

2nd Beatitude

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

Μακάριοι οἱ πενθοῦντες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ παρακληθήσονται.

Compare the first two Beatitudes with Isaiah 61.1-3: The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me *to bring good tidings to the afflicted [or, to the poor]*; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; *to comfort all who mourn*; to grant to those who mourn in Zion – to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.

The word used is not simply *sorrow*, but *mourning*. What does it mean to mourn?

The beatitude can be understood in 3 ways:

1. _____, *i.e.*, “blessed is the man who has endured the bitterest sorrow that life can bring.”

How does mourning/suffering bless us?

A. It trains us by _____ our souls.

B. It strengthens our _____, the motive for enduring suffering.

C. It teaches us the _____ that comes only by the experience of suffering.

2. _____, *i.e.*, “Blessed is the man who is desperately sorry for his own sin and his own unworthiness.”

What was the beginning of Christ's message?

3. _____, *i.e.*, “Blessed are those who are desperately sorry for the sorrow and suffering of this world.”

It is always right to be detached from _____, but it is never right to be detached from _____.

What does *compassion* mean?

Simply put, the more you _____, the more you suffer. Why is this so?

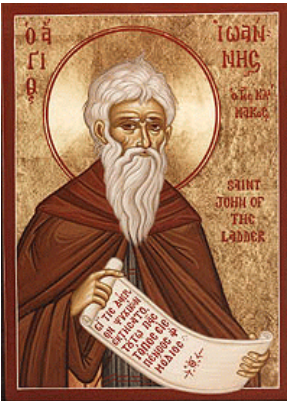
There is a vice opposed to blessed mourning. One definition of it is “sorrow at another’s good.” What is it?

Can we distinguish blessed sorrow or mourning from an evil kind of sorrow?



The Fathers of the Church teach us to differentiate between the sources of tears. Thus, the Venerable Ephraim the Syrian writes: “With people there are three different kinds of tears. There are tears for visible things and they are very bitter and vain. There are tears of repentance, when the soul desires eternal good things, and they are very sweet and beneficial. And there are tears of remorse there [*i.e.*, in hell], where (according to the Savior’s word) there is weeping and gnashing of teeth (Mt 8:12), and these tears are bitter and useless, because they are altogether fruitless when there is no longer any time for repentance.

2nd Beatitude: Citations from the Fathers & others



Mourning according to God is sadness of soul and the disposition of a sorrowing heart, which ever madly seeks that for which it thirsts; and when it fails in its quest, it painfully pursues it, and follows in its wake grievously lamenting. Or thus: mourning is a golden spur in a souls which is stripped of all attachment and of all ties, fixed by holy sorrow to watch over the heart. [St John Climacus, *Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step 7.1]

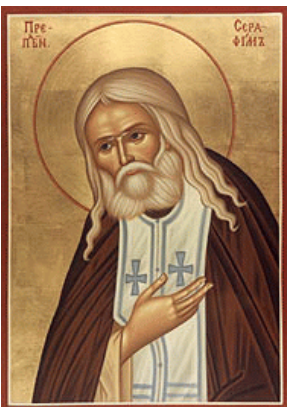
Greater than baptism itself is the fountain of tears after baptism, even though it is somewhat audacious to say so. For baptism is the washing away of evils that were in us before, but sins committed after baptism are washed away by tears. As baptism is received in infancy, we have all defiled it, but we cleanse it anew with tears. And if God in His love for mankind had not given us tears, those being saved would be few indeed and hard to find. [St John Climacus, *Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step 7.6]

I walked a mile with Pleasure
She chattered all the way,
But left me none the wiser
For all she had to say.

I walked a mile with Sorrow,
And ne'er a word said she,
But, oh, the things I learned from her
When Sorrow walked with me!
[unknown]

Whenever Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sasov (d. 1807) saw anyone's suffering either of spirit or of body, he shared it so earnestly that the other's suffering became his own. Once someone expressed his astonishment at this capacity to share in another's troubles.

"What do you mean 'share'?" said the rabbi. "It is my own sorrow; how can I help but suffer it?"
[Martin Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim*, vol. 2, p. 86.]



When the evil spirit of sorrow seizes the soul, it fills it with distress and unpleasantness, and thus it does not allow one to pray with the necessary diligence, it hinders one from reading the Scriptures with proper attention, it deprives one of meekness and deference in one's relations with the brothers, and it produces an aversion for every kind of conversation. For the soul that is filled with sorrow becomes as if mad and delirious and is unable calmly either to accept good advice or to reply meekly to the questions asked of it. It flees people as if they were the cause of the sorrow and fails to understand that the cause of the affliction is within oneself. Sorrow is a worm of the heart that gnaws at the mother that gave it birth.

The sorrowing monk will not stir his mind to contemplation and can never offer pure prayer. He who has overcome the passions has also overcome sorrow. But he who has been overcome by the passions will never escape the chains of sorrow. As a sick man is known by the color of his face, so one who is possessed by passions is given away by his sorrow. He who loves the world cannot but sorrow. But he who disdains the world is always joyful. As fire purifies gold, so the sorrow of longing for God purifies a sinful heart. [St. Seraphim of Sarov, *Little Russian Philokalia*, vol. 1, p. 34]

For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret, but worldly grief produces death. [2 Cor 7.10]

When we want to learn to love like Jesus, we need to listen to what He wants us to do – through prayer and meditation. And many times we will have to do things which, we ourselves don't want to do: to forgive someone who really hurt us deeply, to start over when somebody very close really disappointed us, to continue serving even after a great deception. All these things hurt. But this is the kind of forgiving and unselfish love God is calling us for. [Mother Teresa of Calcutta]

Rabbi Moshe of Kobryn (d. 1858) taught: "When a man suffers, he ought not to say, 'That's bad! That's bad! Nothing that God imposes on man is bad. But it is all right to say, 'That's bitter!' For among medicines there are some that are made with bitter herbs." [Martin Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim*, vol. 2, p. 163.]

Our quest for spiritual advancement cannot lead our soul only on to the meadows of joy and consolation, and leave it there. Sooner or later it is inevitably led on to the way of the cross. Carrying our spiritual cross we learn patience and docility. You should definitely know that spiritual joys are always followed by a spiritual Calvary. [St. Macarius of Optina, *Russian Letters of Direction*, p. 33.]



The inexpressible and unaccountable melancholy that oppresses you and prevents you from enjoying anything may be a test, intended to prove the firmness of your decision and the purity of your love of God. It is not joy of the spirit alone that manifests our love of God; unflinching courage, staunchly maintained through long periods of darkness and anguish, proves this love even more definitely. [St. Macarius of Optina, *Russian Letters of Direction*, p. 43.]

3rd Beatitude:

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς, ὅτι αὐτοὶ κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν.

Preliminary: What does it mean to be “blessed”?

The Greek word for “blessed,” makarios, was originally used to describe the gods. It describes a joy that contains its secret within itself, a joy that is serene & untouchable, and self-contained, a joy that is completely independent of all the chances & changes in life.

Makarios can also be translated “happy,” but this is a terrible mistake. Why?

To the modern mind,

1. *Happy* means something _____, a state of consciousness, a feeling. If you feel happy, you are happy.

2. It connotes a _____. Today you are happy, tomorrow you might not be.

3. It also connotes something _____ (hap is the Old English word for “fortune” or “chance,” the same root from we get the words “happen.”)

Blessed, on the other hand, is

1. An _____, not a feeling. That is why we can easily be mistaken about blessedness.

2. A _____ state.

3. Dependent upon God’s _____ & our _____, neither _____ nor

_____.

“Suffering is the crucial test separating happiness from blessedness. Suffering can be a part of blessedness, but not part of happiness. Job is not happy there on his dung heap scratching his boils with a potsherd, deprived of family and fortune, blamed by his wife and friends, seemingly forsaken by Gld. What arrogant nonsense to tell Job he is happy! But he is blessed, though he does not know it, because he is learning wisdom and coming closer to God, his true good, his true blessedness. It is startling to tell mourners they are blessed, but it is simply silly to tell them they are happy.” [Peter Kreeft, *Back to Virtue*, p. 87-8]

What is Meekness?

Nowadays the word *meekness* conjures up images of spinelessness & subservience, of simpering & contemptuous weakness. It was not always so. The Greeks held this virtue in high regard.

The Greeks had three uses for their word for meekness.

1. Aristotle had a lot to say about meekness (πραότης, *praotēs*). It was Aristotle's fixed method to define a virtue as a mean between two extremes. One the one hand was the extreme of excess; on the other hand there was the extreme of defect; and in between there was the virtue itself, the happy medium. To take an example, on the one extreme there is the spendthrift; on the other extreme there is the miser; and in between there is the generous man.

Aristotle defines meekness (πραότης) as the mean between *orgilotēs* (ὀργιλότης), which means excessive anger, and *aorgēsia* (ἀοργησία), which means excessive angerlessness. Meekness, as Aristotle saw it, is the happy medium between too much and too little anger.

In Christian terms, we might ask: what is the right time to be angry, & what is the wrong time to be angry?

Generally, it is ever right to be angry at a wrong done to ourselves?

Is it right to be angry at a wrong done to another?

2. Meekness (πραότης, *praotēs*) was also the regular word used to describe a

_____, one which has learned to accept _____.

Consequently, meekness implies _____ - _____, or better still, to be controlled by _____. For example, we receive Holy Communion as the servant or handmaiden of God. We are God's _____.

3. The Greek term for meekness was also contrasted with the quality which was called *hypsēlokardia*

(ὕψιλοκαρδία), which means lofty-heartedness. Consequently, in meekness there is the true

_____ which banishes all _____.

From this, we can see that the meek are not the _____. An example: think of the ideal medieval knight. The true knight combines without compromise great strength and great meekness,

the ability to use force and the gentleness to forego it, the willingness to brave perilous quests and the gentle courtesy of a Platonic lover. He is a man, but a _____ - _____.

Sometimes it is harmful to act; sometimes it is harmful not to act. Meekness is that aspect of selflessness which avoids _____, whether by action or inaction.

This beatitude promises an earthly reward. Does this strike you as odd?

Compare the 5th Commandment: "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the LORD your God gives you" [Ex 20.12]

What is the vice that is the opposite of meekness?

Are there occasions where this vice is, in fact, a virtue?

3rd Beatitude: Citations from the Fathers & others



Now the man Moses was very meek, above all men which were upon the face of the earth. [Num 12.3]

Once Rabbi David Moshe of Tchortkov [d. 1903] said with tears in his eyes: “It is written that Moses was meek above all men. How are we to interpret this? He with whom God spoke face to face and whose work was so mighty – how could he think himself less than all others? The reason is this: In those forty days which Moses spent on the heights his body had become pure and luminous like that of the ministering angels. After that time he said to himself: ‘Of what importance is it, if I, whose body was purified, give service to God? But if one of Israel who is still clad in his turbid flesh serves God – how much greater is he than I!’” [Martin Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim*, 2.76]

Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle [*lit.* meek] and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. [Mt 11.29]



Christ was meek to all His revilers. Do you not revile those that revile you? Christ got revenge against no one, though He was able to destroy all His enemies in the wink of an eye. Do you not get revenge for any offense against you? Christ endured all things. Do you not complain and curse in any misfortune and suffering that comes your way? [St. Tikhon of Zadonsk (d. 1783), *Journey to Heaven*, p. 102.]

Labor to acquire meekness. Concerning the heavenly virtues, meekness and humility, the Lord Himself teaches us, saying: “Learn of me, for I am meek and humble in heart; and ye shall find rest for your souls” [Mt 11.29]. Learn not from angels, not from men, but from Me, He says; that is, from the higher wisdom. May outward meekness be manifest in this: may your walk be meek, meek your sitting, meek your glances, meek your word. The clothing of a man, the smiling of his teeth, and the way he walks inform concerning him. And meekness of the souls is, according to the inner man, the restraint of anger, the taming of rage, and when one, being saddened by another, does not revenge

himself even if he can and accepts vexations without causing them in return. Meekness is when one does not vex anyone either in word or deed or in command, but rather gladdens the heart of every man by his manner of acting.

Thus saith the Lord: “To whom will I look, but to him that is meek and silent” [Is 66.2] The prophetic word says: “The meek will the lord guide in judgement (in understanding), and the meek will He teach His way” (Ps 24.9). “For the Lord takes pleasure in His people, and He will beautify the meek with salvation” [Ps 149.4]. “But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace” [Ps 36.11].

And concerning the kind of rest and peace which a man receives from meekness, [St. John] Chrysostom writes, saying: There is nothing firmer than meekness, nothing stronger; it preserves our soul in constant quiet, and strives to lead it as to a harbor, and it is the cause for us of every contentment; and nothing so places the soul in rest and great quietness as meekness and humility. This is more honorable than all crowns for one how has acquired these virtues; it is more profitable than every honor and glory.

The upright souls, says [St. John] Climacus, is a co-dweller with humility, while an evil soul is the slave of malice; the souls of the meek are filled with knowledge, but the mind that is prone to anger is covered with the darkness of ignorance. The meek soul receives the words of wisdom: “Many are they that are exalted and glorious, but to the meek shall mysteries be revealed,” writes Sirach [Sir 3.19].

He who hates those who grieve him, hates meekness. He who flees those who grieve him, flees also the rest which is in Christ, in the words of Abba Dorotheus. God reposes in meek hearts; while the restless soul presents an open door to the devil. The meek soul is the throne of simplicity of heart; but the mind that is prone to anger is the slave of malice. [Abbot Nazarius of Valaam (d. 1809) (who sent St. Herman to Alaska), *Little Russian Philokalia*, 2.67-68.]



And again (he hears), “Blessed are the meek” [Mt 5.5]. Is there anyone who mourns every day who can continue to live in a state of anger and not become meek? Just as a flame of fire is extinguished by water, so anger of soul is quenched by mourning and tears; so much so that a man who has spent a long time being irascible [angry] sees the temper of his soul changed and transformed into total calm. Therefore a man must look at himself in this respect as well, to see whether he is truly meek. He who is this cannot in any way bear to see the transgression of God’s commandment, but laments over those who commit sin as though he himself had committed it. [St. Symeon the New Theologian (d. 1022), *The Discourses*, Discourse 31, p. 330-31.]

Venerable Elder Athanasios, the custodian of the library of St. Anne’s Holy Skete [on Mount Athos], was falsely accused in 1935 of stealing a manuscript and imprisoned for three years. Innocent, he suffered this temptation in total peace and tolerance, without evil thoughts. He refused to prosecute his accusers in court and instead left it to the all-just Judge to bring justice. On his deathbed and with his last breath, the real villain confessed that he had hidden the book in the skete’s charnel house, where the bones of the reposed are stored. [*Athonite Gerontikon*, pp. 334-35]

The hegumen Athanasios, [abbot] of Gregoriou Monastery on Mount Athos, wrote a poem about meekness:

It is sweet, very sweet,
For one to be meek.

When someone torments me,
Why should I return his slander?

Would it stop the anger
If I started swearing too?

His behavior is out of control,
And were I to reply to him in kind,

Like him a barbarian
I would immediately become.

At the moment of passion
I will keep silent.

And the madness with calmness
I will stop.

Afterwards calmly, sweetly,
I will attack the injustice;

In this way I will be heard
Rather than being attacked. [*Athonite Gerontikon*, pp. 337-38.]

The following incident took place in the monastery of Iviron. A man was transporting firewood. A priest asked him to bring him some.

“I will bring some, Father. How much do you want?”

“Ten loads.” The man brought them.

“Bring them closer,” the priest said.

“It is too narrow a passage and too steep for the animal to pass, Father. It is afraid,” the man replied.

“I tell you, bring the wood closer.” And they quarreled.

“You are not to be forgiven,” the priest said.

“And you shall not be forgiven either,” the man replied as he departed.

“Now what am I going to do,” the priest thought. “I cannot celebrate the Liturgy. I cannot! What am I to do now? Ah, when the man passes by tomorrow I will prostrate myself and ask for his forgiveness. But what if his son gets ill before then and he has to go to his village suddenly? How am I going to find the man?”

Meanwhile, night fell and the monastery’s gates were shut and sealed. “Now what?” the priest thought. “I can neither go out to find him nor get back in when I return. But now that we have cursed each other, there is a real treasure I can use. It is prayer. Panagia [the Theotokos] will enlighten me as to what to do. When we monks have a problem, we ask Panagia’s help.”

He began to pray, "My Panagia, what should I do?" It did not take long before he was given his answer. He lit a lantern and went out through the monastery's small door and began to ascend the mountain, at night, with only the lantern to guide him.

"Good evening."

"Welcome, Father."

"Blessed one," the priest said, "we quarreled over some firewood. Forgive me."

"God forgives you, Father," he replied. "Please forgive me also."

"God forgives," answered the priest and went to celebrate the Liturgy.

When you have a difference with someone, do not go to take communion until you are first reconciled. [*Athonite Gerontikon*, pp. 338-39.]



Ryokan, a Zen master, lived the simplest kind of life in a little hut at the foot of a mountain. One evening a thief visited the hut only to discover there was nothing in it to steal.

Ryokan returned and caught him. "You may have come a long way to visit me," he told the prowler, "and you should not return empty-handed. Please take my clothes as a gift."

The thief was bewildered. He took the clothes and slunk away.

Ryokan sat naked, watching the moon. "Poor fellow," he mused, "I wish I could give him this beautiful moon." [*Zen Flesh, Zen Bones*]

Clearly, Jacob was a man on his path in the process of this work. He did not appear to be laboring. He was at one with his efforts. He knew what another baker needed without being asked. When Jacob worked with others, doors sprung open just when a load became unbearable and closed behind men who often forgot to do so. In this way, Jacob's contribution wasn't simply the addition of another person's efforts. It was, rather, that with Jacob one and one made three. He made the others more than they might have been. He didn't think it made him more. He didn't think about this at all. [Noah benShea, *Jacob the Baker*.]