

Back in 1992 MTV brought us a show called "The Real World."
In case you missed it, it featured a cast of "Real People" sharing an apartment together and supposedly showed us behind the scenes what they were really like.

Today, many people recognize this program as one of the originators of Reality TV.
And while some find the show entertaining
I think most people would agree that television is not the Real World.

There was a billboard advertising for a college on the East Coast
and in huge letters, it read: "We Prepare you ...for the Real World."
That's quite a claim.

But if you interviewed faculty members from universities across the country
you'd have a hard time reaching a consensus if you asked them to define the real world.

Does the real world start when you have adult responsibilities?
Is the real world defined by a job, a car, a house?

If someone says to you,
"that's fine to have your ideals, but sometimes you just have to get real"
is that what the real world is?

Does Donald Trump or Wall Street or Hollywood get to decide?

I say all this because one objection that some people harbor against Christianity is this:
They say the Christian life is simply not real. It deals with emotions, not facts.

So maybe you can imagine why I have all of this on my mind for this Sunday.
Because few Scripture passages are as seemingly "unreal" as today's Sermon on the Mount.

- "Blessed are the peacemakers.
- "Blessed are those who mourn."
- "Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you."

A lot of this sounds like a recipe for being a full-time door mat.
Because in the real world what happens to someone who offers the other cheek?
That person would be seen as the loser, right?

But let me ask you this:

“Even though this world, is quick to label someone a loser who ultimately gets to decide?”

In today’s Gospel reading, we hear the first 12 verses of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount.

Now some commentators have taken these verses, and tried to make them into a list of rules, or a code of moral conduct.

They’ve tried to make these “Beatitudes” into some kind of formula for how to become healthy, wealthy, and wise. One preacher even called them the “Be Happy Attitudes.”

But if we tried to “moralize” this teaching of Jesus, we’d be missing the point. Instead of giving us a heavy list of rules to follow, or attitudes we should have I think what Jesus is doing... is giving us a picture of a whole new world

Not the world defined by Television.
But real life, the life God created for us.

And this is a world we can’t know, without Jesus.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus is giving us a sermon, that doesn’t simply speak to where we are now, it calls us to different place a place where he is leading us.

And here’s the main point I want you to remember from this sermon.
The Good News that we see in the Beatitudes, is Jesus himself.

In these 12 verses, Jesus is giving us a declaration telling us whose side God is on.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit” ...that’s the first line of his sermon.

And aren’t we all poor ...in spirit?
Who among us feels completely whole, completely at peace?

And what does Jesus say to us?

Does he say, “You should be more at peace”?
Verse 3, doesn’t say that does it?

Instead, Jesus declares us “blessed.” He gives us his blessing.
Those are Gospel words. Good News words.

- “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.”
- “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.”
- “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness...
for they will be filled.”

The Good News in Jesus’ sermon is that God is at work in this world,
bringing us his Kingdom.

God is at work entering the bad news of this world, and turning things that are up-side-down,
right-side-up
...filling those who suffer the most, with his blessing.

God is on the side of the people who are suffering all over the world.

God is on the side of those who seek freedom from those who oppress them.

God is on the side of those who seek freedom from the slavery of drug abuse
and freedom for those who suffer the drug abuse of their parent or spouse.

God is also on the side of those who suffer child abuse or spousal abuse,
working at the same time to bring the perpetrators to repentance and to seek help.

In the Beatitudes, Jesus wants us to see a new world, the Real World
...not a world filled with hopelessness and darkness.
...but a world Jesus gave his life for, and radically loves.

And Jesus gives us that same radical love for this world.

Jesus calls us a church filled with His love

...a church full of servants ... working alongside one another...

...a church blessed to be children of God. Amen