

Sacrificial Anyway
East Ontario, St. Mary's and Holy Trinity
Feb 1st, 2026
(MATTHEW 5:1-12)

Holy God, may only the truth be spoken and only the truth heard. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

If Jesus were an entrepreneur, and he was making an investment pitch to venture capitalists—picture the Dragon's Den show—and he were to start his pitch with the Beatitudes, it would be the worst investment pitch in history, especially starting off on the note, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." At the same time, if Jesus were a politician, and he was making an inaugural campaign speech for—it doesn't matter—the Liberal Party, the Conservative Party, the NDP, or even the Green Party, and he were to begin his speech with the Beatitudes, it would again be the worst campaign rally ever. Now, while we as a nation sit on the edge of seats, watching our federal and province governments engage in a trade war with the USA, and, while we as a nation also sit on the edge of seats watching American Immigration agents round up anybody and everybody who they suspect on the basis of skin colour of being what you might call either an illegal immigrant or an undocumented citizen—while all this is going on: the fact that Jesus' Beatitudes are an economic and political suicide pact, should say everything we need to know to have a little doubt about the nature of economics and politics in Canada and the US.

The Beatitudes should make us all a little uncomfortable; but they should also ring in our ears like a birdsong your ear forgot over a long winter but then hears again in the spring and the birdsong lifts your head and opens your eyes to a goodness somewhere deep down. Let's walk through each of the Beatitudes. And since I know American Trumpism is on everyone's mind, and a new desire to strengthen our own country is on the mind, I want to submit a claim to you that you may accept or reject: that there is no economy and no political structure that can ever accomplish peace and justice for its people, unless we all govern our individual lives and nurture community with Jesus' Beatitudes.

And as we walk through the Beatitudes, I'm going to use a principle of mine to interpret each of them, which I'm calling "the sacrificial anyway."

"Blessed are the poor I spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Be the kind of person who doesn't need riches. The truth is, even if you have the biggest house, the nicest car, the nicest clothing, the best vacations, and all the cosmetic work the rich have, without a heart that is poor in spirit, your spirit will be *poor anyway*. Don't look for a life full of luxury and empty of soul, empty of love, empty of peace, empty of contentment. To be poor in spirit is to not need what a rich world is selling, and when you don't need what a rich world is selling, yours are the riches of the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.” It’s only by making space in ourselves for grief that healing can come. Reasons to mourn catch up with everyone, and you’re going to have to be sad and angry eventually anyway. Comfort comes to those who feel what is real, which leads to healing.

“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.” Meekness is an old Greek horse-term. A horse is meek, in the sense that a horse is dignified, strong, and powerful, yet gentle, vulnerable, and in need protection. We can hide our vulnerability and gentleness and need for protection under a hard shell of arrogance and ego and pride. But that only makes our inner softness weaker. The meek person has the inner strength to take a hit to their confidence without believing that they’re worthless. A horse’s skin is so sensitive it quivers under your hand without even touching them, but when a horse is confident around you, you can punch them and they hardly care. We can’t be weak and touchy and pathetic, especially when we hide it under a false front of bravado and ego. We might as well be meek, because we take hits in life anyway. The meek are vulnerable but can take a hit.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.” We can hunger and thirst for all kinds of things in life that God may or may not chose you give us. God doesn’t withhold righteousness from those who hunger

and thirst for it. We're going to hunger and thirst for something anyway, might as well hunger and thirst for what God really wants to give us.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.” The way the world works, we have to let things go anyway, because we can't control what other people do. Be merciful. We all make mistakes and need people to let it go. Others are going to make mistakes too, and we can't stop it, and it's going to get by us anyway. Let it go.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.” We're all going to meet our Maker anyway, might as well know God with a pure heart before we die. Don't die having lived dishonestly and with wrong motivations. Going to meet your maker will not be easy without a pure heart.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.” Even those who do violence in the world usually do it so that, in their own little corner of the world, they can find some peace, whether is on a billionaire's private island, or a man-cave or a spa. We all want peace anyway. Find it peacefully, and create peace where there is havoc; you'll actually feel like the child of God you are created to be.

Finally, I'll collapse the last two, blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake or for Jesus' sake. Honestly, there are going to be people who

dislike you in life anyway. Why not be disliked for caring too much about being a good person, being right with God and loving Jesus?

Let me sum up. Not needing what a rich world is selling (to be poor in spirit); feeling what's real (to mourn); being vulnerable but strong (meek); to desire what God promises (righteousness); to let mistakes go (to be merciful); to have honest and good motivations (purity of heart); to seek peace peacefully (peacemaking); to let yourself be disliked for what's right and good (to be persecuted); these are the foundations of blessing. Now, I'll take a rare moment to be controversial. Without these things, there is no number of immigrants we can deport, no number of queer people we can exclude, and there is no Canadian economy strong enough to ever make us blessed. Blessing starts and ends with the Beatitudes.

Thanks be to God. Amen.