

I would like to share with you a testimony of Dr. Iulian Urban, a 38 year old Italian doctor who worked hard for fighting against the coronavirus. I would like to read his testimony:

Until two weeks ago, my colleagues and I were atheists. It was normal because we are doctors. We learned that science excludes the presence of God. I laughed at my parents going to church.

Nine days ago, a 75-year-old pastor was admitted into the hospital. He was a kind man. He had serious breathing problems. He had a Bible with him and impressed us by how he read it to the dying as he held their hand. We doctors were all tired, discouraged, psychologically and physically finished. When we had time, we listened to him.

We have reached our limits. We can do no more. People are dying every day. We are exhausted. We have two colleagues who have died, and others that have been infected. We realized that we needed to start asking God for help. We do this when we have a few free minutes. When we talk to each other, we cannot believe that, though we were once fierce atheists, we are now daily in search of peace, asking the Lord to help us continue so that we can take care of the sick.

Yesterday, the 75-year-old pastor died. Despite having had over 120 deaths here in 3 weeks, we were destroyed. He had managed, despite his condition and our difficulties, to bring us a PEACE that we no longer had hoped to find. The pastor went to the Lord, and soon we will follow him if matters continue like this.

I haven't been home for 6 days. I don't know when I ate last. I realize my worthlessness on this earth. I want to use my last breath to help others. I am happy to have returned to God while I am surrounded by the suffering and death of my fellow men.

Original: (<https://www.gacetacristiana.com.ar/testimonio-del-medico-iulian-urban-de-38-anos-es-doctor-en-lombardia-italia/>)

English: (https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?id=329015557290549&story_fbid=1267483733443722)

At the end of his testimony, he confessed that he was happy, even under experiencing the worst circumstances. He found an inner peace, an inner bliss, and “*makarios*” in the midst of the miserable COVID-19 pandemic. Jesus calls us to be different in our daily life, especially such a time like this. We are called to embody the Beatitudes! We are called to not care about things, but care about people, not about our own needs, but the hurts of others, and not about pleasing ourselves, but rather making God proud.

March 29, 2020
The Sermon on the Mount (1)
Developing a Disciple's Attitude
Matthew 5:1-12
Rev. Dr. Charles Yoon

This Sunday and several Sundays after Easter we will be studying “The Sermon on the Mount.” We will focus on “the Beatitudes” in the Sermon on the Mount.” Jesus’ preaching of the beatitudes guides us to living a good life that will bring us to God's kingdom. When we follow all the beatitudes, we are living in the way that Jesus wants us to live. The beatitudes lead us to where we want to end up and how to know and meet God. In short, the beatitudes tell us that we will be rewarded for the good actions we do throughout our lifetime and in our afterlife.

Today we are going to begin with a brief overview of the beatitudes. First, Jesus repeatedly said it is possible for the people in His kingdom to be truly, deeply, and profoundly happy. Many Bible translations don't use the word “happy” here because Jesus was talking about much more than your everyday variety of happiness. Our word, “happy” doesn't quite convey the concept that Jesus was referring to. He was talking about “happiness and then something else.” In Greek this word “blessed” or “happy” is pronounced, “*makarios*.” The meaning of “*makarios*” is the idea of contentment, fulfillment, satisfaction, and completion.

William Barclay says, “Human happiness is something that is dependent on the chances and changes of life, something which life may give and which life may also destroy. The Christian blessedness is completely untouchable and unassailable.” By using this word, “*makarios*,” Jesus said it is possible for us to have complete joy that no one can take from us. We can have inner peace and inner bliss, a feeling of fulfillment that is not affected by the inevitable worries of life. Think of the ability to be deeply and profoundly joyful, no matter what comes! Do you have an unexpected diagnosis? No problem, you are still *makarios*! Do you have a bill which you cannot pay? No worries, you are still *makarios*! Did you lose job because of down-sizing at work? That's okay, your *makarios* is still intact! Do you feel lonely or anxious or scared because of the coronavirus? No worries, you are still *makarios*!

But there is another meaning of “*makarios*.” “*Makarios*” also means “divine approval.” Jesus said that we who apply *makarios* not only experience an invulnerable joy, but we also can make God proud! In his book, “*The Applause of Heaven*,” Max Lucado describes the beatitudes this way: “God applauds the poor in spirit. He cheers for the mourners. He favors the meek. He smiles on those who hunger for righteousness. He honors the merciful. He welcomes the pure in heart. He claps for the peacemakers. He rises to greet the persecuted.” Have you felt God’s applause lately?

We can live in such a way that we feel the approval of our Heavenly God every day. In this sermon Jesus says, “If you value the things I value, then you can be supremely happy! You can have a joy that no one can take away! On top of that, you will feel the applause of God!” This is good news!

Second, Jesus’ sermon indicates, however, that most of us are looking for this supreme happiness in the wrong places. Jesus said, “*Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are the meek. Blessed are the merciful. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Blessed are those who are persecuted. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.*” (5:3-11) Jesus applied “*makarios*” to things we would never think of applying it to. We would never say, “Happy are the poor, the meek, the merciful, the persecuted, and the slandered!” Those things just don’t go together. Jesus valued what we avoid and He avoided what we tend to value. If we live according to the standards of today’s society, we’d say, “Blessed are the rich, the self-confident. Blessed are those people who never have anything to be sad about. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for a good opportunity! Blessed are those who look out for number one! Blessed are the people with power. Blessed are the popular. Blessed are the teens who have more friends on Facebook or Instagram and get more ‘Likes’! Blessed are the quarterbacks and head cheerleaders. Blessed are the CEO’s and billionaires.” These are the people we applaud.

Over the past 15 years, Dan Buettner, who is a National Geographic researcher and New York Times best-selling author, has been exploring the healthiest and happiest places in the world and to uncover the secrets of happiness and longevity. In his book, *The Blue Zones of Happiness: Lessons From the World’s Happiest People*, Buettner reveals

his findings from visiting three of the world’s happiest places: Singapore, Costa Rica and Denmark. He discovered that they all share a common theme: a strong community and a sense of purpose. They have life’s purpose and focus on others. Striving for something meaningful and greater than ourselves is a significant source of a sense of fulfillment and happiness. Buettner concludes that by taking our focus away from ourselves and focusing on others in need, we’ll experience more gratitude for what we already have and live a happier life in the process. In this sermon Jesus says we can find true and deep happiness, not from what we value, but from what Jesus values. We can have blessed joy no matter what comes in life, but we need to value the things Jesus values.

I would like to point out three things that we must remember as we continue to study this sermon. First, the values Jesus lists in the Beatitudes can only be lived out by Christians. These spiritual standards come about only through the indwelling power of the Son of God. Only the poor in spirit, only those individuals who are humble, realize their need for God and respond by giving their hearts and their lives to Jesus. As we go through this study we’ll see that only by letting Jesus live in and through us can we be merciful and pure in heart and work to make peace and endure injustice.

Second, the Beatitudes are a package deal, not something to pick and choose from. We must strive to display each of these character traits. It’s easy to make the mistake of saying, “I believe in mourning for my own sins, but I’m just not a merciful kind of guy.” We can’t pick some of these attitudes and actions and ignore others. They are a package deal. They go together.

And then finally, Jesus is not just talking about attitudes, but also about actions. He says that our beliefs must impact our behavior. Jesus is not saying, “Live like this in order to be saved,” but “Live like this because you are saved.” Conduct must flow out of character. We need to embrace and embody the Beatitudes. In Matthew 6:8 Jesus said, “*Do not be like them.*” We need to be different! As Christians, we are to be stamped by Christ, not by the culture around us, or not by our feelings or emotions within us. These beatitudes are more than qualities to celebrate in worship. They are qualities to be lived out in our day-to-day lives.