

THE FORGOTTEN BEATITUDE

Acts 20:35

Recently we spent several weeks studying the Beatitudes, the “*Blessed are...*” or the “*Happy are...*” verses from Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount as recorded in Matthew’s gospel. Today, the first day of 2006, we are being reminded of what I am calling the Forgotten Beatitude as recorded by Luke in Acts as Luke is quoting Paul who is quoting Jesus. And even though the Forgotten Beatitude is not included in the gospels it is clearly the heart of the gospel message, it is at the center of all that Jesus taught, lived and died for. And further, the Forgotten Beatitude summarizes Christian living. So what is this Forgotten Beatitude? **It is more blessed to give than to receive!** Or as the New English Bible reads, “*Happiness lies more in the giving than in receiving.*”

I want to be very clear about this beatitude; it is not just an abstract idea; but rather, it is a concrete principle for living. If we really desire to begin this New Year in a fresh and vital life-enhancing way as Christian believers we will make a commitment to not just believe but to more importantly live the Forgotten Beatitude—*It is more blessed to give than to receive!*

Even though I am referring to “*It is more blessed to give than to receive*” as the Forgotten Beatitude its significance is supported by the most familiar verse in the gospels, “*For God so loved the world that God gave...*” And it is in this most familiar verse that we see the relationship between love and giving—God so **loved** that God **gave**. Therefore, when Jesus identifies loving God and loving others as the greatest commandments he is establishing the foundation for the Forgotten Beatitude—*It is more blessed to give than to receive.*_____

Friends, we are first receivers. We receive God’s love. We have been given the visible gift of God’s love through the life of Jesus the Christ. And it is a blessing, a cause for happiness, to receive God’s love. When writing to the church at Corinth, Paul says it this way, “*Thanks be to God for God’s indescribable gift.*”

This leads me to say that in order to be a giver one must first learn to receive. William Tuck writes, “*Many receive with the lumbering grace of a hippopotamus.*” My friends, it is alright to receive God’s love. It is alright to receive love from others: Love that comes through tangible gifts, through presence in time of need, and through compliments and words of praise. Consider this, to receive graciously from someone who gives to us is in reality sharing a gift of ourselves with them. Do you see how giving and receiving compliment each other? If we are to obtain the happiness through giving that the Forgotten Beatitude offers then there must be someone to receive. And when we receive we are the channel through which someone is able to be blessed by giving. Yet, we

must remember that according to Jesus' Forgotten Beatitude, the greater blessing comes through giving.

Even though blessing and happiness come through giving we must acknowledge that there is a cost to giving. When you give your heart there is a cost—an emotional cost. When you give a tangible gift there is a cost—a financial cost. When you give of talent or presence there is a cost—a time cost. To give is costly. Yet, as followers of Jesus the Christ we learn that Christian giving goes out of its way for others as God's love goes out of its way for us—*For God so loved the world that God gave!*

Ponder for a moment what has been given to you—directly and indirectly. Your life given to you by your parents. The skill and knowledge that teachers and professors have given. The love that friends have given. The conveniences that inventors and scientists have given. The freedom that patriots have given. The sacrifice of a child that God has given. Consider all that has been given, all that you have received, all that you have. And now consider these words of Jesus, *“From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required...”* Now it appears that not only is giving costly but so is receiving. If we have been blessed to receive then our further blessing comes through giving. We desire to give as we count the cost for what has been given to us.

In 1935 the Mayo brothers gave a generous gift to the University of Minnesota that provided a graduate medical facility. The following is an excerpt from the letter that Dr. William J. Mayo sent to the University along with the gift. *“Our father recognized certain definite social obligations. He believed that any person who had better opportunity than others—greater in strength of mind, body, or character, owed something to those who had not been so provided; that is, the important thing in life is not to accomplish for oneself alone, but for each to carry their share of collective responsibility.”* This sounds amazingly like Jesus words, *“From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required...”*

When Ernest Hemingway received the medal for the Nobel Prize for literature he gave it to a church in Santiago saying, *“You really do not feel you own something until you can give it away.”*

Luke who quotes Paul who quotes Jesus reminds us of the Forgotten Beatitude—**It is more blessed to give than to receive.** Giving is at the heart of the Christian message—**For God so loved the world that God gave.** Jesus established that the foundation for giving is love—**The first commandment is to love God and the second is to love your neighbor.** I encourage us all to begin this New Year by embracing the heart and the foundation of the Christian message—**giving out of love.** Consider all that you have received, how very blessed you are, and then remember Jesus words, *“From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required.”*

Let this truly be a **Happy** New Year by **living** the Forgotten Beatitude—
Happiness lies more in the giving than in receiving. Consider now how much you
have received and how much you give as we sing together the words penned by
Isaac Watts that capture so well the meaning of the Forgotten Beatitude—*When I
Survey the Wondrous Cross.*