two sons of mine will sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom." {22} But Jesus answered, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?" They said to him, "We are able." {23} He said to them, "You will indeed drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left, this is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father." {24} When the ten heard it, they were angry with the two brothers. {25} But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. {26} It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, {27} and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; {28} just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."*

L.(*Mark 10:42-45 NRSV*) *So Jesus called them and said to them, "You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. {43} But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, {44} and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. {45} For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."*

M.(*Mark 13:1-19 NRSV*) *As he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!" {2} Then Jesus asked him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down." {3} When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately, {4} "Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign that all these things are about to be accomplished?" {5} Then Jesus began to say to them, "Beware that no one leads you astray. {6} Many will come in my name and say, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray. {7} When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is still to come. {8} For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. This is but the beginning of the birth pangs. {9} "As for yourselves, beware; for they will hand you over to councils; and you will be beaten in synagogues; and you will stand before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them. {10} And the good news must first be proclaimed to all nations. {11} When they bring you to trial and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say; but say whatever is given you at that time, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. {12} Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death; {13} and you will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. {14} "But when you see the desolating sacrilege set up where it ought not to be (let the reader understand), then those in Judea must flee to the mountains; {15} the one on the housetop must not go down or enter the house to take anything away; {16} the one in the field must not turn back to get a coat. {17} Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing infants in those days! {18} Pray that it may not be in winter. {19} For in those days there will be suffering, such as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, no, and never will be.*

N. *(Luke 9:23-26 NRSV)* Then he said to them all, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. {24} For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it. {25} What does it profit them if they gain the whole world, but lose or forfeit themselves? {26} Those who are ashamed of me and of my words, of them the Son of Man will be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.

O. Barclay: There are so many of us who have never in our lives made anything like a real sacrifice for Jesus Christ. The moment when Christianity seems likely to cost us something is the moment when it is open to demonstrate our loyalty to Jesus Christ in a way that the world can see.

P. The Church of American Culture, especially of my generation, has not known persecution, but we suffer none the less from an apathy of having our religious freedom in some way protected.

Q. The Church has had to struggle to maintain its moral compass, and we have been and are still attacked on its relevancy to a culture that says anything goes.

R. Charles Colson, *Against the Night*, (p32,33) In 1978 President Carter's attempt to reinstate draft registration, newspapers across the country carried a photo that I have carried in my mind ever since: a young Princeton student defiantly wielding a poster emblazoned with the words, "Nothing is worth dying for."

To many this seemed a noble celebration of life. But if nothing is worth dying for, is anything worth living for.

While such new barbarians know no higher law than self-interest, who see nothing to champion beyond their own individualism, are celebrating their own nihilism, they are, in effect, torching the very props of virtue on which our societal experiment -- and our very existence depend.

S. Barclay: It is inevitable because the Church, when it really is the Church, is bound to be the conscience of the nation and the conscience of society. Where there is good the church must praise; where there is evil the Church must condemn—and inevitably men will try to silence the troublesome voice of conscience. It is not the duty of the individual Christian habitually to find fault, to criticize, to condemn, but it may well be that his every action is a silent condemnation of the unchristian lives of others, and he will not escape their hatred.

IV. Counter

A. These verses don't really just conclude the Beatitudes, they are actually the beginning of Jesus' radical call to discipleship, to pick up his Cross.

B. Because we have a faith worth living for, we have a faith worth dying for.