



The Holidays

Family gathering
coming up?

Let the beatitudes
quell your attitudes!

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The Holidays

The word "The" is in a small, elegant script. "Holidays" is in a large, bold, cursive script. There are four snowflake icons: one at the top right, one at the bottom left, one at the bottom left of "Holidays", and one at the top right of "Holidays".

Family gathering coming up?
Let the beatitudes quell your attitudes!



Many people relish the Holiday Family Gathering (HFG). Ideally we would all relish it---but, alas, for many attending a HFG is like going to the dentist: unavoidable, uncomfortable, painful, disturbingly intrusive, and way too much about what you do and don't eat.

Mostly, of course, both visits are all about enduring it while your open nerves get poked at and jabbed.

Does thinking about an upcoming family gathering make you want to hide beneath a lead blanket and start spitting? Good ---because times of

emotional stress are the times to heed Jesus.

Bearing that truth in mind, let us turn to the Beatitudes from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, that perfect distillation of his overall message to the world. At the beginning of each beatitude, Jesus teaches us one aspect of who we should strive to become in order to more fully manifest him. So let's consider what role each beatitude might play in our attitude, in order to preclude our getting stewed, blued, in a feud (or booed!) when for the holidays we meet with our brood.



Blessed are the poor in spirit.

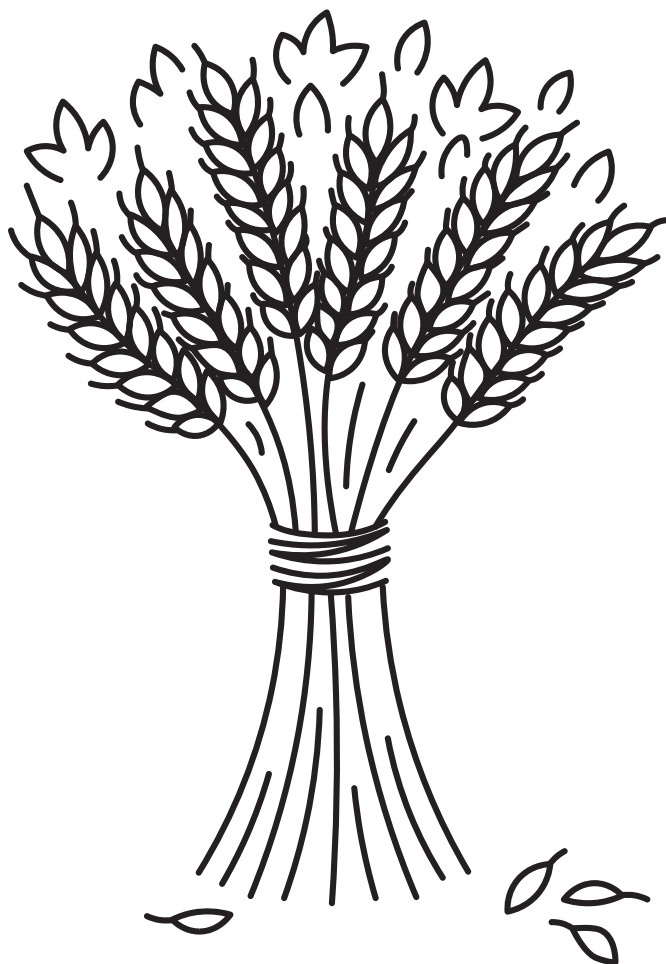
We tend to go into family gatherings pretty keyed up. We feel intense, alert, super-sensitive to everything everybody says and does; when we hear, "You're here!" our spidey senses kick fully on. But that's exactly the opposite of being "poor in spirit"; that's being too rich in spirit. At its core that's all about ego. Before

stepping into your family gathering, take a minute, take a breath, and fill yourself with the Holy Spirit---which eradicates your grubby, score-keeping ego spirit, and brings in its place the spirit of Jesus. And if there's one thing Jesus showed us, it's that it's all about wanting and keeping nothing for yourself.



Blessed are those who mourn

Blessed are those who mourn. Again, this is about the Holy Spirit filling you with the understanding that everything of this world---including your family---is temporary. Centering yourself within that truth gives you the clarity to appreciate that everyone in your family is just like everyone else in the world: in need of constant, absolute, and perfect love. That's a hunger that can't get met on earth. And that fact does inform the human experience with a very great sadness. Know that. Be with that. Let the truth of that flow through you, so that you treat the members of your family not as people with whom you have your own specific, tangled history, but as co-travelers through what is, after all, this veil of tears we call life.



Blessed are the meek

Blessed are the meek. Don't fight. Don't provoke. Don't defend. Don't insist that your thoughts and opinions are given their full weight. Let every last bit of that go. Allow others to go before you. Let others have the floor. Let others be right and strong and firm and clear in whatever way it's important for them to be so. Support

them in an unqualified way. Instead of saying the words your ego-self is first inclined to, say what you know would most please the other person. Why not? If Jesus can sacrifice his life in order for you to be reconciled with God, you can surely sacrifice a bit of yourself in order to promote harmony within your family.



*Blessed
are those
who hunger
and thirst for
righteousness*

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Always look to, point at, emphasize, and celebrate the good. Forget everything else; for the time that you are with your family, allow all negativity to mean to you nothing whatsoever. Be the person who clearly aligns themselves with what's right and true and just. Listen to the Holy Spirit, who will always carry you to where God is most fully manifested. Maybe that will be in the way your mother works so hard. Maybe it will be in the physical grace with which your father or brother moves. Whatever and wherever it is, find it. There's God! Be with Him, and then be with them.





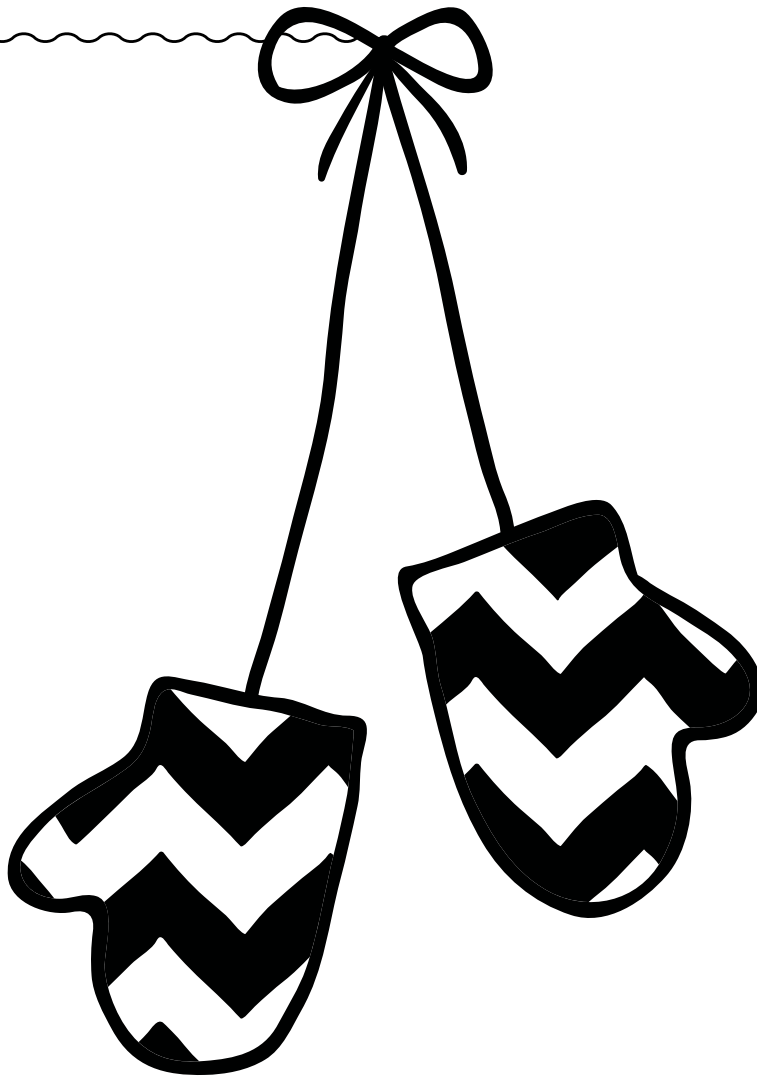
*Blessed
are the
merciful*

Blessed are the merciful. No mystery here. Forgive, forgive, forgive till it hurts. Why shouldn't you? You're no angel. None of us is. We've all done more wrong things than there are numbers to count them. Forgive everyone in your family. When it comes to our proper relationship to our family members, "Forgive them, for they know not what they do," should be tattooed on our hearts. They didn't know. They couldn't. None of us can. Our only hope is forgive each other the way Christ forgave us all.



Blessed are the pure in heart

Don't let the negative stay with you. When you see something that's nasty or snarky or interested only in itself heading your way, step aside, and let it roll right past. Wave to it as it goes by---and then turn your attention back to the Holy Spirit within you. That is God---who, the Bible tells us, is love. There's the source of your perpetually renewed purity.



Blessed are the peacemakers. It's not possible to feel truly loving and forgiving without then acting upon that feeling. Show that the peace of the Lord is upon you by becoming the means by which others find peace between themselves. You can't force that sort of thing, of course. But if you keep your loving heart open to it, you are guaranteed to find among your family

members constant little revelations that, like all people, all they really want is to exist harmoniously with those nearest them. Guide the members of your family back together. Carefully and sensitively minister to their desire for reconciliation. Be bold about it, too: don't be afraid to out-and-out suggest to someone whom they should forgive what, and exactly

Blessed are the peacemakers



why. Sometimes you really do have to make peace. Whatever it takes. But you be the one to do it. And you start it, too: share with members of your family why you're so pleased to take full responsibility for something that in the past went wrong between you and them. So what if it's not really that cut and dried? It's close enough. Let go of the wrong that tries to claim you as its own. Make peace.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness

Being truly right and loving can be truly lonely. So what? You don't serve God because it feels good, or because of the great rewards that come with sacrifice. You serve God's will because you know it's the right and best thing to do. And sometimes that hurts. Which is fair: a sacrifice that feels good, after all, is no sacrifice at all. The devil takes a very acute interest in the person who aligns himself with God. You know that---so prepare for it. And how do you do that? By not even trying to fight the ever-wily devil yourself, but rather getting out of the way, and allowing God to bring the full measure of himself against Mr. Horny Head. That you will be persecuted on account of your aligning yourself with righteousness isn't in question. The question is whether

or not you can continue to feel blessed whilst that persecution is under way. And the quickest, surest way to do that is to remember how horribly Christ was treated. The simple, healing truth is that we are most like Christ when we are being persecuted the most. So don't worry if your family, for instance, in any way derides you for your belief and faith in God. Just smile--and laugh, even, as you acknowledge the validity of how your passion for God must look to them. Just remain with the Lord, and like day follows night he'll lead you back into Eden.

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