

Neighborhood Communion Group
Discussion Questions
The Beatitudes, part 1

Background (Virtual Edition)

The idea behind neighborhood communion groups arose from the earliest Christian communities that gathered regularly in homes for a time of eating and talking, something often missing in our busy lives. At a time when people are social distancing, we crave being together more than ever, even virtually. Think of it as an electronic version of early church gatherings. Below, you'll find a Scripture passage, along with some suggested questions. As always, a neighborhood Communion group is a chance to enjoy food and food for thought.

Scripture Passage

Matthew 5:1-5

"When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

'Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

'Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth...."

Discussion

Matthew's Gospel records nine beatitudes spoken by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, the ones cited above being the first three. Beatitudes are marked by the first word in each, translated "blessed" here, although maybe better rendered as "honored." In each case, God appears to bestow honor on people society would not expect. With this in mind, think about the following questions:

- 1) While Matthew's version specifies "the poor in Spirit," Luke's version names "the poor." Do you think of those categories differently? In both cases the imagery is of those who feel completely at a loss, not just broke but broken. What does this say to you in a time of pandemic? How do the economic repercussions of the current crisis factor into your thinking? How are you feeling right now? Your family, your friends?
- 2) In God's reckoning, honor is also bestowed on those who recognizing their plight, find themselves in mourning. Comfort is promised. Unlike the first beatitude that says the reward is now, this comfort is still in the future. How do you make sense of this? Is a future promise enough to sustain one now? How is this any different from "pie in the sky" forms of Christianity? Can we be agents of comfort even now?

(More on back)

- 3) The third beatitude bestows honor upon the meek, those who do not feel the need to prove they are powerful but have a spirit of gentleness about them. In a time of pandemic, all of us feel powerless. How does this beatitude speak to you? The promised reward is inheriting the earth, which we usually associate with power-hungry world leaders. What do you make of the notion that the gentle will inherit the earth? And what about that future tense here again?