

These first weeks of Ordinary Time continue developing what it means to become a disciple

To become a disciple is not so much physically traveling with the master

It is learning from him

Following his way of thinking

Following his example in how we treat others

How we respect them

Today we learn through the Beatitudes

Probably the most famous teaching Christ gave us

The Beatitudes are an answer to our first reading

Seek the Lord, all you humble of the earth

Seek justice

Seek humility

In other words, Zephaniah is calling for the people to reform their lives

They have lost something in their lives

They have lost their way

Seek the Lord

Israel is being called back to the Lord

After violating the covenant and turning to sin

They are called to seek righteousness

After acting arrogantly with themselves and God

Seek humility

And like we have seen so often

Following their turning from God

They are called to return to their God

And God will return to them

To do this, He will protect a remnant

A remnant that will be righteous and humble

Faithful to the covenant

And God will protect them

Guide them

And they will become the means of God's blessings to all

It is not that they will be rewarded for keeping the faith

It is God who will protect them

So they will keep the faith

So they will be the instruments in His hands to call his children home

We see this remnant in Paul's letter to the Corinthians

Consider your calling

Not many of you were wise by human standards

Not many were powerful

Not many were of noble birth

Rather God chose the foolish of the world

To shame the wise

He chose the weak

To shame the strong

He chose the lowly

To reduce to nothing those who are something

The uneducated, the weak, the foolish, common people

These are those God chooses

These are the remnant

These are the ones that become disciples

So that whoever boasts, should boast in the Lord

How do we live these lives?

Christ gives us the outline in the Gospel

His preaching and teaching has reached many people

Huge crowds began to gather to hear him

But he is not teaching them today

He goes up the mountain

He teaches his disciples

In a sense the remnant

And like the remnant,

It will be up to the disciples to bring this message to the people

The Beatitudes are the opening section of the Sermon on the Mount

These teachings have their foundation in ancient Jewish Wisdom literature

Describing a particular behavior

And the consequences that follow

The beatitudes

Paths of blessings, joy and happiness

These are the path to attaining divine life

And isn't that the ultimate meaning of human life?

Because what is human will end at some point

But what is divine goes into eternity

Jesus gives us 8 beatitudes

8 paths

4 positive

4 negative or counter-intuitive

Central to all of these is God's love or mercy

Blessed are the merciful

How do we increase our mercy?

By giving it away

Like love, the more we give away

The more we have to give away

There is no limit to God's mercy

When this is the source of our mercy

It grows and grows the more we empty ourselves

Blessed are the pure of heart

When we are focused on God primarily

When the other interests we have are fed from this

We enter into God's presence

And become filled with His divine life

Blessed are those that thirst for righteousness

What is the highest priority in your heart?

It is so easy to get caught up chasing things in the world

To thirst for things not of God

These lead to dis-satisfaction, un-restlessness in our lives

This becomes a good point of reflection

Is my heart restless? Am I seeking to fill it with things?

Things that ultimately leave me empty

Blessed are the peacemakers

If we have divine life within us

Mercy flows through us

Giving it away only increases it more

This leads to seeking righteousness

Becoming peacemakers

Leading to peace, joy and a connection with God and others

These positive paths are also reflected in negative paths

Paths that go against human intuition

These paths are all responses to the 4 things we seek to replace God

**St Thomas Aquinas tells us these are money, pleasure, power
and glory**

Blessed are the poor in spirit

This is not a condemnation of wealth

It is a formula for detachment

A way to use the wealth we have as a means of mercy for others

Blessed are those that mourn

The antidote for seeking pleasure at all costs

Being addicted to pleasure

This beatitude calls us to become detached from seeking pleasure

For the sake of pleasure

**When living this beatitude, we can become an instrument of
mercy for others**

Even when doing so costs us

When it requires self-sacrifice

If it is power that we seek

Blessed are the meek

In this we seek righteousness for others

This is not allowing ourselves to be run over

It is not a weakness

It is a strength that goes beyond physical strength

And if we have been blessed with worldly power

It is using that power not for my personal desires

But using it as a means of mercy for others

Blessed are those that are persecuted for the sake of righteousness

This is the antidote for glory

When we seek our own glory

We will roll right over other people

When we live this beatitude

We let go of seeking the approval of others

We no longer care what they think

And we become an instrument of mercy for others

We see the Beatitudes are not about theological theory

Things we need to study and write about

They are practical guides

They teach us how to walk in the footsteps of Christ

Putting away our arrogance and pompous attitudes

And walk in humility and meekness

Seeking to become compassionate to others

Motivated by the Gospel

Seeking to become peacemakers

In a world filled with scandal

We are called to go beyond the scandal

To become instruments of hope and mercy

To seek to build the Kingdom of God here and now

To become witnesses of the good news

To become the remnant of God

That is the promise of living the Beatitudes

And making them the cornerstones of our lives