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The Paradox of the Four Emptying-out Beatitudes

THE ABSURDITY OF THE PARADOX

To be Christian is to be in Christ. To be in Christ means to live in paradox. The shape of that paradox is the shape of the Cross. We have here paradox of two arms connected in one point. It represents two inconnectable natures united in one person: the divinity of Christ and the humanity of Christ. God and human in one. We have here the paradox of death and resurrection. Light was born out from dark. Life was born out of death. Life and death are united in one transforming power: immortality in mortality and eternity in temporary.

To be a Christian is to live a life on the cross. To be a Christian is to reflect Christ's paradoxical identity in our own identity. I am in the world, but I am not of the world. I am a mortal and sinful human being, but I participate in the divine nature of Christ. To be a Christian is to reflect Christ's paradoxical way of life in our life. I am dead in Christ, but I am risen with Christ, and my life is hidden with Christ in God.

Before I found my life in Christ I had been living in a completely different universe. My universe was a universe of chaotic, meaningless, empty spaces. I understand myself as a process of biochemical reactions. Everything that gives meaning to human life seemed to me illusionary. Instead of saying, "I love you," I had to tell my girlfriend that I was just experiencing a very pleasant process of biochemical reactions. My universe without Christ was a universe of absurdity. Everything was upside-down. Non-conscious matter was ruling over the conscious mind. Dead matter was ruling over life. Insensitive matter was ruling over personalities with free will and capacity for love, joy, reflection and happiness.

So, when I have found myself in Christ I was moved from a universe of absurdity to a universe of the paradox. The spiritual journey from its beginning to its end is a single process in which I am walking deeper and deeper to the nature of this paradox and in this paradox I am discovering my true self. I want to take you with me on that journey. We will follow the steps which Christ left here for us. He spoke them out in his beatitudes. The beatitudes are the description of the inner qualities of the Christ-consciousness.

The beatitudes have two parts. The first four beatitudes are paradoxical in nature. They describe the process of emptying ourselves from illusionary selves. The second four beatitudes describe the process of filling our empty selves with the true self. I will take now the first part of the journey with you. Christians talk much more about filling than emptying. But without emptiness there could be no fullness. We will walk step by step through the paradoxical beatitudes.

BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT, FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

The ideal of our society is to be strong and rich in spirit. So, Christ calls us to walk against the stream. But, what does it mean to be poor in spirit? What do we mean by the word poverty? We often speak about poverty in a social context. We can talk of poverty in comparison. So we are poor in comparison to somebody else. But here Christ talks about existential poverty. To be poor in an existential sense means not to have enough food to live, not to have home to live in.

And what does the word *spirit* mean? We knew our spirit by longings. Those longings are spiritual in us that aspire to be absolute values (e.g. love, truth or freedom). Love is not a real love if it contains even a small shadow of egotism or pride. Truth is not a real truth if it contains bits of illusions, deceptions or prejudices. Freedom is not a real freedom if it contains elements of dependence or addiction. So, to be poor in spirit is to be aware that we do not possess spiritual qualities to live by. We do not have enough spiritual material to build a home from it for our homeless self, we do not have enough spiritual material to feed our hungry self. All our loves are corrupted by our egocentric nature. All our truths are corrupted by our delusions and prejudices. All our freedoms are corrupted by our dependence and addictions.

Christ does not suggest that there are some human beings rich in spirit and some poor in spirit. We are all poor in spirit. But only those who genuinely strive for love, for truth or for freedom can realize the despaired nature of our inner poverty. Only when we live for something higher than ourselves, we can discover the inner sanctuary in the depth of our poor spirit. To discover this poverty is the first step on our journey toward a new identity in Christ. Only the poor in spirit have their hearts opened. Only to that poverty can the richness of heaven enter.

It is not only the beginning of the way here, but the journey itself. We do not just start from the poverty of spirit, we travel all the distance by that poverty. Throughout all our lives we instinctively try to add something to our ego. We spend all our energy to make our ego greater and greater. We add to it possessions, we add prestige, honor, education, and social or professional status. We are occupied by the struggle to exalt our name. We need the stimulus of social success to raise our self-esteem. To walk by the poverty of spirit means to travel in the opposite direction. Instead of adding, it means to take out. Not more and more for me, but less and less for me. I must move from an identity of myself in myself to a new identity of myself in Christ. Our first step is a step to emptiness. Let us take this first step.



BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO MOURN, FOR THEY WILL BE COMFORTED

The ideal of our society is entertainment. According to our wisdom, blessed are those who escape from all mourning. Christ is leading us again in the opposite direction. We have instinctive mechanisms in our psyche which defend us from suffering. There is a thick wall around our hearts. We defend ourselves from pain which comes from the awareness of our own evil. We do not want to see ourselves by the eyes of those whom we have wounded by ignorance, egotism or pride. We defend ourselves from the sufferings of others. The television shows us terrific the suffering of thousands of unknown people each day. These suffering people become, for us, just pictures on a screen. We are inoculated against compassion. The name of our fortress is cynicism.

But have you realized that those who are sheltered from real pain are as well sheltered from real joy? Our inner systems of defense mortify our hearts so in the end we are unable to experience anything real. We are safe but we are dead. Sheltered from the pain of compassion we are sheltered from the joy of love. If we are here to give ourselves to the mystery of love, we have to be ready for suffering. From the beginning till the end, Christ walks from the heights of heavenly pleasures to the depths of earthly sufferings. His was the way of Love. The second step is the step to defenselessness.

BLESSED ARE THE MEEK, FOR THEY WILL INHERIT THE EARTH

The ideal of our society is assertivity. The winners are those who are loud. Blessed are those who successfully assert their will against the will of others. The world belongs to them. Christ is foolishly calling us to meekness and inner silence. And Christ even claims that the world belongs to those who silenced themselves. The successful person of our age is the conqueror. This person owns the world by conquering it. But the earth and its richness does not belong to those who buy it or conquer it, it does not belong to those who own it. The world belongs to those who understand it in love and empathy.

To guard ourselves towards that direction, we must learn the art of listening. In order to learn the art of listening, we must learn the discipline of silence. If a husband wants to understand the heart of his wife, he must listen to her in inner silence. If a mother wants to understand the heart of her child, she has to

learn the discipline of silence. If you want to understand the heart of your rival, you must learn the discipline of silence. If you want to understand the heart of God, you must learn the discipline of silence.

Have you ever tried to be really silent? When outward voices cease to attract our attention, we will find that we are full of inner voices. Desires, projects, conflicts and dreams are speaking in us without interruption. Christ is calling us not only to outward but also to inner silence. To be really silent, we must give up all our inner aspirations, projects and dreams, and we must accept the unknown future of God.

BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO HUNGER AND THIRST FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS, FOR THEY WILL BE FILLED

There is a mental hunger in each human being. There is a thirst for satisfaction and happiness. We do multitudes of things because we believe they will make us happy. But after a while we find that we do not really know what will make us happy. We do not know what is desirable for us.

Christ gives an answer to our ignorance: blessed are those who hunger for righteousness. Christ calls us to redirect the will of our desire, to change the object of it. Not to hunger for satisfaction but for life in truth,

because the word *righteousness* means a life in truth. Not only hunger to know the truth but to become part of the truth. Christ knows what we really need in order to become happy. Only if we are perfectly good, if we are in sole accord with the truth, we will be blessed and filled with real happiness. We have to move from the illusion that we own the truth to the reality in which we existentially belong to the truth. But in our earthly condition, we can not really connect ourselves with the truth, only through perpetual hunger.

The truth is endlessly greater than our understanding of it, so to walk under the kingdom of truth is to walk humbly under the glory of overwhelming mystery. Our first step was the step to emptiness, the second was the step to defenselessness, the third was the step to silence and the last will be the step into to humility.



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