

Beatitudes for the Workplace

The Beatitudes is one of Jesus' best-known teachings (Mt. 5: 3-11). It is filled with Good News of how God is present in people's lives. Jesus' original listeners spent most of their waking time and energies in the workplace. Their lives were blessed by what Jesus said and did. Our good news is that what Jesus said, then, is just as relevant for us, today.

Jesus' Beatitudes address the painful areas in our lives, such as brokenness of spirit, grief, feelings of powerlessness, etc. Jesus named nine areas, and then explained how he is present with people who experience them, and the difference he makes.

Following are thoughts on Jesus' second Beatitude, about mourning and grief.

Blessed are those who mourn...

Mourning is our (normal) response to grief, and expresses the pain of grief. Grief causes mourning. We normally connect mourning and grief with death. But, it helps to recognize that 'death' comes in many forms. So do our responses.

We grieve and mourn when something we value dies. When our employment ends, voluntarily or involuntarily, it's a death. That kind of death includes imposed retirement, wrongful dismissal, business bankruptcy, incapacity from illness or injury, corporate restructuring, and what you can add from your experience(s).

Jesus' Beatitude on Mourning encourages us to:

- learn how grief works (knowing the 'enemy' helps us deal with it)
- recognize how Jesus is with us – and the difference he makes

Grief: Grief is a normal feeling in response to an abnormal event. At the root of grief is change. Change always brings degrees of difficulty. But, when change is imposed and takes away something we value, we grieve. Unemployment, downsizing, incapacity, etc., are examples of where and how grief hurts! Changed (gone) are valued relationships, self-esteem, and our freedom to make choices.

Feeding grief is society's values, which emphasize 'doing,' not 'being.' Confusing 'doing' with 'being' deceives us into taking our identities from what we do. So, when 'doing' changes 'being' is injured (workplace-wounded).

Much is written on grief and its dynamics, which Google can help us find. Learning them can help us better deal with them. Most dynamics ebb and flow over time, and gradually lose their sting. But, one tends to linger and ambush us. It bears special mention. Let's call it, *FDI*.

F is for frequency. Over time, how often (frequency) we remember a painful incident diminishes. This is not saying that *time heals*. Rather, the “how often” we remember becomes further and further apart.

D is for duration. Over time, how long a painful memory lasts diminishes. What originally stayed with us for long periods (days, weeks...) gradually reduces to hours...minutes.

I is for incident. Over time, the impact of some incidents does not diminish. This is why impact can remain strong, long after an event has occurred.

FDI is a normal, grief response to a painful and abnormal situation. Knowing about *FDI* helps us deal with it. To that knowledge, we can add Good News. Jesus will help us with *FDI*, especially the difficult part, the *I* (intensity).

Jesus: Jesus’ help begins with his clear statement of intentions. *Blessed are you who mourn, for you will be comforted*. *Comfort* means *strengthen*. Jesus’ choice of words declares (i) his commitment (ii) to share his strength with us to *bless* us (be happy).

His help continues as we ask him to free us of the tyranny of *I* memories. *I*, in Jesus’ hands, will lose its ability to control and hurt us. As we ask him to help us, expect him to do it. The memory may remain; but, its power to dominate will be broken.

Jesus’ Church is always ready to help us. Local churches have people like us, who are normal(!), and are searching for Jesus like we are. We’re safe in church. We are accepted as we are. The Church helps us learn that God made us as beloved beings, not as rugged, competitive and isolated individuals in a workplace.

Learning about Jesus and his values helps us. Luke’s Gospel is a good place to begin. A local governor commissioned its writer to *Give me the facts*. Its stories include values that work, and explanations of why God gave them to us. God wants us to enjoy life as it can be with God, not as someone dictates, or as a workplace imposes.

Summary:

Jesus said: *Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted*. This is true for all of life, including our work. So, as we mourn and grieve in the context of the workplace, we may expect Jesus to be with us, to strengthening and blessing us. Even when we aren’t aware of it, or question or doubt it, Jesus is still with us. We have his word on it. And he does deliver! Thanks be to God.

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