

The Life Challenge

"I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." John 10:10

Series: SERMON ON THE MOUNT
Title: Blessed
Speaker: Steve Berg
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WARM-UP

Begin today with a prayerful reflection on Jesus' invitation in Matthew 11:28-30:

- "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." "Come" is a familiar word in scripture. "Come back to me; come and see; come follow me." God continues to invite you, desiring what is best for you. Bring to Jesus all your weariness and heavy burdens, one by one.
- "Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls." A yoke has traditionally been used between a pair of animals, usually oxen, to help them pull together on a load. Who is joined to you in this yoke? And what is this yoke of Jesus that does not weary but gives rest?
- "For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light." Imagine Jesus saying these words to you, now. Jesus offers you rest for your soul. How does this invitation open up a refreshing space in your soul?
- What reflections do you want to share with the group?

DISCUSSION

1. Matthew 4:23 says, "Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom..." The center of Jesus' teaching and ministry is that the Kingdom of God is present. John Stott said he could summarize the message of this sermon of Jesus in two words, "Christian Counterculture." In what ways does the counterculture message of the Kingdom speak to concerns and issues that we face now?
2. The beatitudes are the opening "blessing" of the sermon: "Oh, how happy are those...!" Pastor Steve suggested three things are helpful to receive this blessing:
 - Proclamation - Jesus is not declaring what you feel, but what God thinks. Read the beatitudes as a declaration about what is real, right now. "Blessed..."
 - Paradox - you will discover happiness in the opposite of what you expect. Discuss how this paradox reveals God's blessedness for you.
 - Progressive - The beatitudes go somewhere - they build on each other. Discuss how this has been true for you. It does build from "poor in spirit" - to - "rejoice and be glad when you are insulted and persecuted."
3. If you have "The Message" paraphrase, read the Beatitudes together again. How does this bring a refreshing "rest" for your soul?