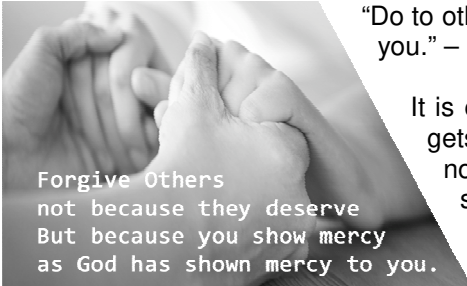


**As you celebrate the New Year,  
May your future be as bright as  
the promises of God!**

*(continued from January issue of The Vine)*

5. May the supreme blessedness of mercy be upon the merciful!



“Do to others as you would have them do to you.” – Luke 6:31

It is easy to understand that mercy begets mercy. Conversely, if you show no mercy to others, then you deserve no mercy, like what the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant (Matt. 18:21-35) illustrates.

However, the “merciful” in this Beatitude is not simply referring to those who perform compassionate acts from occasion to occasion. Rather, it refers to faithful Christians who live holy lives displaying charity as a constant testimony of God’s grace in them and through them, a constant testimony of Christ-likeness in being “merciful” (Heb. 2:17) and faithful in service to God.

The Hebrew verse speaks of Christ being “fully human ... that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.” The “merciful” in the Beatitude and the “merciful” in Heb. 2:17 are the same word that appears nowhere else in the NT.

The supreme blessedness of mercy is shown, on the last day, to believers who have mercifulness grounded in God himself and made manifest in the life and ministry of Christ.

6. May the supreme blessedness of seeing God be upon the pure in heart!

How many people like to wear white and think that they can show off as without stains on their



clothes, oblivious to the fact that they badly need a scrubbing brush to get their whites whiter than white? It is not easy to be pure white; even the white paper on which The Vine is printed is not pure white.

In a moral sense, being white is not good enough; but can anyone be whiter than white – completely pure in heart without evil? As Jesus said, “For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.” (Matt. 15:19)

A school examination is very difficult. Those who manage to get by will merit an award of a pass to get going for the next target in their endeavour. However, those who exert exceptional effort to conquer the hurdle to high achievement is blessed by his examiner with a grade of distinction. The student of distinction sees his performance achievability in a way that his peers with casual attitudes never get.

Similarly, the attainment of purity in the heart comes in grades and God is the examiner who makes His award of supreme blessedness to the ones with the purity to be worthy:

*“I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind, to reward each person according to their conduct, according to what their deeds deserve.” – Jer. 17:10*

As we take God’s examination of our heart, do we aim for distinction and the concomitant Beatitude of seeing God, or do we just satisfy ourselves with a passing grade?

*“Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” – Ps.139:23-24*

Along our journey as pilgrims in this world, we struggle to pass God’s examination of our heart; but with dedicated effort, the full consummation of the beauty of purity in our eschatological vision, with the Beatitude of seeing God, will come to pass.

7. May the supreme blessedness of being called children of God be upon the peacemakers!

The world is not at peace, with intractable conflicts between nations. Workplaces are not peaceful places, with bad attitudes among colleagues. Home is supposed to



be a place where love abounds; but sadly, frequent news of conflicts in families seems to suggest that peace is not in rich supply. How about in the church? Bickering, intolerance and the presence of toxic habits have the potential of breeding disharmony. Peace – the precious commodity – where art thou?

If there is peace, we need peacekeepers to keep it intact. If there is a lack of peace, we need peacemakers to make more of it. Peacemakers – where art thou?

The Beatitude of being called children of God is not referring to peacekeepers at centres of strife. Peacemakers don't wade into discords, but bring men into harmony with one another and with God. We may all be children of God through our faith in Christ, but being called out pointedly (given outright affirmation) as "children of God" – truly, not just in name – is a badge of honour, of esteemed recognition as Christ's ambassador of *shālôm*.

For us who are peacemakers, it is good to know the Father's appreciation, to have the confidence that we are led by the Spirit of God and "we are heirs — heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory." (*Read Rom. 8:14-17*)

8. May the supreme blessedness of the kingdom of heaven be upon those who are persecuted because of righteousness!



in heaven." (Matt. 5:43-44)

You may be persecuted because of unrighteous things you do. But if you are persecuted because of righteousness, heaven is on your side. Instead of hating your enemy, "pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father

in heaven." (Matt. 5:43-44)

What a blessedness to be children of the Father (as in Beatitude #7 above)! The reward of "the kingdom of heaven" is also the same as for the poor in spirit. (Beatitude #1 above) Matt. 5:11-12 re-state and flesh out the Beatitude in v.10 by using the 2<sup>nd</sup> person "you" in place of the 3<sup>rd</sup> person references.

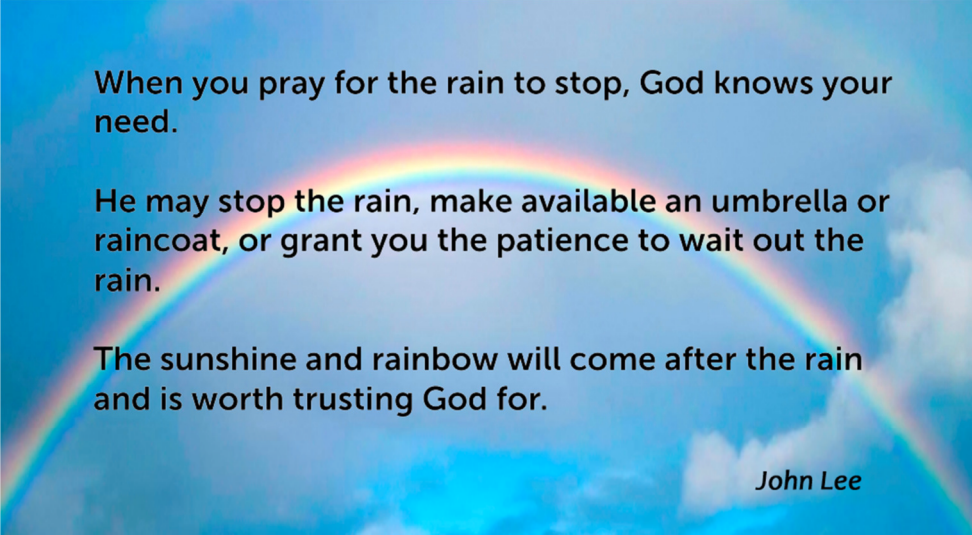
*"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so*

*that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” – James 1:2-4*

Unpleasant experiences “now” are often treated with negativity, but those who are persecuted can extend their vision horizon to see the pleasures saved for them in the kingdom of heaven when the Son of Man comes in his glory. Then the King will say to them, “Come, you are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you ...” (see *Matt. 25:34*)

Time passes by fast. In the blink of an eye, one New Year becomes old and another New Year begins. Small kids soon become grown adults as young adults mellow into their sunset years. Everyone loves lasting blessings. May the Lord shine down his eternal Beatitudes on you from New Year to New Year!

*John Lee*



**When you pray for the rain to stop, God knows your need.**

**He may stop the rain, make available an umbrella or raincoat, or grant you the patience to wait out the rain.**

**The sunshine and rainbow will come after the rain and is worth trusting God for.**

*John Lee*