

Brother Satyananda

The Deeper Teachings of Jesus Christ

Lake Shrine Temple

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The Easter message this morning will include The Beatitudes of Jesus Christ on the Mount of Olives. Early in his ministry Jesus taught extensively around the Sea of Galilee. It was kind of his home base throughout his three year ministry. He gathered quite a following as his teachings were very profound and had a way of connecting with the common people. Also, there were the spectacular healings that he performed; unheard of in any generation. Multitudes of people, it is said, would follow him wherever he would go.

On one occasion, in the Book of Matthew, St. Matthew tells of the time when Jesus went north along the shore of the Sea of Galilee from Capernaum and inland towards the hills, which are referred to as a mount or a low hill. We might think of the Sermon on the Mount as being a tall mountain but, actually, in the Holy Land it is a low hill that overlooks the water. There is a shallow swale in the middle of the hill that is like an amphitheater. It is felt by historians that Jesus delivered his famous Sermon on the Mount in the middle of this hill and that the people who were gathered around were able to participate in his teachings.

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So Jesus, with the people gathered round and his disciples immediately with him, began to speak:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.”

These are the beginning of The Beatitudes. Beatitude meaning a blessing, a blessing of joy. This is a unique and beautiful teaching of Jesus Christ because he was giving to his disciples and to the people of the region, a way to live rightly and be happy; to develop a loving relationship with God and to find happiness through righteousness. A Christian minister once famously coined The Beatitudes as “attitudes of being” or “be-attitudes.” This is a life affirming truth that we not only read in the scriptures but proceed to practice in every day life.

Brother chose to concentrate on the first few Beatitudes since there wasn't time for them all and to present the teachings that comes along with them. There is a traditional level of practice and understanding and as always our founder and guru, Paramahansa Yogananda, offers through his commentaries on the Christian scripture of the King James Version of the New Testament a deeper mystical interpretation and says that Jesus, being a mystic and deep lover of God, always had a deeper level to his instruction. So we have the inspiration of our guru, Paramahansa Yogananda, helping us to understand this deeper level of instruction.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." We, almost always, stumble over this phrase "poor in spirit." It is not something that we can commonly use in today's vernacular but in the poor language of the Dark Ages translated from the Aramaic means, essentially, humble...blessed are the humble in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. We see this manifested through the stories of St. Francis of Assisi during the Dark Ages where part of his rule of order was the rule of poverty. Back in those days being poor was a virtue; that is, a virtue of simplicity, a virtue of humility. In fact, Paramahansa Yogananda translated for us this poverty in terms of simplicity.

Blessed are they who are simple and humble before man and before God: theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Paramahansa Yogananda also says that it is important in our spiritual lives, as far as having a fruitful, productive spiritual life, to be private about our spirituality, about our spiritual experiences. Yogananda said to his disciples and taught regularly not to advertise our spiritual experiences. That we may have inspiration; we may have divine perception but not to brag about these things and then warned that if we do, we may lose them.

Brother was giving a Kriya Yoga initiation on the East Coast. During these initiations the people come forward one by one, as part of the ceremony, to receive a blessing, known a diksha in India. Everyone was very quiet as they were coming forward, nodding, receiving the diksha and returning to their seats. However, one young man came up and after receiving the diksha threw up his arms "Oh, Oh, the bliss! and just kind of collapse on the floor very dramatically, theatrically Brother said that it looked very rehearsed He called upon the ushers and asked that the young man be removed and that when he came around not to let him back in. "Oh boy, was the young man mad." After the ceremony Brother told the young man to be more humble and not to come to another ceremony until he was ready to receive in the right spirit of humility.

This is an exaggeration, but some people want others to think they're spiritual and that is what is more important than their relationship with God. Master would often say to be private about our devotion. If

we have a love for God and a growing relationship that is meaningful to us, we should not broadcast it around. If we ask why, we might use the following example: lovers keep secrets, don't they? When we're in love with someone we immediately start sharing things that we haven't shared with anyone else. It is a secret between the lovers and they keep it a secret. Why? Because it helps to make the love more special, more exclusive. There is a secret sharing between the two that does not exist with others and that makes it special.

So Master was saying to keep our love special with God; to make it exclusive and in this exclusivity we will feel a greater intimate connection. It can be sustained in this way and if we broadcast out to everyone, we risk losing some of that specialness. So the teaching here: "Blessed are the poor in spirit," that is, blessed are the humble and those who keep their growing relationship with God a secret, private and a personal thing. Although, it's talked about in the lectures and read in the inspirational writings of the gurus, in our private lives we just quietly commune with God. We don't talk much about it. In this way, it becomes sweet. It actually manifests. We can't hide it. When we are feeling a sweetness with God, it becomes manifest in our actions, attitudes and behavior...our very vibration. This is the way that we can emanate the sweetness of God. There is no need to talk about it.

Most of us are this way. We have a culture and a climate here, an environment at the temples and ashrams, where we are very comfortable in our private relationship with God and we respect each others privacy in that. Based on this Beatitude we might ask ourselves how we can practice this in our daily lives. Our modern daily life it is almost like warfare in business. Competition is so steep and everybody is promoting themselves through the roof. What chance do humble devotees of God have in this kind of cannibalistic world? We need to learn to be proportional without violating these spiritual truths or this tenet of Beatitude that Jesus has offered us.

If we were asked what was our dream job, Brother thinks that each of us would probably say that we would like to have an independent product or offer a unique and special independent service to others. Something that could really be part of us in action and would relate to our beliefs. Isn't this the way it is? We'd all like to do something unique and special ourselves and offer it to the world but the flip side of that is that we'd have to promote it ourselves. If it's our product or if we are the product, then we get into marketing or even self-marketing and this feels kind of uncomfortable for a lot of spiritually minded men and women. It's like how do we promote ourselves as a brand? We don't feel like promoting ourselves in this way.

So this is a challenge because it seems like it might violate our spirituality but, in fact, it doesn't have to. There are many Self-Realization Fellowship [SRF] disciples in the congregation here and around the

world who are engaged in this kind of work. We can have an attitude of non-attachment where we are not identified. Our sense of identity is not with our product or with our professional life. It is a part of us; it is an extension of us but it is not our whole being. We recognize that we are spiritual beings. That we are souls with a cosmic potential but we are manifesting the work in this world and need to promote it. So we find ways to share and to promote the message of our product or our brand and the benefits of it. We're proud of it; we're passionate about it but it's not our sense of identity. In doing so, we follow the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita where Krishna says to his disciple, Arjuna: "Oh Arjuna, offer Me your actions of righteousness every day and give to me the fruits of those actions and you shall achieve liberation."

In this way we can compete in the business world and our own clients will find us because they are seeking the kind of product that we are marketing. They are looking for the kind of promotions that we offer. In this sense we are able, through our spirituality, to target our market. Brother says that he personally sees this exhibited in those who come and serve here at the temple. Also, that there is a wonderful, large group but that more would always be welcome. Even here this morning there is a wonderful, large group of professional men and women, with very developed skills, who play very important roles in their daily lives. They may have several secretaries or they may have very important services that they offer to their clients but they step away from that on an Easter Sunday morning and come here to serve. They help get people on the shuttle on Sunset or they're ushering here in the temple or they're down below in the parking garage taking care of your keys or cooking in the kitchen getting ready for the brunch. They have in a sense liberated themselves from the professional obligations. They are not identified with them. They merely perform them to the best of their ability and then they step away. They have that freedom.

So this Beatitude of Jesus is a teaching of personal freedom. We cannot be bound by one role or one set of rules or obligations. We can step away anytime to perform a humble or great task. That is the way we practice this affirmation in daily life. Our Master said, "When the spirit of man mentally renounces desire for objects of this world, knowing them to be illusory and perishable, he begins to find true joy in acquiring permanently satisfying soul qualities."

As we set aside our selfish motives for success and achievement, we begin to discover a deeper level of meaning and purpose. There is a potential to unite our highest spiritual ideals with our commercial and professional endeavors. Even greater than this, when we cultivate an attitude of humility towards ourselves, towards others and towards God, we attract the highest blessings.

And Jesus said: "Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted." In the chant this morning in the second verse, which we didn't sing, Paramahansa Yogananda composed that one of the attributes of God is "to the sorrowful Thou are sympathy." That God is the source of sympathy and comfort to those who are mourning or are in grief. Jesus is saying in this Beatitude that in personal loss there is faith to sustain us. In personal crisis there is comfort to strengthen us. He doesn't say maybe; he says, "...shall be, shall be comforted." When we are sad; when we are hurting; when we are grieving: we shall be comforted.

During the week Brother was talking with a woman who six months ago had a very dramatic medical episode. An aneurysm, that was unknown to her, burst right in a public place. She collapsed on the ground. The paramedics came; she was rushed into the hospital where she had an emergency operation. When she came to she found herself in ICU and her whole life changed from there. She was released from hospital with partially paralyzed but she's working hard and slowly and painfully regaining, to the doctor's amazement, the full function of her body. Brother's question to the woman was what was her experience through the whole thing because she sounded so amazingly strong. Her response was: "You know, Brother, even though I lost partial consciousness I was still aware as the event was taking place and this tremendous calm ascended on me. I was so calm on the inside even though there was panic and chaos all around me. Throughout, the calm remained inside me. When I came out of the anesthesia, there was this wonderful serenity. And you know, Brother, that serenity is still with me now, six months later. To be honest, if someone gave me the opportunity to go back and not have that medical trauma and, also, not have this sustained serenity, I wouldn't trade, I wouldn't trade. I gained something on the inside that I never had before and it has more value and meaning for me than anything else."

Brother asked her saying: "I'm giving a talk to the Easter morning crowd on Sunday and going over this Beatitude, do you have a message you'd like to share? She said, "My message is: God will protect you. God will protect; you will be in His arms." So this is a "shall be" that something will manifest to us in our time of need. It is important for us to accept this because sometimes there is a lot of fear in our lives and we allow that fear to drive and motivate us and that only blocks out the blessings of God. So if we were to reword this beatitude, I might be: blessed are they that take their grief and human loss to God: for they shall be comforted.

Now we go to a little deeper level. When we can consciously take our sorrow to God, we have an opportunity to reap a greater blessing. There is always a choice, isn't there? When we get into a situation that is critical to us or is a crisis for us or we're worried about something and there's a lot of fear, there is always a choice to turn toward God or away from God. Brother thinks it is a sign of progressive spirituality when we start to turn toward God in time of sorrow or grief and not try to hide it all within ourselves. This Beatitude is speaking to the wisdom guided choice of choosing God; choosing to be open and receptive and offering it to God in times of personal crisis. SRF's late president, Sri Daya

Mata, said: "God's divine consciousness that shone through Jesus is a transformative power ever duly expressed through the receptive hearts. Ask yourself what you can do and what you need to let of that God's light of love and truth can shine through you."

In Brother's opinion this forms the basis of a very good prayer in our times of crisis. That is, "Lord, flow Your light through me. Show me Your decisions that I am to make. Show me the things I need to release and let go of that Your light might flow through me; that your strength might flow through me." Partly, the beatitude lesson here is to invite God in. Invite God in and let God be a part of what is going on. Especially in dark times there will be, there shall be comfort and strength.

Now the last portion of the message turns mystical. Our Guru offers in his commentary in the Second Coming of Christ on this Beatitude that Jesus has not only identified God as a source of comfort for those grieving over human loss but that there was more. In Master's own words: "He [Jesus] was speaking of that divine melancholy resulting from the awakening consciousness of separation from God, which creates in the soul an insatiable yearning to be reunited with the Eternal Beloved.

This is a very mystical message for those who have ears to hear. Brother said that he was born sad. It was a melancholy sadness that he'd carried with him from the past. He had a great family; a wonderful life but he was still sad. He couldn't explain it nor could anyone else. He was a happy guy but it was a mask because down inside he was very unhappy. It was only when he met his guru, Paramahansa Yogananda, and really started to receive his Cosmic Truths that he understood the source of that sadness. He knew that nothing in this world could provide him with sustainable happiness but he didn't know where that would come from and now he knows. This message is shared with all of us to realize that this happiness comes from the Cosmic Source that is right within us. We can seek it; we can find it and until we do, we're always incomplete.

Brother says he hears all the moaning and groaning going on about the bad stuff going on, which is really true. People are also saying: "Life is good; life is fine. I love my wife. She's beautiful. We get along great! My job has never been better. It's kind of a dream job. You know, I really should be happy. I really should be happier but I'm not. What's the problem?" There is something missing and, you know, the Beatitude of Jesus and our Guru's interpretation says that something will always be missing because there is that something else that we need to find in God. God is a part of us. God is our origin; our genesis. We need to find our completeness in God. When we seek it there we start to find a fulfillment and satisfaction that we haven't been able to find anywhere else.

If we find in our daily lives that there is a kind of persisting sorrow, through good times and bad; if we find that there is a persisting loneliness even though you have wonderful friends and family, don't think of it as our problem, don't think it's their problem. It is between us and God! This is really an amazing teaching because we can, at a certain stage in our spiritual lives, recognize a divine melancholy, a divine loneliness, that we can use as fuel to yearn for God's presence. Again, if we take this loneliness and turn it toward God, we will find that God will be there to comfort us. He has been waiting for our prayers. It is one of the loftiest yearnings of the heart. God fulfilling on the deepest levels..."I can only find sustained completeness in You."

Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

So the theme of Easter this morning in this Temple is resurrection and Self-realization. They are very closely together. Jesus resurrected his body and there is an amazing story behind that but our Guru says that the most important resurrection is the resurrection of Spirit...lifting up our mortality into immortality; our humanity transforming into divinity. This comes through our personal effort on a daily basis in meditation; to set our humanity aside for a short period of time and connecting with the divinity in our lives. We can use meditation to help invoke this and to create an environment of receptivity and then God's light can begin to flow. This growing realization within us is the real resurrection in Spirit.

Our Guru says: "Oh, Universal Christ, be awakened within us; be resurrected within us as everlasting Christ-wisdom and perennial ever-new joy."