



THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Formation in the Christian Contemplative Life

63: The Beatitudes: Healing the Emotional Programs, Part 2



Photo by Jodi Anne, *The Mount of Beatitudes*

Fruits of the Spirit

*...The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience,
kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.*

- Galatians 5:22-23

Gifts of the Spirit

*A spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
a spirit of counsel and of strength,
a spirit of knowledge and of godliness (piety),
and he shall be filled with the spirit of the fear of the Lord (reverence).*

- see Isaiah 11:2-3

Depending on where you are on the spiritual journey, the "skyscraper" model – the section where Fr. Thomas presents the Models of Christian Growth and the Stages of Prayer – may seem heady, elusive, even intimidating. Your head may be spinning with the meaning of terms and what they have to do with you on your journey. Take heart! God meets us wherever we are and brings us along at a pace that is meant just for us. Sometimes this may feel like a crisis of faith, but we are most likely in a transition, led by grace, and need to spend a significant period of time adjusting to a new way of being in our lives and the world.

While we may not yet be experiencing the night of sense, the night of spirit or transforming union, we are likely starting to experience the emergence of some of the fruits and gifts of the Spirit and growing in understanding of the wisdom contained in Jesus' teaching on the beatitudes. Fr. Thomas calls the beatitudes Jesus' comprehensive approach to happiness.

"The Fruits of the Spirit are indications of God's presence at work in us... I often use the example of the spiral staircase as a symbol of the purification that gradually takes place through contemplative prayer... Every time we move to a new level of recognition of our weakness and dependence on God for everything, we experience a kind of inner resurrection... This is manifested by the experience of the Fruits of the Spirit... As we descend the spiral staircase into the depths of our own being and into the center of our nothingness, the Seven Gifts of the Spirit, which are even more mature fruits, begin to manifest... The Seven Gifts of the Spirit are habitual dispositions... a way of acting that is permanent, easy and delightful. The ripe fruits of the Gifts are the Beatitudes."
- Thomas Keating, *Fruits and Gifts of the Spirit*

When Fr. Thomas uses the term "ripe fruits" he is referring to the stage in our growth and development where we have matured into a deeper understanding and acceptance of the fruits available to us through the beatitudes. The poor in spirit develop a greater trust in God. Those who mourn experience a new freedom from and a new relationship with what may have been an over-dependence. The meek become free from the drive for power and control. Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness are freed from over-identification with social groups. The merciful are able to experience life in a cooperative, nonjudgmental, accepting way. The pure of heart see God through the eyes of faith. The peacemakers find peace by integrating the emotional and rational into the intuitive and surrender to God in love. Those who are persecuted for righteousness have moved beyond self-interest to an identity rooted in Christ.

The beatitudes seem to encourage us to participate in our life and healing. We do have a part to play in dismantling and healing our emotional programs. In this session's video Fr. Thomas says, "...Don't...give too passive a meaning to some of these wisdom sayings of Jesus in which he urges us to accept what is. He always wants us to be ready to do something about the situation once we've accepted it."

A Meditation

I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower.

*He takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit,
and every one that does he prunes so that it bears more fruit.*

You are already pruned because of the word that I spoke to you.

*Remain in me, as I remain in you.
Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine,
so neither can you unless you remain in me.*

*I am the vine, you are the branches.
Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit,
because without me you can do nothing.*

*Anyone who does not remain in me will be thrown out like a branch and wither;
people will gather them and throw them into a fire and they will be burned.*

If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you.

By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.
- John 15:1-8

To Practice

- View the video excerpt "The Beatitudes: Healing the Emotional Programs, Part 2" which is about 25 minutes in length.

- Reflecting on the Fruits and Gifts of the Spirit and the beatitudes, notice which fruits, gifts, and ripe fruits are manifesting or emerging in your life. Notice in the Scripture passage from John 15 the gentleness of Jesus' words to remain in him in order to bear fruit.

Resources for Further Study:

You may wish to read Chapter 19 in *Invitation to Love* (20th anniversary edition), Chapter 18 in older editions.

You also may wish to read *Fruits and Gifts of the Spirit* by Thomas Keating.

Notes and Reflections: