**January 29, 2023 The Vision is Beautiful**

**Matthew in his Gospel places the Beatitudes at the very beginning of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, and this sermon comes at the beginning of his ministry and also is considered as a prologue to the discipleship. The gospel passage for this Sunday St. Matthews 5:1-12, is the introductory part of the Sermon on the Mount.**

**In the closing verses of the fourth chapter of the St. Matthew gospel, Jesus having finished the calling of his disciples, begins teaching in the region of the Galilee and in the Synagogues of that region. People brought the sick to Jesus for healing, and great crowds were gathering from as far as Jerusalem, the Decapolis, Judea and areas beyond the Jordan. Seeing the crowds, Jesus gathers the disciples and goes up on a mountain.**

**The opening of Jesus’ sermon appears to be directed only to the disciples, those who have left everything to follow Jesus. They are being prepared for their discipleship, and for the ministry they will share with Jesus. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. This teaching must have dawned upon the disciples quickly.**

**The pattern appears to be humiliation now and glory later. Such a proposal makes no sense whatsoever unless God can be trusted to "deliver" on His promises - "His side of the bargain." As the ministry of Jesus unfolds, it becomes clear that the Beatitudes reflect the style of Jesus' own life and ministry, and what his disciples will be expected to follow. These words become a prologue to the gospel Jesus will preach, the examples he will set, and the counsel he will give. We recall the question as Matthew records in chapter 19:16,21"Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?" Jesus said to him: "If you would be perfect, go sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."**

**Underneath each one of the Beatitudes is the call to live our lives in full trust of God. Spiritual "have-nots," who know that they have no righteousness of their own, are those who will hunger and thirst for God's righteousness. Because God can be trusted, they shall be satisfied! It is only when we have this confidence in the promises of God can we begin to understand and follow Jesus' example and his mandate.**

**The Beatitudes must be studied in the context of a community of trust, vision and hope. From the first four of Jesus' "Beatitudes," it appears that the followers of Jesus are more nearly "victims" than the "disciples." They are the spiritual "have-nots" who must trust and depend wholly upon God and his promises. However, Jesus has in mind for us something more than our passively staying out of trouble ... trusting God, being deeply sorry for the suffering of the world, practicing self-control, and longing for perfect righteousness. The works of faith are not passive. They are active and outreaching.**

**Now the disciples, solidly established in faith and with a firm hold on God's promises, are free to live in love, being of a single mind and of pure heart, showing mercy, and actively doing the hard work of peacemaking, even accepting persecution with purpose and with rejoicing.**

**Being of a single mind about the things of the kingdom, the disciples are called to be merciful, just as they have received and experienced God's mercy. More than a gracious attitude of good will, "being merciful" includes having empathy for another's suffering and participating with another in setting things right. It is an act of healing. Making peace involves proclamation, diplomacy, and self-control, a willingness to forgive and to promote the work of forgiveness among others. Again, the issue is an active participation with God in healing. If you like to learn more about on your work of faith and vision please join us in our worship on Sunday at 11: 00 AM**

**Peace and Blessings**
**Rev. Dr. Christopher Ponnuraj**
**Minister**