

One of our favorite passages is probably the Beatitudes. They bring us comfort. But as with much of what Jesus says, it also brings us challenge. Let us consider that as we pray through the Beatitudes.

O Lord...

You have said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." But we have been rich in pride and self-sufficiency. We refuse to believe that "apart from you we can do nothing." Forgive us we pray, and grant that we may have humble hearts, may we confess to our frailties with genuine repentance, and may we admit to needing you and cultivating an ever deepening dependence on you. "Blessed are the poor in spirit."

You have said, "Blessed are those who mourn." And while we may have mourned for a loss, we have not felt much sorrow for our sin. We have not mourned for the injustices, the hatred, the grief and pain so present in your world. Teach us to weep, to mourn for all that breaks your heart, that we might look within and seek to be a blessing to others. "Blessed are those who mourn."

You have said, "Blessed are the meek." But we have been aggressive, impatient, stubborn, wanting to be in control, putting ourselves before others. Help us bear your fruits of kindness, gentleness, patience, peace. Help us to truly love our neighbor as ourselves and follow you who said, "I am gentle and humble in heart." "Blessed are the meek."

You have said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness." But we have filled ourselves full with other things – possessions, sense of importance, overextended calendars, worry. Empty us of all that is not of you, and fill us with your Holy Spirit. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness."

You have said, "Blessed are the merciful." But too often we hold onto our anger, our resentment, wanting revenge. We forget the forgiveness that was won at such cost. Heal our bitterness, teach us to forgive and help us work toward restoration in our lives and world. "Blessed are the merciful."

You have said, "Blessed are the pure in heart." But our lives are cluttered with impure, manipulative and often selfish thoughts, motives and deeds. As we prepare to enter the season of Lent, we echo the psalmist, "Create in us clean hearts O God, and put a new and right Spirit within us." "Blessed are the pure in heart."

You have said, "Blessed are the peacemakers," But we live in a world where there is tension, where it's easier to take sides, where we are quick to judge, and where we want things our way. Grant us patience, understanding, compassion and love, even for, or maybe especially for, those with whom we disagree. "Blessed are the peacemakers."

You have said, "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness sake." We confess we often lack courage to stand up for you, and for what is right because we are afraid of what others will think. Help us be strong in our Christian principles, and faithful to you, without regard to what it costs our ego. "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness sake."

Lord, we pray to be able to live out these Beatitudes, that we might indeed know your blessings upon all our lives. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.