

**The Beatitudes and 9/11,
September 12, 2021
Homily by S. Kay Young for St. Martin's Episcopal Church**

Today's readings and prayers were chosen by the Diocese of New York in 2005, on the anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. We continue to remember. So many things have changed since 9/11. Some because of the attack; some are new to us. We have seen so much tragedy and disfunction in the world and our own community... even in our family and in the church. Who could have predicted the day when we would have to be isolated from one another to survive? Who really believed a pandemic could happen in our day?

It feels like the writers of the Bible did indeed anticipate these times, but hard times, pestilence, war and destruction have always been around. It has often felt like the whole known world was crumbling: The Psalmist speaks of a net cast by enemies; maybe a physical one, maybe a net of despair. We have woes aplenty to commemorate. Then Paul wrote a rousing letter to the Romans reminding them not to despair. We cannot be caught up in that net. Both we and our enemies are beloved children of God, and nothing can EVER separate us from that love.

Jesus sat down and told the crowds (that includes us) about the blessings of God for those who are miserable. More than that, they are a guarantee for us that God is blessing us at all times, even...especially... when WE are miserable.

In a sermon in 2005, Father Michael Marsh said,

The temptation is to think that the beatitudes are rules or conditions for being blessed or receiving our heavenly reward. They are not that at all. They are not about building up, accomplishing, or acquiring. They are about letting go, surrendering, living with a vulnerable and open heart. That does not mean we run away, back down, or isolate ourselves from the realities of our life and world. It means we engage them in a different way, Jesus' way. The beatitudes teach us to trust God more than the external circumstances of our lives. They invite dependence on God rather than self-reliance.

In today's world that sounds a lot like weakness and foolishness. That's what it sounds like in every age. But to those who are being saved it is the [power of God](#). God chose what is foolish to shame the wise and what is weak to shame the strong. The beatitudes are nothing less than the way of the cross. The fullest expression of a "beatitudinal life" is seen in Jesus' crucifixion. If we live the beatitudes they will take us to the cross.

We cannot do this alone. We have to let go of our illusions of power and have faith in God. Do you know what a post pandemic world looks like? What does a post terrorist world feel like? How would we get along without prejudice? Racism, or any of the other -isms that plague us. These aren't rhetorical questions. For all we know we are facing a world that is radically different than the current one. There has to be something more than our fearful ways. Even if the world ends, we have to take up the Beatitudes to move forward. Because

the opposite of Fear is Faith. The beatitudes are not just a way forward through this life, they are our way to walk with Christ. He said so.