

*Blessed are...* is a refrain that begins one of the most familiar passages in scripture.

*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.*

*Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.* (Matthew 5:1-12)

While these phrases may be very familiar to our ears, have they touched our hearts? Have they reoriented our mindset from today's prevailing values and toward the gospel message?

As we journey through Lent toward Easter, our congregation will engage the Beatitudes through worship, study, and the arts. We will take time to plumb the depths of the Beatitudes in the very best of the Latin tradition of *fides quaerens intellectum* or *faith seeking understanding*.

On the First Sunday of Lent, March 1, we will begin a sermon series on the Beatitudes. Since the lectionary offers us only two Sundays every three years to hear the Beatitudes in worship, we will depart from the lectionary for an unhurried study of this treasure trove.

Also starting on March 1 is an Adult Christian Education series on Beatitudes from the Backside: A Different Take on What It Means to be Blessed. Pastor Marc and I will join Anne Bailey in leading this series meeting on Sundays at 11:45 a.m. in the Seminary. Adding even more value to this study series is the close family connection Anne has to the author of Beatitudes from the Backside J. Ellsworth Kalas. Pick up your book from the office today and connect with others through this in-depth study taking a fresh look at these gospel touchstones.

Then there are the arts – films to be precise. Our Seminary Cinema curator, Matt Benzing, has selected a fantastic line up of movies that bring the comfort and challenge of the Beatitudes to real life. Some scenes may make us laugh out loud or move us to tears. Each movie will elicit meaningful conversation and inspire us to consider how Jesus would walk among us in 2020 proclaiming.... *Blessed are the... Blessed are the...*

The Beatitudes are, J. Ellsworth Kalas writes, *ours, to bless and inspire us; and especially to challenge us. Some of us... will keep the material at a safe intellectual distance, where we can speculate on its meaning from a philosophical point of view without being compelled to live it out in our daily lives. Other of us will nod our heads in earnest agreement, but this nodding will be the extent of our action.*

*But some of us, please God, will say, "I believe this is the kind of life to which the Son of God calls his followers. I don't begin to understand everything that is being asked of me, but I intend to obey what I can grasp and to seek to know still more. And I believe that those who follow our Lord with such a heart are the truly blessed, truly happy\* ones."*

Join us as we journey through Lent toward Easter with *faith seeking understanding*.

\* author's emphasis