



Resource Centre

From our Churches

Author: Michelle Stoesz

Church: Sargent Ave. Mennonite Church

Date: Summer, 2006

Scripture: Matthew 5:3-16

This resource is part of a larger **From Our Churches** archives available as an inspirational resource to teachers, ministers and others of Mennonite Church Canada. Posted by permission of the author. Permission to reproduce and distribute is granted.

The Beatitudes – Summer Worship Devotionals

The Beatitudes dispose us to be open to the presence of God within us so that our Christian attitudes of social justice, peace, and mercy flow over in daily acts of congenial, compatible, and compassionate love and service... Implicit in each Beatitude is also a message pertaining to practical formation, that is, to the awareness of obstacles that may block the flow of grace in our being and of conditions that facilitate its release so that our hearts and lives may become more and more Christ-like. *Susan Annette Muto*

May you feel blessed as you read these blessings from God's Word. The promises of the Beatitudes are blessings if you live in the way the Beatitudes prescribe.

There were various resources in the organizing of this calendar. The booklet called, *Praying the Beatitudes of Jesus*, by Lois Barrett was used for the pondering questions. Another helpful book was *Kids and Blessings: Living the Beatitudes* by Sandi Hannigan and Eleanor Snyder. The definitions for each of the Beatitudes is from the book *Matthew: Believer's Church Commentary* by Richard B. Gardner. The Bible passages are quoted from the NRSV version.

There are blessings (right from the Bible) at the end of each page where you have the opportunity to put your name in the blessing, and receive a blessing from God. The pronouns used on each page are alternating him/her so it flows better. Insert whichever gender applies to you.

Blessed are the Poor in Spirit - June 18, 2006

The Poor in Spirit are those people who are stripped of all self-sufficiency, self-security, and self-righteousness.

Scripture: Matthew 5:3, Mark 9: 33 – 37, Psalm 5:1 - 7

Response:

- Write reflections about the poverty of spirit. What are the current issues in your life?
- Plant a special flower that will remind you of your need to rely on God.
- Invite a family with children over for a visit.

To Ponder:

- Imagine a world where the poor are considered blessed. What would that look like?
- “An essential part of this spirit is knowing that we don't have it all together and that we need help.” *Lois Barrett* How have you experienced poverty of spirit? How have you tried to take care of everything by yourself, without help from God?
- What do you need to empty from your soul in order to make room for God? How do children represent the “poor in spirit”?

Prayer: Feel the spirit of poverty; take the presence of God with you into each situation.

- Pray for the children at church
- Pray for a way to let go of self-security, self-sufficiency, and self-righteousness

Blessing: Blessed is (your name) when she is poor in spirit for hers is the kingdom of God.

Blessed are those who Mourn - June 25, 2006

The mourners are the people who have experienced loss and are suffering in the world.

Scripture: Matthew 5:4, John 11:17 – 45, Psalm 30: 1 - 12

Response:

- Make a card for someone who is mourning.
- Write down reflections about mourning and the current issues in your life?
- Take time to mourn with those who are mourning, taking the presence of God with you into each situation.

To Ponder:

- Read the passage again (Mt. 5:4) slowly. What is God saying to you through this promise? Are you mourning?
- What lessons have you experienced that have led to grief and mourning? What has helped you through the time of mourning?
- When has something good come out of loss and mourning? Often when people are in the depths of suffering they feel God closer to them than before. Why do you think this is?

Prayer:

- Thank you God that you are with us in our mourning.
- Lead me to pray for someone who is mourning.

Blessing: Blessed is (your name) when he is mourning, for his is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are the Meek- July 2, 2006

The meek are those people who are powerless to defend their own agenda, but trust God to deal with oppressors.

Scripture: Matthew 5:5, John 10: 1 – 18, Psalm 5

Response:

- Go for a nature walk and enjoy God's creation.
- Write a letter to a member of Parliament on an issue that is troubling you.
- Nature rubbings – Put a paper on top of a leaf (vein side up) then colour on the paper. How are the leaves different?

To Ponder:

- I wonder how Jesus is our good shepherd.
- I wonder how I can be gentle like Jesus.
- What would it mean for the meek to inherit the earth? What would that look like?
- What is God saying through this blessing? Are you meek? What does that look like to you? How would you change?

Prayer:

- Pray for someone who is meek
- Ask God what you can do for the people who are meek. How can I get involved God?

Blessing: Blessed is (your name), when she is meek, for she will inherit the earth.

Blessed are Those Who Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness - July 9, 2005

Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness want a deeper and right relationship with God.

Scripture: Matthew 5:6, Luke 14: 7 – 14, Psalm 36

Response:

- Write a story or poem about your deepening relationship with God.
- Read a book to deepen your relationship with God.
- Draw, make, or mold a cross to remind you to have a deeper relationship with God.
- Visit websites that will deepen your relationship with God (e.g. www.sacredspace.ie)

To Ponder:

- What if those who hunger and thirst for righteousness were blessed instead of persecuted?
- "There is no peace without justice, and there is not justice without peace." Barrett
What do you think of this statement? Do you agree with it?
- What do I hunger and thirst for the most? What would it be like to want righteousness, justice, and right relationships that much?
- How can we wait for God to bring about justice?

Prayer:

- Pray for a deeper relationship with God
- Pray for the church

Blessing: Blessed is (your name), when he hungers and thirsts for righteousness, for he will be filled.

God's People Now - July 16, 2006

Scripture: I Peter 2:9 – 10, Psalm 135: 1 - 7

God calls, equips and sends the church to engage the world with the reconciling Gospel of Jesus Christ. We are a community of disciples of Jesus, a part of the Body of Christ, covenanted together as congregations, area conferences, and a national church body. Gratefully responding to God's initiatives and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves and our resources to calling, equipping and sending the church to engage the world with the reconciling Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Response:

- Plan a picnic with friends – Call friends and make sure you have everything you need (equip). After the picnic send everyone home with a blessing.
- Go on the internet and check out www.mennonitechurch.ca/programs/witness/international/
- Write, email, or send a package to a missionary

To Ponder:

- How do I tell others about God? How can I serve God right where I am?
- What does it mean to be “God's People”? How is God calling me?

Prayer:

- Thank you God that I am one of “God's People” now!
- We confess we have not always taken up the cross in obedience. Forgive us.
- Pray for Conrad Stoesz as he serves the church through the archives at MC Canada.

Blessing: Blessed is (your name), as God's person now! She is loved by God.

Blessed are the Merciful - July 23, 2006

The people who are merciful give others the same pardon and compassion that we experience from God.

Scripture: Matthew 5:7, 18:25 – 35, Psalm 102: 1-2

Response:

- Go for a walk and take care of the environment – God's creation. (e.g. collect garbage, weed flowerbeds, plant flowers)
- Assemble a health and/or school kit for MCC (check website for information).
- Invite someone from a different age group over for a visit.

To Ponder:

- I wonder how the servant felt when the king forgave him.
- I wonder why the servant didn't show kindness to the other servant who owed him some money.
- What happens to us when we do not show kindness and forgive?
- How has God showed mercy to you? What then is our responsibility toward others who do not deserve mercy?

Prayer:

- Help me forgive others. Help me confess my sins.
- Help me have compassion.

Blessing: Blessed is (your name) when he is merciful for he will receive mercy.

Blessed are the Pure in Heart - July 30, 2006

The people who are Pure in heart have a vision that is clear and focussed. Their commitments are always genuine and they clearly have integrity.

Scripture: Matthew 5:8, 17:1 – 8, Luke 6: 12 – 13, Psalm 24: 3 - 6

Response:

- Donate toys/material aid to a charity.
- Where do you need to take risks for the sake of the gospel?
- Look at your life...is there anyone you need to forgive?

To Ponder:

- How we “see God”.
- I wonder how I can have a clean heart. What do I need to change?
- How have you experienced the difference between knowing about God and knowing God? What brought you to a new level of experiencing God?

Prayer:

- Help me to take risks for the sake of the gospel.
- Thank God for never failing to love us.

Blessing: Blessed is (your name), when she is pure in heart, for she will see God.

Blessed are the Peacemakers - August 6, 2006

Peacemakers are those who work actively to bring or make peace.

Scripture: Matthew 5:9, John 8: 1 – 11, Psalm 3

Response:

- Write a story that would help tell people about peace. How do you live peacefully?
- What do TV shows have to say about peace and peaceful ways of living? Watch TV with new eyes this week.
- Find and decorate a stone. Where would you place your peace stone to remind you to work for peace?

To Ponder:

- I wonder what I would have done with the stone.
- What will help me become an active peace worker at home and away from home?
- Imagine that the Peacemakers of the world were seen as sons and daughters of God. What kind of impact would they have on the world.
- How is it sometimes risky to be a peacemaker and to proclaim the message of reconciliation?
- Where is God calling you to make peace?

Prayer:

- Pray for courage and creativity to work for peace in homes, communities, and around the world.
- Help me to actively bring peace or make peace.
- Pray Psalm 29:11

Blessing: Blessed is (your name), when he is a peacemaker, for he will be called a child of God.

Blessed are the Persecuted - August 13, 2006

The persecuted are people who put up with ridicule, persecute, or slander.

Scripture: Matthew 5:10 – 12, Acts 4:1 – 22, Psalm 56

Response:

- Write a story about when you were persecuted. When we write stories about our own lives, we can heal and pray through that experience.
- Read a book about someone who was persecuted. How did they feel?

To Ponder:

- I wonder how I can love a person who hurts me.
- What would it mean to commit ourselves to work for right relationships (justice) with gentleness and non-violence?
- How was Jesus persecuted for righteousness' sake?
- What are the blessings of being persecuted for righteousness' sake? Why does the kingdom of heaven belong to such people?

Prayer:

- Thank God that we live in a peaceful country.
- Pray that God would lead you in how to handle that responsibility.

Blessing: Blessed is (your name), when she is persecuted for righteousness sake, for hers is the kingdom of heaven.

Salt Of The Earth - August 20, 2006

A faithful follower of Jesus is to be salt in the world. Salt is a seasoning, preservative, or purifying agent. Salt plays an important place in everyday life, just like the followers of Jesus play a important role in the world.

Scripture: Matthew 5:13, Mark 9: 49 – 50, Psalm 146

Response:

- Make bread which needs the salt and sugar combination. We need Jesus in order to give our lives peace and joy.
- Each time you use salt this week, see it as a reminder of being the salt of the earth.
- Make dough ornaments to share God's love.
www.razzledazzlerecipes.com/christmasfun/kids.htm

To Ponder:

- How can I be salt of the earth? What does that mean?
- How can I season my life more with the blessings of Jesus?
- How can I purify my life with Jesus' help?
- How can I preserve my friendship with Jesus?

Prayer:

- What are you calling me to do?
- Thank Jesus for the special gifts you are able to use in the world
- Lead me as I try to be salt to the world

Blessing: (your name), Jesus' love will surround you.

Light of the World- August 27, 2006

To be the light of the world is to be seen and to be visible.

We need to show visible praise for God's call.

Scripture: Matthew 5:14 – 16, Luke 8: 16 – 18, Psalm 67

Response:

- Light a candle each day as a reminder of being of being the light in the world. Let others see in you the love and joy of Jesus.
- Look at the sunlight making a rainbow through a prism. God has given us all unique gifts, they are all different "colours". Enjoy the colours/gifts God has given us.
- This week find symbols or of light in the community. Celebrate gifts God gives us.

To Ponder:

- What does it mean to be the light of the earth?
- Who are the friends around me that keep my "light" for Jesus going?
- How can I keep my light shining? What do I need to do? Do I need to change anything to help my light shine?

Prayer:

- Lead me as I serve you.
- Help me to be the kind of light in the world that you want me to be.

Blessing: (your name), Jesus will be with you.