

021107 6th SUNDAY IN OT

Beatitude -- A New Way To Live

Quite a few years ago – a company that I worked for selected me to head up a new computer software development lab out in the Bay Area of California. I was able to go out and choose a site location and I selected the Cupertino area near San Jose. My employer had received a mega \$ contract from the San Jose Police and Fire Departments to set up new dispatch, records and mobile communications systems. As the Project Manager, I placed ads in the San Jose Mercury and the San Francisco Chronicle newspapers. Boy were we flooded with resumes – hundreds of resumes. Then began the process of dozens of hours of review and sifting through the verbiage and fancy letterhead and the sometimes-flowery language to get an accurate picture of whom to bring in for interviews. What was it that made this man... this woman... this recent grad different? What was it that appeared to be motivating them? Motivation was one of the things that was important – to hire good, dependable, and motivated people. I'd like to tell you it was done perfectly. We did pretty well – but there were a few things I would like to do over.

These resumes would be looked at, sometimes well into the night. And as I revisit this experience, it got me to thinking about the followers of Jesus. What if the disciples had to prepare resumes before being interviewed and hired by Jesus? Would they have had to already be living by a different set of values than most others? Or could they have been ordinary people awaiting a new position?

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By today's standards, it's normal to want to pursue money, food, a good time and status. Yet the people that Jesus wanted for his development project surely must be special. I can just see Jesus' ad in the Jerusalem Times newspaper: 'If you're willing to step away from the crowd, and live by a different set of values, and a different set of priorities, and you're willing to pursue life in a whole different standard, then blessed

are you.’ Blessed are you because you’re going to find that which you seek... Blessed are you. But if your sights are only fixed on needs, on goods, on wealth, on food and on having a good time and being well thought of, woe to you. Because whatever consolation you receive is only for the here and now.”

Dear folks -- you and I have decided by virtue of coming to Mass today, and by virtue of claiming to be Christian and Catholic, we have decided that we’re going to live by a different standard. You and I have decided that we want – or most of us think we want to live by the standard that Jesus put forth. We know this isn’t easy... but we come to Mass every weekend to try – to try to be nourished... to be inspired... to be challenged as our pastor says – to see if we really are living or want to live by the standards of Jesus – not the standards of the world.

You and I know that the message of the world can be very powerful and addictive. It would appear that the devil has a Ph.D. in marketing – and he presents a powerful, compelling message. Can’t you just see the project team the devil assembled? Imagine the devil calling a meeting of his new hires in his marketing department....

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“Okay... I want some new approaches to lure THEM – potential disciples away from HIM” One fresh-faced marketing assistant says: “Let’s convince them there is no God. Another says, “Let’s convince them their church is corrupt and out of touch with reality. A seductive-looking new employee in hell says: “Let’s put together a campaign that suggests that marriage isn’t something sacred and holy – in fact, let’s promote marriage of a different kind... or throw away marriages. Another marketing type says, “Let’s say the Bible is just a bunch of old wives tales – that it doesn’t really have any message that’s relevant.”

In an anger that only THE Devil can demonstrate, he raises his voice “YOU FOOLS... is this the best you can come up with? We’ve done all of these ... you fools....” The

devil looks away for a while and then he stares at the assembled table of junior marketing devils – and he says: “Here’s what we’ll do... we’ll put together a new campaign to corrupt faith; a campaign built on two themes... The first theme is that there is no rush... that there is nothing to worry about – there’s plenty of time. And the second theme is to convince them to just keep doing what they’ve been doing... that they don’t need to do anything different. They don’t need to go to any religious education or catechesis programs. Nothing needed to put their faith on fire again.” And so they all agreed – the DMG – or Devil’s Marketing Group put together this new plan – and they are working it intently in America... & here in our town: “Don’t worry – everything is okay. No rush to do anything different – just keep doing what you’ve been doing.”

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But for those gathered here at this Mass today... can we not hear another voice and message trying to break through? It’s Jesus – with His good news. It is the news that He has revealed to us about how He wants us to live our life. And Jesus has told us in today’s Gospel that we will NOT live according to the way of the world. His call involves repentance, conversion, catechesis and formation... The Scripture and message of a week ago had to do with the dynamics of being a follower – a disciple of Christ. Today it’s the lesson of the PROGRAM for following the Good Shepherd.

The Beatitudes contain the essence of the Christian way of life. Our Catechism of the Catholic Church says, “The beatitude we are promised confronts us with decisive moral choices. It invites us to purify our hearts of bad instincts and to seek the love of God above all else. It teaches us that true happiness is not found in riches or well-being, in human fame or power, or in any human achievement – however beneficial it may be – but in God alone is found the source of every good and of all love” (CCC # 1723).

I don't know if you've ever heard this supposedly true story of Mahatma Gandhi? A missionary gave him a book that contained the four Gospels. It was the Indian leader's first exposure to Christianity. He read the Gospels with great interest, and was convinced that the principles taught by Jesus could resolve all of the political, social and economic problems of his country. And as he traveled through Europe trying to gain support for his country – Gandhi observed those who proclaimed themselves Christians.

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He was dismayed to conclude that the Gospels are wonderful indeed, but he did not see hardly anyone living their teaching. For this reason, it is said that Gandhi never converted to Christianity. The Beatitudes challenge us to choose to live Christianity. Or we can just keep doing what we are doing – in other words we can opt to live by the standards proposed by DMG – the Devil's Marketing Group.

The Capuchin Monk Michael Crosby has written something like 16 books. In one of them entitled Spirituality of the Beatitudes, he writes of just one of the beatitudes: "The poor in spirit are those who have turned their lives over to God, and, in the power of God, work for the fulfillment of justice on behalf of those who are (just) poor."

Do you want to give in to the demands of a worldly way of life, or have you decided to live true and authentic Christianity? This choice to live the Gospel changes our entire life. It tells us how we are to act, how we are to dress, how we are to speak, and how we are to interact with people. The choice to live the Gospel affects every aspect of our entire existence. And Jesus is looking for real followers... people to work on His 2007 development project team.

Speaking of Jesus as an employer – think about Him placing employment advertisements this weekend in the Denver papers. I'd like you to think of what you

have heard today. Then think about whether there is a reality in your life about you wanting to work on Jesus' team.

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In fact, at home, would you consider writing a resume to apply to work for Christ? What kind of a resume and cover letter would you write? Could you say anything profound and noticeable to the Lord Jesus about how you have been living – or how you want to live your life? Would your resume be persuasive about what you'd like to do to be a soldier in his army? Would He see anything distinctive in your resume? Would there be anything there that would say, 'Ah! This one – she has what it takes. This one! He knows what I'm talking about. Ah! I want her in my company of disciples.'

In actuality, we believe that He has already called us. Now, in many ways it's up to us to accept His call. So today – I invite you to take home this challenge. We need to begin to live and act in such a way that our spiritual resume can and will draw His attention, and that our cover letter of application will draw forth from Christ these words about us: 'This one. Yes. This one has potential. I want Joe. I want Elizabeth... Those in this pile... they understand.' How powerful it would be to have an interview with Jesus – to see His most beautiful face smiling at us... and to hear him say with tender love: "Blessed are you. Welcome to my project team.' And finally – you do know, don't you that if you join his project team -- His benefit plan is out of this world?