

## INNER VIEWS

## BLESSED ARE YOU WHO ARE MOURNING, YOU WILL BE COMFORTED

Blessedness is the fullness of Life that is found in those things that our hearts instinctively constrict against, that seems to be beyond the capacity of our heart to bear. Poverty, persecution, mourning are not experiences that we would invite into the intimacy of our inner being

Grief is like our inner being touching a hot stove. We instinctually recoil at losing what we hold dear. As the mind stiffens against its grief, the natural spaciousness of the heart constricts. And yet there is a poignant beauty in this experience – like the flaming beauty of Autumn as it ushers in the bitterness of Winter. There's a bittersweet fittingness because it attunes us to the sacredness of our bonds of love. And the pain of grief keeps us alert to the continued reality of our communion with those we love

Who wants to hear: “Blessed are you who feel the grief and loneliness, the devastation of mourning?” But mourning is a prayerful state in which grief explodes our self-sufficiency and exposes the vulnerability of loving fragile beings. In this state our grief can blossom into compassion as it strips away our illusion of independence and control and leaves our hearts throbbing with God's love. There seems to be little consolation in this. It is not something any of us would choose. It simply is.

“Blessed” means that the comfort promised in this beatitude is already our reality. We are already God's; already divine even in our grieving. Both divine and grieving are our truth. As divine children we are alive eternally. Our nature is to be loved and loving. “Blessed” recognizes this as our truth.

Our Blessedness transforms us into “Beloved” when grief loses its monopoly on our hearts and we awaken to our divine capacity to hold both the loss and cherish the love that bursts all our barriers. The blessed mourning in this beatitude is a sacrament. Its aching emptiness points to the sacredness of what we have lost. At the same time it also points to the expectations we have imposed upon our self.

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## BLESSED ARE YOU WHO ARE MOURNING, YOU WILL BE COMFORTED: Part 2

The sacramental dimension of grief is the poignancy that comes alive in our hearts in the presence of loss. No life is without its broken empty spaces. There is some corner of our heart

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that remains faithful to all that we have loved. Even years after a loss, the sight or scent of something associated with the departed can still quicken the heart. As we grow older the ruins of loss multiply and basins of grief become more familiar to our inner landscape.

Most think of grief as a debilitating sadness but it is simpler and more common than that. No life is without the abandoned wreckage of denied hopes. Every path we have chosen leaves multiple paths forsaken. Everyone grieves. Everyone seems to have some unbalanced tally sheet with life, some unfinished business.

We no longer know, because we have become accustomed to it, that we grieve the loss of our inner awareness of God's intimacy. We experience as a dissatisfaction in our life, an emptiness and desire for something we can't put our finger on. We yearn for something but we're just not sure what it is. This leaves a hole in our center that makes us cling all the more desperately to what we have. Grief is the rope burns left behind when what we have held to most dearly and hoped in most fervently is pulled out beyond our grasp.

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### BLESSED ARE YOU WHO ARE MOURNING, YOU WILL BE COMFORTED: Part 3

Grief will often turn our gaze inward. However when we begin to focus on our inner life we usually don't encounter warmth, gentleness and compassion. Instead we are met by a harsh critic. When we pay attention to our inner experience we will meet judgments and fears about what we are encountering, upset or disturbance over what may have caused it, and a desire to change by denying it to our selves.

What we're seeing here is the activity of the superego. The superego is a specialized part of our ego structure that has the job of making sure we live up to the standards we learned as children so that we could get along with our families and communities. It does this by various means, including judging, criticizing, advising, and warning, encouraging, threatening, and punishing ourselves in reaction to our thoughts, feelings, and actions.

Very early in life we learn to internalize these attitudes, which means we inflict them upon our self. It's a way of coercing our self into compliance with the values and rules of the people with whom we live. This is a basic strategy for survival.

However this inner pressure on our self can soon become debilitating and ever more so when we are made vulnerable by the loss of someone or something dear to us. We have to learn how to effectively counter these pressures. We begin as soon as we become aware of the dynamic of our superego. This gives a little distance and space from its onslaughts. And this is the beginning of learning the necessity of forgiveness and compassion. We wonder, looking into the warped mirror of our superego, why what is reflected back seems so distorted, so unacceptable, so

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unwhole, and unlovable. It seems to feel our grief. And it will continue until we find forgiveness for the imperfection and messiness of being human.

We cannot talk ourselves out of grief – no rational argument can stand up to it. At best our mind can distract us for the moment but the seeds of grief are planted in the shadows that hide our human limitations, our inability to live up to the abstract demands of our self-imposed expectations. When the vulnerability of our grief allows the exaggerated expectations and demands of who we must be to flood us emotionally we need to look beyond our self for healing.

Forgiveness belongs to the divine. It is God's act: something other, something that is not ours; and unless our faith and support from others helps us acknowledge this we will remain engulfed in our grief. Its otherness is in its very name; "forgiven" is "given-b-fore". It is not ours to grasp but ours to receive; we cannot create it for our self. The healing takes time and forgiveness results from the healing. We do not do it to our self, forgiveness happens to us as we learn to let go and stop rubbing salt into our wounds. Slowly, subtly, almost imperceptibly, there is a shift in our perspective that allows us to relate to our self and to others with fewer demands and judgments.

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BLESSED ARE YOU, THE GENTLE  
THE EARTH IS YOUR INHERITANCE

*"No one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son reveals the Father. And here is how I know the Father – by being Gentle & Humble of Heart"* Jesus wants to share his consciousness with us – his way of knowing and relating to God

The Beatitudes are Christ's consciousness of living in a world bigger than the one our ego creates for our survival. This is the world of our spirit and to live there our spirit needs to be opened, stretched, surrendered to God's world. Only God is big enough to hold all of our contradictions, to love all of our limitations and difficulties, and heal all our wounded lives. All of us, every part, with nothing left out, is held in existence by God's love. This is what it means to be "Blessed."

We are "Blessed" because we are being loved into existence at this moment. But Jesus wants this blessedness to transform us into his state of consciousness, of being Beloved. He wants us to learn to love God and one another as God loves us. Love is the only way we can know God. Our mind simply isn't big enough. Thoughts and ideas just reduce God to our ego. There's no way you can love God until you accept God for who God is, unconditional love.

This Beatitude uses gentleness as the door way into God's world of unconditional love. Jesus invites us into this world: *"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble of heart..."*

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Notice that Jesus isn't asking us, "who labor and are heavily burdened" to do more. No's he's saying "Stop working so hard, set your burden down. Learn from me, I am gentle and humble of heart." Gentleness is the ability to find rest because we trust that God is holding us in existence and acting as the Wise Source of our living.

Here's the paradox. It's our laboring, our working so hard, our carrying around the burden of trying to be perfect, our attempts at imposing our will on our life, that stops our spirit from being itself and becoming the resource its meant to be in our life. The intrinsic nature of the spirit is to be pure clarity, transparency, luminosity, and awareness. The spirit is our capacity to see things as they are.

Jesus is the path of humble acceptance of God's love, rather than struggling to make ourselves lovable. This calls for humility because it means we have to accept our selfish, impatient, often recalcitrant humanness. And most importantly it means we accept that we cannot control every aspect of our lives. What a burden to think we could or should be able to control our lives. And what a relief it is to set this burden down.

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Part 2

Blessed, healthy in spirit, are those who have softened what is rigid within; they shall receive vitality and strength from the heavenly Father. As we learn to trust our Father's unconditional love we soften our rigid striving and learn to live from the real source of all power, divine life acting through our earthiness and our humanness. This softening is a form of surrender that leaves us vulnerable to the expansiveness of our Father's kingdom of heaven and earth.

We all long for peace of spirit, the Blessedness of inheriting this earthly existence as a place free from all the struggles and sadness, conflicts and criticisms, desire and longings, fear, anxiety and hostility that plagues so much of our life. We want to settle into our real self instead of fabricating our self or working at being our self. We're tired of reacting to one thing or the other. We want to act from the peacefulness of our spirit, instead of reacting too all these things that intrude in our lives. We love the possibility of being our self, of feeling real and simply being at home in our real self. We've had moments of this home coming but they have been so fleeting and mercurial that we're not sure that they were real.

These moments of being ourselves are a genuineness that comes from being open to the gentleness of our spirit. When we are being ourselves we feel intimate, close to our self, without any distance from our divine Source. Our heart is open, our mind is clear, our spirit is settled. There is no thickness, inner agitation, or fighting within our self. We experience an inner unity happening within us that feels peaceful, relaxed, contented and light hearted. Our spirit feels the blessing of satisfaction with all that is. This is the door that Jesus is opening to us in this Beatitude.

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Gently laying down our burden and trusting in God's love means allowing our selves to be vulnerable. To find true rest is to give up the burden of being something that we are not and cannot possibly be. To find true rest is to give up the burden of finding our value, self worth in what we have and have accomplished. To find true rest is to give up the judgments we inflict upon others and upon ourselves for failure in perfection. To find true rest is to accept the gift and reality of God as the only true center of our security and value. This is the gentle yoke. But we are so accustomed to carrying the burdens that we feel naked and exposed without them. We feel vulnerable.

Being our self means coming to terms with this vulnerability. Vulnerability is the door opening our spirit to God as the love that is our basic living energy. It is living in awareness before the mind reacts with its judgments. Here we come face to face with our fragility. Our ego was created as a way of protecting this inner delicacy and we are told to live with the vulnerability of letting go.

As human beings we are essentially vulnerable, our natural state is to be undefended. In fact the sense of security that our ego constructs by building defensive walls is delusional. When it comes to real danger we *are* vulnerable and our ego can create a false sense of security. But our vulnerability is also the quality of our humanness, our being created as the earthy- divine incarnation. It is a heart quality of openness and gentleness that is needed to love all of who we are and to live with it. We cannot truly recognize who we are without this gentleness and this humble humanness. We must be all of this if we want to be aware of and learn to love our whole self. This is how we come to experience the reality of God's love.

Vulnerability in the face of danger feels frightening, but in the absence of danger, vulnerability can simply feel natural, undefended, peaceful, our self. So we have a dilemma. We are scared, we want to protect ourselves, but at the same time we want to be real. How are we going to solve this paradox? How do we protect ourselves against danger and still be real?

We need to take care of our self. We get professional health care as we need it, we brush our teeth, we take reasonable precautions when we are walking in an unsafe neighborhood, we do not do drugs and so on. We use our intelligence to do what is necessary and we defend ourselves physically if that is called for. But inside we remain open, supple, and gentle. In this way we begin to appreciate vulnerability as a human quality that gives us openness to reality, to perception, to our spirit in all of its expressions.

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 Part 4

We cannot be ourselves if we don't experience our vulnerability, because vulnerability is just the beginning of experiencing the gentleness and the exquisiteness of being genuine. In time, we learn that we can feel completely undefended without it feeling scary, without feeling that we need to defend ourselves, without the need for those inner walls.

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Living with our vulnerability will also allow us to share our unique personality and talents in a more effective way. When we live with the illusion of power and control we often strive to improve the situation through argument or persuasion. These may produce some momentary gain but they also violate others' spiritual space. They may create compliance but they will not support the spirit. Enduring results, which are achieved through freeing the spirit depend on our integrity, our ability to relate form our whole personality. In this wholeness is the acceptance of Love and with our integrity comes the passing on of creative possibilities

Because striving is based on inner doubt, it negates any influence we might have. Our doubt further inhibits others' ability to find their way, and prevents God from transforming the situation. To empower truth and engage the creative force of Love, we need the vulnerability that allows us to trust God's work in this situation.

Again, the paradox, we take up the gentle yoke by letting go. When we let go we live in the moment, not feeling the pressure to achieve something, not thinking about winning or losing or worrying about acting foolish, breaking away from the neurosis of restraint or defense, enjoying the beauty of the moment yet not holding onto it, letting go without thinking about the need to let go, feeling the happiness without hoping for the happiness to continue, having no ego or attachment to anything. We let our self be vulnerable to what is.

When we begin to let God be the center of our self-knowledge we come to an awareness, no longer of limitation, but of burgeoning potential. It is not just fantasy, creating self-images that we pretend to be and strain to imitate. Instead we begin to experience ourselves as God's gift. Or, as Jesus says in the Gospel, "*Father, what you have hidden from the wise and intelligent you have revealed to the infants.*"

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INNER VIEWS  
BLESSED ARE YOU MERCIFUL,  
FOR YOU WILL BE SHOWN MERCY. Part 1.

Mercy is God's love freely given. We can't grab it, nor do we merit it. It is our Father's joy to be merciful. Mercy is our Father sustaining us as "Beloved children." For those of us who are used to working for our keep, attaining our place in life, and trying to get what we deserve, this can be a humbling experience. At the same time, accepting God's mercy helps us let go of our accumulated self-expectations. It returns us to the true ground of our dignity, worth and meaning as manifestations of our Father's love.

Mercy is not mercy until it exists in the concrete situations of our lives. Our Gospels begin with a very concrete image of mercy that is meant to slip past our defenses and free our spirit. Mercy is an infant born in a manger.

In Jesus Christ, the infant God claims our hearts by becoming as fragile and dependent as we are. God becomes dependent on our good will. God knows what it means to need our love freely given just because he is in need.

Out of love for us God becomes us. From that moment on everything in human history takes on its true perspective against that background. The mightiest human efforts and achievements are put into perspective against the back drop of this child. A child born of humans, a son given by God. We are talking about the birth of a child. Not the revolutionary act of a conqueror, Not the breathtaking discovery

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of a scientist. Not the pious act of the devote. Because of this we must learn to reverence childlike powerlessness and dependence.

And here is the wonder and the mystery: this child is born for us, is given to us. This human child, this son of God belongs to us. We are his and he is ours - a new humanity is being created. God is softening us up. Blessed are the merciful for they will receive mercy. In a sense this breaks the general spiritual principal that spiritual gifts must first be given by God and received by us. and then in our giving what we have received they become ours. In the case of mercy, however, God prepares us to receive mercy by first being merciful ourselves. Our hearts need to soften before we'd be ready for the gift.

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Christ on the cross is the response of God to the scandal of human violence. God calls to our heart with deep tenderness knowing that we are exhausted trying to be our own god. God calls in the Word who lives with our poverty and powerlessness, sharing our vulnerability. God calls us with the Word who is all that we are and love for all that we are.

Jesus' role is far more than a teacher or a good example, or even a moral guide. It is more intimate. Jesus is God with us in every possible way, and his human existence incarnates God's love for us in all of our humanness. The cross also confronts us with the consequences of our wound. The cross of Christ confronts us with our power and our helplessness; our power to inflict violence and pain, and our helplessness to do anything about it.

Do we judge ourselves and others? Here is the one for whom judgment leads to death. Do we reject? Here is rejection of both the Son and the Father. Do we seek power? The violence we inflict on others is an extension of the violence we exact upon ourselves. Well, here is what power does to the loving one and here is where weakness triumphs. Do we continue the violence in our own lives? Jesus does not continue the violence; "Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing."

Jesus' mercy leaves him vulnerable. He is not self-protective nor angry nor fearful. His power and authority lie in compassion, non-judgmental awareness and generosity. He invites a loving response so that we who are Blessed can lower our self-protective barriers and can give up our violence to find our self to be Beloved.

The haunting image of Jesus, so totally vulnerable on the cross, grooms the tenderness of our heart to respond to mercy. If we respond to the innocent man on the cross with great love we will find that our most sincere efforts at being in control, being secure and successful are useless in relieving his plight. In the light of his cross we find that we are even more helpless than he. And if we're lucky, if we're willing to accept the grace of this moment of powerlessness, we may find that Jesus' way through helplessness is our way through helplessness.

Powerlessness is full of grace. Helplessness is where God awaits us. Powerlessness and helplessness deflate our ego-mind of all its pretensions. When we are stripped of all the illusions of power we find that we continue to exist and our continued existence is what we share with all of our sisters and brothers.

The cross is the Father and Son's determination to meet us where we are, love us for who we are, and open us to healing and wholeness. Jesus accepted suffering because we cannot avoid suffering. By

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plunging into suffering and death Jesus exposes the ultimate illusion of separation from our Father. This is the pivotal revelation that every person is one who is of God, from God, and held close to God's heart through all adversity - forever. Nothing can separate us from the love of God. This is the mercy that is ours, the mercy that makes us Beloved.

God does not send suffering or helplessness into our lives. But the revelation of the Cross of Christ is that God is there in our suffering and helplessness. God is merciful, God never abandons us. Nothing can drive God away from our hearts.

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The cross of Christ reveals the stark reality of our condition, we are both perpetrators and victims. For we too suffer anguish, personal humiliations and fears; we are betrayed, undergo loss and loneliness. We are vulnerable to violence and this leaves us vulnerable to doing violence, even to the most innocent of all victims. We have the power to inflict violence yet we have little power to do anything about it.

Intimacy happens only when we are vulnerable. God's mercy is the recognition that our revulsion to our retaliation and violence can open our spirit in a way that nothing else can.

When we look back on the decisions we made and the actions we performed, we will be tempted to turn the violence on our self. We can also try to justify our self, although we'll feel the self deception darkening our spirit.

But if we give up judging ourselves or justifying ourselves and count our self among the "tax collectors and sinners," we will find that we have turned into the people whom Jesus seeks out, the people ready to hear about the mercy of God.

We can rest and be renewed by this mercy that softens our fierce and violent condemnations of our self and others. We who are Blessed with mercy will be the merciful Beloved.

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