

23rd Sunday After Pentecost (Series B)

November 1, 2015

Gospel: Matt 5:1-12

Epistle: 1 John 3:1-3

Lesson: Rev 7:(2-8) 9-17

Psalm: Psalm 149

CLB Commentary: The NIV Application Commentary, by Michael J. Wilkins

It is the Spirit's work of conviction that brings a person to the place where she or he can respond to the invitation to the gospel of the kingdom, and in that they are blessed. In the same way that the Beatitudes express the blessedness that comes to the crowds from the convicting work of the Holy Spirit, they also express the blessedness that comes from the renewing work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a disciple...

The individual characteristics of the Beatitudes are not self-produced, nor can we simply learn or emulate them in an attempt to bring them about in our lives. They are products of a life energized by the Spirit of God. They are, like the listing Paul gives in Galatians 5:22-23, the fruit of the Spirit. They are a holistic view of what the Spirit will produce in the life of a disciple of Jesus who is walking in his ways and is being transformed into his image.

So it does help tremendously to study the Beatitudes, because they reveal the values of the kingdom of heaven. As in any study of Scripture, they show us God's ways in distinction from the world's ways and help us to know the right path. But the wonderful truth behind the study of the Beatitudes and our obedience to their truth as the Word of God is that the characteristics of the Beatitudes are ultimately produced by the Spirit of God.

Throughout church history the Beatitudes have been subjected to faulty interpretation that has led to extremes...The church I left in my teens was theologically liberal. They really did believe that the Beatitudes were an expression of the ideal life that humans need to pursue to find God. They rightly recognized that the Beatitudes are an ideal statement of the Christian life, but they mistakenly thought that they could do it on their own. Some groups have have contended that these characteristics are not for today's rough-and-tumble, sin-wracked world, but await some far-off future kingdom. Still others have based entire personal and ecclesiastical practices of pacifism and nonviolence on the Beatitudes' overriding centrality for a present-day theological system.

The Beatitudes are neither a means of entering nor of advancing in the kingdom. They are expressions of Spirit-produced kingdom life, revealing to the entire world that a transformation of creation is beginning in Jesus' disciples. That is why we are blessed.