

August 20, 2017 Beatitudes III - Blessed are Those Who Weep

Jack McComb, a beloved member of my first congregation, leaned into my ear on his way out of church after worship one Sunday and said with a wink and a smile, "I think maybe your bladder is a little too close to your eyes." I must be most blessed among women! After all, Jesus said... "Blessed are those who weep." Tears, it seems, are so often close to the surface for me. Of course, I'm not alone in this. By the time I left Glen Morris United Church, I knew whose eyes not to look into when my own emotions began to rise. It is a skill I have put to use in every church since! For my final service as their minister, I brought with me a beautiful gift bag filled with small Kleenex packs. At the end of the service I walked up and down the isles flinging them through the air, and scattering them amongst the congregation, in honour of all the laughter and all the tears we had shared over the years. So often there is laughter in the midst of our tears. As William Blake wrote so eloquently, "Joy and woe are woven fine..."

This summer, (perhaps some of you have noticed by now!) I have been doing sermon series on a cluster of teachings found in both Matthew and Luke, and generally known as, "The Beatitudes." Together, over these summer weeks, we are pondering a few of these beautiful and baffling sayings of Jesus. This morning I am inviting you to ponder with me what Jesus might have been alluding to with the 2nd 'Blessed Saying' in Matthew's list.

The New Revised Standard, and New International Versions of the Bible phrases it this way:

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted." (repeat)

The Message paraphrase, which we read this morning reads:

"You're blessed when you feel you've lost what is most dear to you.

Only then can you be embraced by the One most dear to you." (repeat)

Finally, The Casa Del Sol Celtic paraphrase says.

"Blessed are those who weep
for their tears will be wiped away."

There are so many reasons for our tears, and so many ways in which we are blessed through them. Perhaps that why, I am drawn first to the Casa Del Sol wording. It extends the possibilities for receiving and, perhaps, perceiving blessing into a seeming infinite number!

For me, and I suspect for most of you, tears will unexpectedly brim my eyes when something has touched a tender place in my heart and soul. Whether in a place deep joy, hurt, or profound sorrow, a connection has been drawn and I am moved to tears. Our tears reveal the preciousness of the love that draws us into and keeps us in relationship with one another as members of the human family. Our tears, if we let them, will draw us into the heart of the universe—into the beating heart of the One who is the deep Presence within all our souls, within all the earth, and indeed within the whole cosmos.

We are blessed in our weeping, first because it reveals the depth of, and honours our caring to and for ourselves, for one another, and for the Sacred; it also offers opportunities for deepening our personal and mutual understanding. Our tears are a divine gift that provide a healthy release of deep emotion that can free us, heal us, and in time allow us to move more fully into life

We are blessed through tears, because they express the passions of our hearts, and provide a place of connection with others. "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

One of my dearest friends always takes time to wonder about my tears. When my eyes begin to brim in the middle of a story that she is sharing with me... or one that I am sharing with her, she will stop the conversation, look at me and ask, "What are the tears about?" She is always curious about my tears. Sometimes, I don't want to go there. There is a vulnerability in sharing what one's tears are about. But she will persist, which is her gift to me, and usually I begin to share, and shed light on the source of the joy or pain that is (often unexpectedly) revealing itself through my tears.

I suspect that many of us find that the trials of the day sometimes rise to the surface of our consciousness as we try to drift off to sleep. It is as if our minds say... "Hey! You need to deal with this and you're not going to sleep until you do!"

As a child, when I didn't know how to deal with whatever was upsetting me, I would sometimes start crying. If no one came to my aid, I would cry louder! Finally, I imagine my mother, who was the lighter sleeper, would push my sound sleeping, hard-of-hearing father out of bed. He would come to my bedside, kneel down, and listen to the hurt in my heart (which the whole household would also hear since he never had in his hearing aid in the middle of the night!). He would take my hand and pray with me. Then, after the tears, after the talk, after the prayers, I would sleep.

I would like to invite you to take a few moments to ponder the three versions of this 2nd Blessing of Jesus that you were given with your order of service. Then, I will give you an opportunity to turn to one another in groups of two or three and each take a turn (as you are willing!) and share briefly which wording seems to connect for you, and how it reflects your experience of weeping/with tears wiped away, mourning and being comforted, or losing what was most dear to you and being 'embraced by the One most dear to you'. Perhaps a story will rise to the surface of your memory, and you can share a significant moment of tears and comfort.

(A Time of Conversation)

Lutheran Pastor, Dawn Hutchings, in her sermon on the beatitudes writes: The Sermon on the Mount (of which the Beatitudes is a part) has given us a glimpse of the world that Jesus taught was possible. The beatitudes are not a prescription for life, they are the description of the kind of world that nurtures life in all its God-given splendour. The beatitudes offer us a glimpse of the kin-dom of God and describe a life that I want to be a part of ushering in to this world, right. Let those who have ears hear and those who have eyes capture the vision. That vision is what Jesus' is all about.*

*Pastordawn.com, Epiphany 4A Sermon on the Beatitudes, January 25, 2017. Pastor at Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Newmarket, Ontario.