

LENT 2024

JOURNEY to FREEDOM

WEDNESDAY 27TH MARCH

READ: Matthew 5:1-11

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

Matthew 5:3

Are you a natural rule follower? I know I am. I like to have clear instructions so that I know what I should or shouldn't do. Last week, we read in Exodus 20 how Moses went up a mountain and God instructed him in the 'Ten Commandments'; ten rules for God's people to live well with each other and to live as the holy people of God.

In today's reading, approximately 1,500 years later, we see Jesus similarly going up a mountain and He proceeds to teach on what Christian living looks like. But interestingly, Jesus doesn't produce a list of 'do' and 'don't' rules, rather He inspires us with the qualities of character that ought to be exhibited by his followers; those to whom He says the Kingdom of Heaven belongs.

The challenge with simply having rules is that it puts the responsibility and potential glory onto our shoulders and we can easily slip into equating how 'holy' we are with how many rules we are able to keep in comparison to others and begin to judge others as a result. Jesus does away with that wrong attitude. Rather, the list of qualities of character includes that we are to be 'poor in spirit'. This doesn't mean that we are to be weak or crushed with despair. On the contrary, it means that it is those who recognise their helplessness before God who are blessed and to whom the Kingdom of Heaven belongs.

And so as we approach the cross this weekend, the beatitudes encourage us to reflect on our posture towards it. Will we do so with any sense of pride or guilt around whether we feel we have 'followed the rules'? Or will we do so on our knees, acutely aware of our need for God's help, forgiveness and love? Jesus' teaching in this passage is clear that it is those who do the latter that are blessed.

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