



Our Response to God

After a certain number of my last sermons, I was told that I cast a feeling of darkness, of sadness in what I say; that I always insist on the fact that we are called to such greatness, such holiness, and that we betray our calling, and by doing this we betray the millions of people who need not only words of Christ, but a revelation of the fact that Christ has called people like us to Himself, and has transfigured them, made them different, so that in a gift of self, of love, they bring not only a message but a vision of what Christ has willed for all mankind — indeed for all creation. I will to-day say a few words about this.

First of all — yes, it is true; when I preach a sermon I speak of myself. I speak of how I respond to the word of Christ, and I feel that I stand before God, and most of the time I stand condemned, but I am not projecting this on to any one in the church. So many are faithful, so many have changed their lives since they met the Gospel of Christ and entered into this mysterious communion of prayer and sacrament which we find in the Church. But if you ask me what to do in order to grow into this communion with Christ, into the joy of being at one with Him, I will say two things.

To begin with, you remember the first of the Beatitudes: Blessed are the poor in spirit — theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. And the poor in spirit are those who at the very core of their being, with all their awareness understand that whatever they are, whatever they possess, is a gift of God. We exist only because we have been called into existence in an act of Divine Love; and not only of Divine Love — God has entrusted us life. He has trusted us enough to call us into being in order to become one day His companions of eternity. The fact that we possess nothing which is our own, and are nothing except by an act of Divine Love, is truly blessedness, because if anything was our own, it would be taken away from our love relationship with God and with one another. So, indeed, we are blissful, we can rejoice, but we can also be deeply, infinitely grateful to God for what He has done to us by loving us into existence, by entrusting life and the destiny of the world to us, by hoping all things from us, because He hopes against hope, as it were, until our life has come to an end, He still hopes that we will be His own.

And so, if we concentrate on this, if we respond to God's love and hope and trust by true gratitude, if we try to make our life into an act of gratitude that will give God joy, that will show Him that it is not in vain that He has done all this, we shall be very close to living worthy of God. It may not appear outwardly to be spectacularly different, but this gratitude of ours, this joy, this sense of possessing already the blessedness which will expand and flower into eternity, will be an inspiration for us.

The second thing which I want to mention is that when we read the Scriptures, when we read the writings of spiritual fathers, we must concentrate not on what accuses us of our unworthiness, but concentrate on what our heart responds to, our mind takes in with joy. Because, if our heart responds to any word of Christ, if our mind is illumined by His words, if our will is stirred into action, it means that God and I — yes, I, unworthy as I am, am akin to Him, that I am already in His image, that His is my like and I am His like.

And then, let us then remember these passages of the Gospel, of the Epistles that have hit us at the heart, that have made our heart bound with joy, that have made our mind luminous, our will alive and strong. Let us remember them, because these are points at which we are already with Christ, ways in which the Kingdom of God has already come to us. Let us then live worthily — not of things which we do not yet



understand, but of those things which are already reality within our hearts, within our minds, within our lives. If we start at this point, then however sad we may be that these points are few, that we are imperfect even in who we already are potentially, we may rejoice that this is a beginning and that we can grow further and further into the depths of our communion with God.

So, let us read the Scriptures, let us live by the Beatitudes with gratitude and joy, knowing that we already belong to this realm and it is enough for us to consider that the aim of our Christian life is to give Christ the joy of our salvation, and for us to work our salvation also with joy. Amen.