Chapter 3

THE BEATITUDES
1. Introduction

The Beatitudes at the Sermon on the Mount are a paradigm example of Jesus’ communication. Perhaps, this is one of the most intelligent moves from a redeemer, Messiah and reformer in comparison with similar anecdotes.

The context of the Beatitudes must be seen with a meticulous approach. At that time, Jesus was not given the status as Messiah by the common people. He was acting only in the capacity of a Jewish Rabbi. The Decalogue of Moses, namely the Ten Commandments were direct words of Yahweh. They were the words directly given by Him to His chosen prophet Moses, who in turn spreads it among the various tribes who were chaotic and disorganized and brought them together through the Mosaic Law.

At this point a distinction must be drawn between what is stated in Quran and the Bible. It is claimed that the entire Quran is nothing but words of God, as released to Gabriel the Angel, who in turn gives it to Prophet Mohammed, who is supposed to be the last prophet. But then, God speaks to Mohammed through an Angel only, and in case of Prophet Moses and the Decalogue, God speaks directly to Moses and not through any one.

During the Sermon on the Mount, we see Jesus doing what’s the impossible. He interprets the Mosaic Laws in such a manner that even the hard cores fails to notice what actually Jesus does.

In those days, the society had literally taken the Decalogue and was practicing it miserably. To change this was an absolute social requirement and no one would have agreed to any such changes. We find Jesus changing them so craftily, changing them so completely, without any one even realizing that the whole thing was getting totally changed. And people accepted them.
This is a paradigm example of effective communication; communicating with a resistant group. The communication is so devised that the resistant group is unable to resist and what is desired by Jesus is fully accomplished. It is possible for us to observe tenets of this communication strategy of Christ in the efforts of the Catholic Church in Kerala in their 2000 years of attempts to communicate with the people in Kerala.

Thus, this chapter mainly discus the Beatitudes at the Sermon on the Mount with its communication implications. There are eight Beatitudes in the gospel of Matthew as against four in the Lukan narration. This chapter mainly focuses on the exegetical study of the Beatitudes according to the Matthean version and its socio-religious implications. It stands as a basis for our study, where we analyze its practical implications in communication activities and services of the Church in Kerala.

Jesus effectively communicates with a group of people who would usually oppose any attempts to change the Mosaic Laws. Here, the communication strategy of Jesus is such that he successfully creates the desired changes in the society. Now the question shall be, to what extent the Kerala Church could draw benefits from this in their efforts to communicate with the Kerala Society. Do the Beatitudes have anything to say about the Church in Kerala Society and its responsibility towards the poor, marginalized people? Does this great ethical and moral principle, which influenced great leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi, have any political-economical-communal demands? What does the spirituality of the Beatitude address? Is it just certain principles of peace, mercy, justice, generosity, charity and love?

All these questions must naturally lead the Church to certain rejuvenation process in her communication management and technique. This need for revitalization is explicitly manifested in her different meetings, brain storming sessions and conferences. In one of the meetings of the Roman Catholic Synod of Bishops at Rome in 1971, Bishops from all over the world brought with them the experiences of poverty, famine and malnutrition, racial and national conflicts. The analysis of the issues convinced them the need for a revitalized
gospel message which is in the spirit of the principles of Beatitude. It is as follows:

“Even though it is not for us to elaborate a very profound analysis of the situation of the world, we have nevertheless been able to perceive the serious injustices which are building around the world of men, a network of domination, oppression and abuses which stifle freedom and which keep the greater part of humanity from sharing in the building up and enjoyment of a more just and more fraternal world.”¹

Thus a critical analysis of the countless forms of communication techniques of the Catholic Church of Kerala Society in the background of the Beatitudes is very relevant today for her rejuvenation and revamping.

2. The Beatitudes

The Beatitudes² of Jesus are at the very heart of the Sermon on the Mount. They have been interpreted differently down the ages. The reader will find new meanings and interpretations each time they go on reading the particular text. Since the Beatitudes are a part of the Sermon on the Mount and are related to each other in structure, there will be nuances that will naturally overlap.

As Pope Benedict XVI writes in his Jesus of Nazareth,

“The Beatitudes, spoken with the community of Jesus’ disciples in view, are paradoxes - the standards of the world are turned upside down as soon as things are seen in the right perspective, which is to say, in terms of God’s values, so different from those of the world.”³

Thus, we can implicitly state that there are possibilities of contradiction in the life of the followers of Jesus namely, the members of the Church. Even if there are contradictions, it can be rectified by God’s grace itself mainly because the Beatitudes impart God’s unconditional blessing and grace to all the suffering,
afflicted and marginalized people of the world. We can say that this is the good news that Jesus preached two thousand years ago.

Hence the Beatitudes contain a new vision of God, a new vision of humans and a new vision of society. We feel the heartbeats of Jesus in the Beatitudes. Jesus, who lived as a poor man, who identified himself with the wretched of the earth, proclaims blessedness and supreme happiness to the poor. The opening of the Beatitudes recognizes man’s infinite need for grace and God’s mercy.\(^4\)

Beatitudes is a distinctive literary genre found both in Jewish and Hellenistic literature. The equivalent Greek word is makarios. Beatitudes confer a blessing on those who live in conformity to the principles prescribed by God and the wise. Majority of the OT Beatitudes praise certain conduct and set it as a condition for blessing. Beatitudes occur in another literary genre namely the prophetic and apocalyptic literature.\(^5\) The Apocalyptic Beatitudes are addressed to those who live in great trials and tribulations. The Beatitude pronounces blessing for them at the end of the age.

3. A Bird’s eye view of the Beatitudes

According to the first Beatitude, those who are poor in spirit already possess the Kingdom of God. Happiness flows from this awareness. The poor consequently combine the dimensions of mysticism and social liberation to become the agents of the Kingdom of God. The eighth Beatitude\(^7\) similarly makes the same promise to those persecuted for righteousness’ sake. That is, the promise of the kingdom is made to them not so much because they are persecuted, but because they are committed to righteousness.

The second to the seventh Beatitudes disclose a reversal of worldly schemes and the eschatological promises urge the disciples to agree to such a reversal. Those who mourn, do so because they do not conform to evil and resist worldly models of behavior. The world would want such to stop mourning and with it stop pricking the consciences of those who would rather keep them insensitive.
The third, the meek in a gradual, mysterious and unassuming way bring about a transformation of the world in that it is God who will bring to an end the present inequitable access to land, based on exploitative societal relationships, for the earth and its resources belong to him.

The fourth, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness desire both personal uprightness and social justice. Such a desire is born of knowing and doing God’s will. The Indian religious term dharma seems to reflect this idea of righteousness.

The fifth, the merciful that a radical mission of liberation from deprivation and misery must go hand in hand with a pastoral mission of forgiveness and reconciliation. There cannot be mercy devoid of concrete actions.

The sixth, purity of heart implies integrity of action. Those who know the consolation of God have preserved their integrity whether they were subjected to the evil of persecution or to that of moral laxity. Knowing God this way and having trust in his promises makes one happy.

The seventh, peace is the cry of modern world. Peacemaking involves the pursuit of justice and reconciliation. But to establish peace there is a need for commitment which is not easy, for it is a commitment to justice; and when justice prevails there is reconciliation which will lead to peace.

The eighth Beatitude announces an eschatological blessing on those who are persecuted not so much because they are persecuted but because they are committed to righteousness in spite of being persecuted. The disciples because of their suffering in the cause of righteousness are worthy successors of the martyrs.

In short, Beatitudes articulate “what kingdom-ready people should be like”. We can definitely say that it is the real meaning of what discipleship is. They are the “road map for the Church, which recognizes in them the model of what she herself should be.” They convey the perfect models of strategy and programmes by which the Church should carry on its activities.
4. Two Forms of the Beatitude

Other than the Matthean Beatitude there is a Lukan version too. The first Lucan Beatitude reads thus:

“Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God”\(^\text{11}\)

At the outset we find two differences between the Lukan and Matthean forms: (1) The Lukan form uses second person plural, whereas the Matthean form has third person plural. (2) Matthew adds ‘in spirit’ to the ‘poor’, thus apparently spiritualizing a more social-revolutionary statement. Matthean theology emphasizes humility, gentleness, and trust in God. His Beatitude seems to stress the spiritual importance of the Beatitude rather than the social.\(^\text{12}\) The word ‘poor’ contains not only a sense of social depravity, but also the religious concept of attachment to God.\(^\text{13}\) Matthew makes this addition to clarify the spiritual connotation already hidden in the word poor. The Hebrew/Aramaic word *anawim* also implies both the social change of the *status quo* and the spiritual yearning for God. Hence the Matthean form of the first Beatitude brings out the double meaning - both social and spiritual - of the Beatitude rather than the Lukan form, which emphasizes only the social aspect.

The Beatitudes take a different form in Luke 6: 20-6, and the explicit mention that Jesus stood ‘on a level place’ (6: 17) seems to be making a deliberate contrast with Matthew 5:1. To be on level ground would not normally call for special notice. Luke loves to mention Jesus' compassion for the literally poor, the disadvantaged, and the despised and second-class citizens. So in Luke, the first Beatitude is ‘Blessed are you who are poor’, followed in 6: 24 by ‘But woe to you who are rich’.

Furthermore, it must be noted that Jesus, the Messiah inaugurates the Messianic Era of liberation and salvation through the Beatitudes. Behind the Matthean and Lukan forms, we find the Isaiah text, declaring the blessing of the Messianic Era.
“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners, to proclaim the year of God’s favour.”

5. The First Beatitude: “Poor in Spirit”

“Happy are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”

This is a vision for a new society. Among the eight Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount, the first one stands as an introduction and summary of all the Beatitudes. Among the Beatitudes, the first four stands as one block. They have unique importance too. The mourners (second Beatitude) and the hungry (fourth Beatitude) are other terms which show the social predicament of the poor people. Thus, the first four Beatitudes are different versions or intensifications of the most fundamental biblical term ‘poor’. Mercy, purity of heart, peacemaking, and suffering for the sake of righteousness are in fact virtues, which a person who follows the spirituality of the ‘poor in spirit’ practices in his/her daily life.

5.1 Analysis

Matthew understands the poor as totally destitute, who lives like beggars without any material possessions at all. It doesn’t refer to an economic poverty but it is used as a spiritualized metaphor. The poor people are completely at the mercy of others. Matthew wanted to emphasize the misery of poverty. It denotes a state of lowliness or distress and hence a man is in a state of reduced competence and lesser worth.

There is a historical background behind this concept. In the post-exilic times, the people who came back to Palestine after enduring great humiliation and tribulation in the foreign land were literally poor. They had to face many problems when they started rebuilding the temple and the nation. They looked to Yahweh in filial trust. Slowly there evolved the piety of the poor. We see this in
Second Isaiah and Zephaniah and also in the Psalms and the Wisdom literature. There is a request to God for help. The term ‘poor’ acquired a religious meaning: the suffering people are those who trust in Yahweh and rely on him in their utter hopelessness. Thus, the poor are those who, realizing their own fragility and the illusory nature of human support, look to Yahweh alone for safety. The Matthean addition of ‘in spirit’ thus brings out the religious implication already implied in the word ‘anawim’.  \(^{17}\)

Furthermore, the poor considers everything as a gift from God and they trust wholeheartedly in God. They are humble people. Thus, sometimes poor in spirit is interpreted as humble.  \(^{18}\)

### 5.2. Spiritual Interpretation

According to scholars this Beatitude concerns spiritual poverty or humility. What matters is our attitude to material possessions and our interior disposition before God. The interpretation emphasizes trust in God, dependence on God and humility. It internalizes poverty. It prepares the mind for the mystical union with God.

It is the conviction that our entire life and all our spiritual and physical blessings, such as life, health, strength, spiritual ability, knowledge, riches and all good things of life are the gift of our creator. Without the help from heaven, it is impossible to acquire either material well-being or spiritual riches. This spiritual lowliness is called humility. Humility is the foundation of Christian virtue. It is the opposite of pride. It is pride that introduced all evil into the world.

### 5.3. Social Interpretation

Another interpretation focuses on the life situation of Jesus and his messianic work. Jesus addresses specially the people of the land who are oppressed by the rich landlords, the aristocracy, the religious leaders and the powerful Roman political overlords. The ‘poor’ in the Beatitude refers to people
living in social and economic misery. Jesus never advocated material poverty. On the other hand, he summons all people to work for the eradication of poverty and deprivation. The first Beatitude is a prophetic protest against all kinds of unjust structures of the society, which supports poverty, discrimination, exploitation and oppression. According to W. Carter, the poor are not to be spiritualized by either softening the referent or making it figurative.\textsuperscript{19} They are literally the poor and the destitute. Jesus instills hope in them and he envisions a new humanity where there is no poverty or oppression. For G. Gutierrez:

\begin{quote}
“The poor are blessed because the coming of the kingdom will put an end to their poverty by creating a world of brotherhood.” \textsuperscript{20}
\end{quote}

According to G. M. Soares-Prabhu:

\begin{quote}
“Jesus proclaims the poor ‘blessed,’ not because their poverty is a good thing, but precisely because it is an evil, which he is about to bring to an end. The poor are blessed because they are to be the beneficiaries of the total revolution that the kingdom of God will bring.” \textsuperscript{21}
\end{quote}

5.4. Contextual Interpretation

Just as Jesus practiced the vision of the poor, the Catholic Church is called to practice this in the current realities of our society. It demands a paradigm shift in all our perspectives and activities. A pro-poor church that works for the integral liberation of the marginalized alone can witness effectively among the people of Kerala, the evangelical value of ‘poor in spirit’. The question to be confronted is that are we ready to empty ourselves from the comfort of institutionalization to the powerlessness of solidarity with the poor? Are we ready to give up the oppressive attitudes of luxury, domination, arrogance; and work for the building up of a new humanity of love and fellowship?

5.5. Kingdom of Heaven

Kingdom of Heaven does not connote a territory but the reign of God. According to the narratives in the Gospels, it began with the deliverance works
of Jesus. But the fullness of the kingdom will be realized only in the eschatological time. The first Beatitude in Matthew emphasizes that the poor in spirit already possess the Kingdom of God. It is not a divine reward promised to men to be received in the afterlife, but a state of life to be enjoyed here and now.

It is the reign of God where everybody accepts God as the Father and all humans live as brothers and sisters. It is a world order based on the universal fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood and sisterhood of humans.

The Church is entrusted to work for the realization of the kingdom in every gamut of human society. In our context we mean that the communication workers and disseminators of the Church must embody such a mentality throughout their services and activities.

5.6. The First Beatitude and the Churches Communication Techniques

This Beatitude had guided the Kerala Church effectively in making their communication successful with the Kerala Society. In this Beatitude, we see Jesus effectively reaching the very soul of people during His sermon, reaching the very psyche of the poor and the destitute. A promise of the Kingdom of God in heaven gives them two kinds of strength. Firstly, it gives them the strength to endure their miseries without surrendering their spirits. Secondly, it gives them the much needed strength to continue to be righteous. To be righteous and to be enduringly righteous is a much more difficult challenge than the challenge of enduring poverty and misery. Though in a positive manner both strengths are mutually complementary, at a practical level poverty works against being righteous from desperation of misery. We often see that it is easy for a rich man to be righteous but the poor often collapse in desperation.

The society of Kerala was enduringly righteous. It was poor in material spirit and knowledge. The geography of Kerala made it difficult for other Indians to interact with them and with care; the Western Ghats were like fortresses. On the other hand, the many natural ports and a full length of sea shore enabled interaction with people from different lands. But most of the foreigners were
traders and naturally profit motivated, with a natural material orientation of trader’s ethics.

Thus, it resulted in two major handicaps. Firstly, the flow of Indian wisdom and spirituality remained limited. Secondly, the infiltration of traders immaterialism occurred, both supplementing one another to some level of alienation of Kerala Society.

In effect, Kerala Society was poor both in spirit and material means. The Church entered the society catering both their needs. The first Beatitude enabled the Church to work among the poor and destitute, providing them with the touch of a soothing hand. They had no bias to work among the poor with the notion that they are the blessed. It is this spirit indeed that later gave birth to an embodiment of compassion, Mother Theresa.

But today we witness that it is materially rich and splendid with institutions and organizations which are all reasons for severe criticisms. There is nothing wrong in creating those things for the betterment of the society but it should not lead the Church to undermine the basic qualities of Christian life. Thus, all the communication techniques of the Church must arise out of this spirit of poverty.

6. The Second Beatitude

“Blessed are those who mourn
For they will be comforted!”

This statement looks paradoxical since we like to be happy always with wine and dinner. If we mourn how can we be happy? As well as, if we are happy why should we weep? Without doubt this looks to be a paradoxical statement for the laymen. At the same time, happiness of the mourners sounds ridiculous!

6.1. Those who mourn

Mourn here can be an inner feeling (sorrow of the heart), expression in an act (a lament), or a passionate grief that leads to a corresponding action namely tears. Mourning is grief and sorrow caused by profound loss, usually associated
with death. It represents the deepest heart-felt grief, experiencing sadness as the result of depressing circumstances.

There are two types of mourning: the first is that which involves a loss of hope, that has become mistrustful of love and of truth, and that therefore eats away and destroys man from within. But there is also the mourning occasioned by the shattering encounter with truth, which leads man to undergo conversion and to resist evil. This mourning heals, because it teaches humans to hope and to love again. Judas, struck with the horror of his own fall, is an example of the former and Peter, struck by the Lord’s gaze and bursts into healing tears that cultivated the soil of his soul, is the best example of the latter.

Worldly grief is a grief without hope in God. It proceeds not from acknowledgment of one's sins before God, but rather from disappointment in ambition, aspiration to power, and desire for gain. Such sadness, characterized by despair, leads to spiritual death, which can also result in physical death, by suicide or simply weakness due to lack of will to live. An example of such grief is that of Judas Iscariot, the betrayer of Christ.

6.2. Shall be comforted

Literal meaning of the original Greek is “to be called to one’s side”. This refers to the act of calling someone to one’s side for help. This means to “comfort”, “cheer up”, “to console”, “to encourage” etc. There is a legal nuance in Greek such as “legal adviser”, “pleader”, “a proxy” or an “advocate”. In the Talmud, the Messiah was known as “comforter”. Comfort is the courage due to their position under the protective wings of God. Isaiah speaks of true comfort for God’s people since “her warfare is done and her iniquity is pardoned”. Also this is the strength to accept sorrow and oppose oppression with the conviction that God is with them.

6.3. Happiness of the Mourners

There is an eschatological interpretation for this statement. J. Ratzinger puts it:
“This must not, however, be taken to mean that the joy they proclaim is postponed until some infinitely remote future or applies exclusively to the next world. When a man begins to see and to live from God’s perspective, when he is a companion on Jesus’ way, then he lives by new standards, and something of the eschaton, of reality to come, is already present.”

In the Old Testament, the just reign of a king is judged by the standard of his care for the poor. God must necessarily act on behalf of the poor, the hungry and those who mourn. Jesus’ availability to these sections of the society is the concrete proof that God has ultimately acted. The kingdom brings a reversal of fortunes. In other words, God’s presence, advocacy, and redemptive work are seen among the poor. The “original Beatitudes about the ‘poor’, the ‘mourners’, and the ‘hungry’ express Jesus’ mission to the needy in Israel and the dawn of a new era in salvation history.”

‘God’s Kingdom should come in every epoch of time. Therefore, there should be mourners, who are “people who do not run with the pack, who refuse to collude with the injustice that has become endemic, but who suffers under it instead’.”

Oppression is not normative; it should be mourned. The mourners are “sensitive to evil, to the world’s rebellion against God and the world’s suffering in consequence.” They are those who are brokenheart over their situation. They mourn because:

“Until the eschatological reversal takes place, it is not possible to be satisfied with the status quo.”

They mourn because they see evil reign on earth. They represent a culture of inner freedom to counter a culture of prosperity and thereby create conditions for social justice.

6.4. A Gospel based life

This is a gospel based life. The mourners are people:
who do not harden their hearts to the pain and need of others, who do not give evil entry to their souls, but suffer under its power and so acknowledge the truth of God. They are the ones who open the windows of the world to let the light in.”

They are the suffering, those whose life is, from a worldly point of view, an unhappy one and particularly those who suffer for their loyalty to God.

This Beatitude is to be interpreted in its interconnectedness with the others. This may be paired with the “blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness” (5:6), which in turn is connected to the Eighth Beatitude, “blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake…” (5:10). In the face of terrible needs, their hunger and thirst to see right prevails or to do what is right. To “hunger and thirst for righteousness” is not merely a longing for personal holiness, but it is a serious effort to end oppression and to bring the rule of justice to prevail in the land.

But, in a social set up it is always risky. As Pope Benedict XVI puts it rightly:

“The mourning of which the Lord speaks is nonconformity with evil; it is a way of resisting models of behavior that the individual is pressured to accept because ‘everyone does it’. The world cannot tolerate this kind of resistance; it demands conformity. It considers this mourning to be an accusation directed against the numbing of consciences. And so it is. That is why those who mourn, suffer persecution for the sake of righteousness.”

6.5. Social Dimension

The Beatitudes ‘are not practical advice for successful living, but prophetic declarations made on the conviction of the coming and already present kingdom of God.’ In God’s “visitation of the people” there is a great reversal. Human security and complacency is challenged by the Good News. Those who are
powerful, rich and “consoled” are themselves ‘cast down,’ or ‘lowered’, or in the end ‘cut off from the people’. Those ordinarily deemed unworthy, lowly, marginal or even outcast are accepted by God and “raised up”. Apart from all human endeavors, and in spite of all opposition, God inaugurates a new situation. In the midst of poverty, hunger and weeping, the kingdom is present in those who turn to Jesus right now. Therefore, their comfort is actually a “standing under the protection of God’s power, secure in his love.”

6.6. Second Beatitude and Church’s Communications

There is sadness and sorrows in every society at every time. It is this universal truth that eventually made the Enlightened Buddha spread out his first noble truth that, “the world is full of suffering”. The Beatitude here makes sufferings and the sorrows of that suffering a positive phenomenon. Suffering is only temporary.

This Beatitude communicates with the suffering and mourning ones as they shall be much more receptive to any offer of comforts. The Beatitudes are the direct words of Jesus. It is an authority to say that there is an end to suffering and mourning. This authority enables the Church to go formidably to the suffering ones to guarantee them the positive comfort from the divine itself. With these, the church establishes deeper communications with the suffering people of society and wins their trust. Then onwords, they shall start looking at the church as the only positive means for comfort from suffering and mourning. Thus, the second Beatitude enabled the church to make deeper communication with the people of Kerala and to go dearer to their very souls by winning their trust.

This is relevant in contemporary circumstances where our society faces dangerous situations of fear, terrorism, corruption, communal violence etc. At times we feel fury furies and sometimes helpless. But, we are asked not to lose heart, but to trust in God who has his own scale of time to bring about a reversal. We have to look from a right perspective and in terms of God’s values.
7. Third Beatitude

“Blessed are the meek,
For they will inherit the Earth”. ⁴⁰

Christian meekness expresses itself mainly in patient endurance of insults imposed by others. It is the opposite of anger, malice, self-exaltation and vengeance. Meekness is manifested in the spirit of a man who never becomes angry and never permits himself to grumble against God or people. They do not become irritated and do not aggravate other people.

But this seems to be a funny statement in today’s competitive business scenario. It may be the most underestimated value in the catalogue of today’s virtues. It is not well enough understood to be appreciated. One is not surprised that Jesus assumes the actual laws of nature with the ‘absurd’ notion that the meek will inherit the earth, when nature has determined that it is usually the strongest, the swiftest and the fittest who will survive.

F. D. Bruner commends on the Beatitude with the following remarks:

“Both the new socialist man and the new and old capitalist entrepreneur agree that it is the aggressive, not the meek, who inherit the earth. In both cases, it is those who fight for their rights, not those who waive them, who get them. For no one possesses this earth here below by gentleness, but only by pride.” ⁴¹

7.1. The Meek

It is an important character of the leaders and the wise. Rather than being passively submissive, the meek are those who have an active attitude and deliberately accept to be gentle and friendly. They are not cynical or angry at what is unpleasant. Meekness among the Greeks was a gentle friendliness that was highly prized and extolled and was a mark of a good ruler, the high-minded, noble and wise, who remained calm even in face of abuse. ⁴²
Centuries before Jesus spoke about meekness, the Greek philosopher Aristotle had identified meekness as the virtue that was a ‘golden mean’ between the opposing voices of hate and apathy. The meek person does feel anger but it is under control. It is grounded in strength. It is an active meekness, not the passive one, like fear or indifference that sometimes covers-up as meekness. Only the strong can afford to be meek. Earlier this term came to be associated with individuals especially the rulers. Moses is designated as meek leader.43 Since he is meek, he is entrusted with the task of realizing Yahweh’s plan for Israel by his mediatory role.44

7.2. Jesus the Meek

Jesus invites those who labour and are heavy laden to take His yoke so as to learn from Him and find relief because he is meek and humble at heart.45 Matthew presents Jesus as a model of meekness and humility to the disciples. The latter are those who suffer oppression, but when they embrace the yoke of Jesus, they will experience true rest.46

From the Holy Bible we see that it is only the meek that can discover who Jesus really is. Jesus thanks the Father for having revealed to babes ‘these things’ – a reference to the good news of the Kingdom of God ushering its presence in the person of Jesus. This revelation is hidden from the ones who claim to be wise and knowledgeable.47 Jesus has intimate knowledge of God because He is the divine Son. Paradoxically, His meekness gives Him the authority to empower the powerless, those who are left out.

Jesus is presented as the Meek King in the interpretation of Jesus’ triumphant entry into Jerusalem.48 Here we see Matthew quoting Zech 9:9:

“Behold, your king is coming to you, humble and mounted on an ass, and on a colt, the foal of an ass”49

The messianic king comes to take possession of the city. It signifies that: “Jesus, the already present and at the same time expected king of the end time, has in His person realized meekness and humility and in this respect is a model for the community.”50
It was a way in which kings expressed their humility before the people. The vision of the Messiah that Zechariah gives is one of meekness and suffering, and of the vindication of the meek. The best example of meekness given to us is that of our Lord Jesus praying on the cross for His enemies. He taught us not to take vengeance on our enemies but to do well to them:

Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.51

7.3. Inheritance of the Land

The Hebrew verb for inheritance has a wide range of meaning such as ‘occupying’ by driving out previous tenants and possessing it by displacing the ownership.

In the OT the land as inheritance to be taken possession of is well known in Deuteronomy. The Deuteronomist evolves a theology around the great historical event of the Israelites taking possession of the land of Canaan under the leadership of Joshua. Land is the gift of God that guarantees life for the nation when His laws are obeyed. Israel’s infidelity would lead to the death of the nation by which they would be dispossessed of their land and banished into exile. Hence the inheriting of land has from the beginning a religious significance.52

Inheriting connotes more God’s giving than man’s acquisition. Further, man has no absolute right to the land. The individual right must be subordinated to the rights of everyone in the community.53 This idea gets amply reflected in Deuteronomy, where the author constantly admonished Israel not to forget that land and its resources are God given.

The inheritance of the land by the meek is a gradual, mysterious, and unassuming way a transformation. But, it is “God, not the meek,” who “will overthrow the elite so that all may use the earth.”54 The present inequitable access to land, based on exploitative societal relationships, will end for “the earth and its resources belong to God.”55

Lapide expresses the point briefly:
It is a question of building a realm of heaven here on this earth. It is rather the emergence of God’s royal dominion over all creation - a dominion that of course has existed in the hidden depths since the beginning of the world. It will free the world from discord, isolation, and bondage; make it habitable for trust, harmony, and peace.\(^5\)

7.4. Life Enrichment

By the time of the Christian era, the phrase ‘possessing the land’ has become a cliché to mean basically a sense of security that the meek will come to possess. For Matthew it is the realm of the Kingdom of Heaven becoming a reality on earth. It is Jesus who by His role as a meek messiah, realizes the long-cherished hope of Israel, viz. the Immanuel – that God would dwell in their midst.\(^5\) Meekness, such as Jesus exemplified, demands total dedication to God’s plan for the world. The communities of believers embody the presence of Christ and thus possess everything. Paul has expressed this experience to the Corinthians making them realise that by their faith in Christ, everything belonged to them.\(^5\) Thus, the Christian experience of meekness is basically one that gives enrichment to life, an optimum feeling of contentment as though one needs nothing more to satisfy his being.

7.5. Meekness and the Church’s Communication Techniques

This Beatitude enables the communication of the Church in Kerala in two ways:

First: Jesus makes the Church itself conscious of the virtue of gentleness or meekness. This enabled the Kerala Church to maintain simplicity and uphold the virtue of gentleness.

Second: it enabled them to respect the meek and appreciate it as a virtue not only to go to them with much humility but also to give them the much needed courage and hope for better days.
Thus, on one hand the Church itself became fortified and on the other, they fortified the people who were meek as gentle to put up with aggressions whatsoever. Developing this quality could be the pre requisite of a successful communication and that is what the Church in Kerala had done effectively and meticulously.

8. Fourth Beatitude

“Blessed are those who Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness, for they will be filled”.59

The Indian religious term *dharma* seems to reflect in a better way this comprehensive idea of righteousness in Matthew. The expression "hunger and thirst" indicates that our yearning for righteousness must be very strong, as strong as our desire to appease our appetite and thirst.

In a globalised and consumerist world, human’s wants and desires are mounting like anything. It is a pity that any amount of consumption of goods does not bring in the desired satisfaction, but on the contrary, leaves the person in frustration and despair. In this context our particular Beatitude gives us the right orientation.

8.1. Hunger and Thirst

There lies a basic difference between the Lukan and Matthean Beatitudes. The Lukan Beatitude declares ‘happy’ those who have physical hunger.60 But the Matthean Beatitude concerns “those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.” A few authors have understood this Matthean expression in a material sense, as if it refers to people who have “starved for justice” or people who are victims of injustice.61 The expression, however, has been used in a metaphorical sense in the OT and the other Judaic Literature to express the desire for the word of God,62 for the eschatological bliss,63 for seeing God and participating in worship64 and for the knowledge and practice of God’s precepts.65 Experts speak of thirst for moral beauty, knowledge, wisdom, instruction, virtue, good etc.
The hunger for righteousness is then, blessedness of moral integrity, the desire for spiritual goods and energetic longing and a decisive effort towards the realization of righteousness etc. More than a simple concern or striving for uprightness, “it is the desire, fed by painful lack, that God’s will shall be done.”

8.2 Righteousness

This serves to link the Beatitudes to the whole Sermon on the Mount and the Gospel. Matthew has used it with a nuance befitting the ‘ethics of the new covenant’ which directs the disciples to conform to God’s plan.

For Matthew, righteousness is the right conduct of man in conformity to the divine will by means of observing the prescriptions of God as interpreted by Jesus. ‘Fulfilling the righteousness’ in the context of Jesus’ Baptism and the coming of John the Baptist in the ‘way of righteousness’ means conformity to the divine will. The two references in the SM with the pronoun ‘your’, only suggests the righteousness demanded of the disciples. Doing the will of the Father is doing justice, which in fact, is the precondition for entering into the reign of God. More precisely, doing righteousness implies putting the words of Jesus into practice.

8.3 God’s Gift or human activity?

Three different types of interpretations are put forward by authors:

a) The righteousness to be established by God at the coming of His Kingdom in the eschatological times;

b) Righteousness as a gift or grace of God; and

c) A human conduct of doing the will of God.

These explanations may be narrowed down to two significant ways of interpretations such as righteousness understood as God’s gift and righteousness, in the sense of ethical command is centered on human efforts. The Beatitudes are not just consolations promised in the future but they see the
present in the light of the future.\textsuperscript{76} The present conditions should be fulfilled in view of the judgment of God.\textsuperscript{77} One can observe that the tension between ‘now’ and ‘not yet’ running through the Beatitudes.\textsuperscript{78}

\section*{8.4. They will be satisfied}

The question is, ‘with what will they be satisfied’? In the light of Isaiah 56:1 and Proverbs 21:21, God’s justice to be manifested at the end of times is not the same as that which we are exhorted to practice at the present time. In addition to the vision of God\textsuperscript{80}, messianic banquet\textsuperscript{81}, Matthew exhorts the Christians to have the desire and longing for justice without defining what they will be filled with.

Righteousness, as interpreted by Jesus in the SM, touches upon all our relationships - to self, others, God and to the world. Moral order should influence all the areas of human life and root out all forms of injustice and oppression. This Beatitude must come to ignite our heart, soul and mind so that we become hungry and thirsty to practice the righteousness demanded of us by the will of God.

\section*{8.5 Righteousness and Church’s Communication Strategies}

There is an implication to this Beatitude in Indian culture. It is ‘Dharmo Rakshati, Rakshita.’ The saying is that dharma itself shall protect anyone who ventures to protect Dharma. The Biblical concept of righteousness is something akin to the Indian concept of Dharma. Both concepts of righteousness and dharma stand for sets of values and virtues, carrying all of them together in these comprehensive concept.

Indirectly, it guarantees the safety of anyone who stands for these values in being righteous. There would be difficulties, hardships and troubles in maintaining righteousness. But then, there is nothing to be afraid of; safety is guaranteed. For all purposes, being righteous shall be a great source of inner strength in its own way and here it is further strengthened through the Divine guarantee. In the first place these values strengthen the Church in their efforts to
go to the people with the Gospel, as they are very convinced that they are only doing the right things. On the other hand, it makes people strong enough to carry righteousness by providing them with the requisite inner strength to be righteous through a guarantee of safety from the Divine itself.

This enabled the Church of Kerala to address the Kerala Society with invigorate vitality. Church can now assume divine strength, the strength of righteousness, a strength which was already familiar in the form of the strength of Dharma to the Kerala Society. This makes the communication efforts of the Catholic Church much easier and more natural.

9. The Fifth Beatitude

“Blessed Are the Merciful for they will receive mercy”

The Beatitude under consideration entails that the poor, the suffering and the dejected in the society become the primary beneficiaries of our mercy and service.

9.1. The Various Meanings of Mercy

The Hebrew equalent in OT (hesed) can be translated as tenderness, kindness, graciousness, loving kindness, and steadfast love etc. In the secular usage in the OT, there are at least four elements that constitute the concept of hesed: they are social, active, mutual, and enduring.

It has a social or relational nature. The demonstration of hesed in human relationships would consist of release of someone who could have been killed, speaking on someone’s behalf, restoration to someone his ancestral property, etc.

Secondly, it includes an element of action. The essence of hesed can be expressed as ‘doing good.’ The third characteristic of hesed is its reciprocity or mutuality in the sense that the one who receives hesed does a merciful act in return, or the one who demonstrates it can at least claim it in return. Finally it is
enduring and permanent. This endurance or permanence is a constitutive element of mercy.\textsuperscript{88}

From the foregoing analysis, it is clear that \textit{hesed} in the OT is not a pious inner attitude, but is other-oriented and expresses itself in relationship, mutuality, love, forgiveness, and other positive actions.

\textbf{9.2. Characteristics of Mercy}

The theme mercy plays an important role in Matthew’s theology. It is evident from the fact that he twice mentions Hosea’s statement, “I desire mercy, not sacrifice”\textsuperscript{89}

\textbf{9.2.1. It implies forgiveness}

Mercy refers to forgiveness of sins by God because “the commonly accepted explanation of suffering saw in it only the deserved punishment for sin.”\textsuperscript{90} We see that a disease like blindness was regarded as God’s judgment and punishment for one’s sin.\textsuperscript{91} The word mercy is also part of a prayer made to Jesus for healing from various diseases. Every request for a healing begins with the prayer, ‘Have mercy on me or have mercy on us.’\textsuperscript{92}

\textbf{9.2.2. It implies action}

Mercy does not stop with an emotional wave of compassion but translates itself into concrete actions.\textsuperscript{93} It is only by seeing our good deeds that people will give glory to our Father in Heaven.\textsuperscript{94}

Mercy in this Gospel refers to love and concern for the spiritually poor (9:13) and for the physically and materially poor.\textsuperscript{95} Towards the end of the Gospel, in the passage on the Last Judgment\textsuperscript{96}, the blessed by the Father (v.34) are those who positively responded to the neighbor’s material needs through an active involvement by doing good deeds. Mt. 19:21 would say that one must sell one’s possessions and give the money to the poor in order to become perfect. So, perfection is attained through acts of mercy.\textsuperscript{97} Thus, though mercy apparently refers to an internal disposition, it is never self-oriented.
9.2.3. The other-orientedness

Whereas the first four Beatitudes focused attention on a state of mind or an attitude of the individual (poverty in spirit, meekness, etc.), this Beatitude refers to the blessedness of those who act, namely, those who show mercy to others. Though the new followers of Jesus and the crowds living in the periphery of the Jewish society have not been shown mercy by the rich and the powerful, they are exhorted to show it to others unconditionally.

9.2.4. Meriting God’s Love

This Beatitude could arguably be the most noble and rewarding one of all the Beatitudes because, according to the OT, it is the performer of merciful acts whom God will love more than his mother does. No wonder, then, that this is the only Beatitude which has been brought by Jesus on par with justice and faith, which he declared as the mightier matters of the law. This unique significance of the Beatitude is attested also by the fact that Jesus brings all his five discourses to a grand finale by naming the doers of merciful acts as righteous and by awarding them eternal life.

9.3. Beneficiaries of Mercy

The merciful love God tenders to his people resembles that of a shepherd who anxiously and graciously cares for his flock. Nevertheless, the shepherd has a special interest in the sheep that are neglected by the careless shepherds and, therefore, have strayed. This fact is attested by the immediate context of the SM, where the beneficiaries of Jesus’ mercy and compassion are the large suffering crowds and also by his last discourse where the poor, the orphans, the sick, and the prisoners are presented as the beneficiaries of our merciful love. Consequently, the Beatitude under consideration entails that the poor, the suffering, and the dejected in the society become the primary beneficiaries of our mercy and service.
9.4. Two-pronged Mission

This Beatitude entrusts us with a two-pronged mission: a radical mission of liberation from deprivation and misery, and a pastoral mission of forgiveness and reconciliation. This spirituality is a warning against a self-oriented spirituality which makes us content with a pious inner attitude of mercy devoid of any concrete actions.

In the context of our society whereby there are increasing number of people crying for liberation of various kinds, an important missiological implication of this particular Beatitude is that it is not so much piety and loud proclamation, but good works to which we must give priority in our mission. Thus, priority of the deed and concrete actions over piety and proclamation is highlighted here.

9.5. Merciful Communication Techniques

One of the most important virtues of human civilization is that of mercy. The very existence of any civilized society has much to do with this virtue.

The Beatitude prescribes that one has to be merciful, with a promise of rewarding anyone who is merciful with mercy itself. This enabled the church itself to practice the virtue of mercy and at the same time receive mercy from the Divine. Once merciful, it legitimizes the entitlement of mercy from the Divine; a phenomenon that can make one strong, confident and hopeful. The Church that approaches the Kerala society could establish effective communication through the notion of being merciful.

When the Church was active in the Kerala Society, the efforts of the Church to evangelize could have posed serious doubts and disbeliefs among the Christians themselves. Why these strangers from outland are involving in strange and mysterious doings must have aroused the curiosity of many. This is very clear from the actions and activities of Sundarpur Baba, alias Edamattom Kunjachan, the man for the year 2009 by The Week magazine, who has been working among the leprous patients in the Orissa region for more than three decades and Daya Bai of Kerala who works among the marginalized in Rajasthan.
The church could answer all such doubts and disbeliefs through this Beatitude of being merciful. Every man will have to depend on various instances of mercy from many quarters; depending of mercy from divine shall almost be a day to day affair. Here, the legitimacy of the Church’s activities get proved, since being merciful begets mercy and it thus becomes natural for the Church to exhibit unconditional mercy in Kerala Society through their various activities.

10. The Sixth Beatitude

_Blessed are the Poor In heart_

_For they will see God_\(^1\)

According to biblical terminology, "cleanness of heart” cannot exclusively be found. Frequently in the Old and New Testaments\(^2\) the "pure heart" is the simple and sincere good intention.

Matthew consistently stresses that the righteous or the just ones are those who respond to God’s word with their works. One’s external actions indicate interior preoccupations for Matthean Jesus. The sayings of Jesus gives a picture of this. He said, “the eye is the body’s lamp. If the eyes are good, your body will be filled with light; if your eyes are bad, your body will be in darkness”. In another occasion Jesus spoke, “where your treasure is, there your heart is also”.

10.1. Purity of Heart

In the Sermon on the Mount it is stressed that if the eyes are pure or simple, so is the heart. If one is absorbed in the experience of God’s reign and will, the whole personality will be endowed with light perfection. Matthew here considers the wholeheartedness or an attitudinal aspect of the inner commitment. That is why Jesus refers to attitudes or looks. They are certain internal dispositions in the mind:

‘do you not see that everything that enters the mouth passes into the stomach and is discharged into the latrine, but what comes out of the mouth originates in the mind’.\(^3\)
These dispositions are referred as surface or external ‘looks’ which are expressed in attitudes as actions, words and works. If these ‘looks’ assume authority over one’s life, they are the source of worry, tension, and anxiety instead of rest, reconciliation, and peace.

Richard Byrne describes the various looks that represent Matthean impurity of heart. Unless we are free from these ‘looks’ we cannot be open to the divine gaze and vision.¹¹⁰

The first look is an attitude of being full of cares and anxieties. Jesus described a person controlled by this look as the man who hears the message, but then worldly anxiety and the lure for money chokes it off.¹¹¹ They reflect a kind of chaos, a separation, an alienation within themselves. According to philosopher Martin Heidegger, curiosity is one of the chief characteristics of the inauthentic self. It always runs after things that alleviate fear and anxiety.¹¹²

The next obstacle to seeing God is the lustful look, or ‘the eye of pleasure’:

“From the heart stem evil designs, murder, adulterous conduct, fornication, stealing, false witness, blasphemy. These are the things that make a man impure.”¹¹³ When we are controlled by lustful look, we seek instant gratification.

The third type of evil eyes which block the purity of heart is the ‘ideal look’. This ideal look or ideal self people are preoccupied with comparing themselves and others in terms of power, processions and image. This comparison takes the forms of ‘more or less, better or worse’. We are then controlled by the ideal of having more, being better and if we never reach these ideals we experience alienation. Thus we are unable to accept our self as well as others. Frustrated at never meeting our goal of perfection, we often relate to others with anger and judgements.¹¹⁴

The final look of impurity is resentment or hatred. Jesus commented that even murder rose out of impurity of heart. It takes its expressions in anger, criticism, envy, gossip etc. These forms and other distinct types of impurities of heart kept us away from entering in to the circle of God.¹¹⁵
10.2. The Spirituality of Pure Heart

Purity of heart is what Christianity is all about. The condition of the heart was the center of Jesus’ teaching. The Pharisees were scrupulously concerned with the external, ritual purification. They ignored the inside. They kept the letter of the law, but their heart was unclean. Jesus was not concerned with religious rituals but “the defiling influences of sin upon the inner man.”116 “Out of the heart proceeds ...” Jesus went on to emphasize evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies, etc.

Heart is the place where we make our moral decisions. It represents the whole of our inner state, thoughts and will as well as emotions. Psychologically it is the abode of man’s combined energies, the focus of his personal life, the seat of the rational as well as the emotional and volitional elements in human life. Thus the teaching of Jesus is concerned with the fact that the very center of our being must be pure. He demanded purity of heart and stated that this is the core to the problem with man.

The pure in heart have clarified their values, and have pure motives. There are no hidden agendas, no double motives, and no vested interests. The pure in heart are completely loyal to God because cleansing of their heart has taken place. They are free of dishonesty and deceit.

This must be the charisma of all the communication techniques. If any of our ministry moves away from this motive it will be a counter witness and often the Church tempted by worldly pressures fall in to the sin of impurity of heart.

10.3. Blind Spirituality

The opposite of a pure heart is one that is divided. The divided self tries to serve two opposing masters at the same time. The double-minded are blind spiritually and their loyalties are divided and therefore cannot see God. Jesus makes this clear:
“No man can serve two masters. He will either hate one or love the other or be attentive to one and despise the other. You cannot go yourself to God and others.”\textsuperscript{117}

This blind heart will have hidden agendas. There will be ulterior motives in service of the Master. It will not be focused on one clear objective to glorify Him alone. There will be selfish interests. About this singleness of purpose He said:

"Do not store up for you treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."\textsuperscript{118}

Anytime we love money or things more than the Lord, it will break our fellowship with Him. Sinful, forbidden cravings and lust can brake our love relationship. We fall in love with what we have, or with what we are able to do. Our relationships with other believers reflect our relationship with God.

\textbf{10.4. Purity in the Communication Techniques}

When the Church goes to the Society with the Gospel the intention becomes important. When purity in heart is guaranteed, automatically the intentions get legitimized.

In all efforts of the Church to communicate with the society, the intention remains pure and noble; this is guided and guaranteed through this Beatitude. And further, through this Beatitude, the intention or purity becomes known to the people with whom the church makes an effort to communicate. We are witnessing that whenever the Catholic Church of Kerala is moving away from this purity of heart in its communication techniques with regard to the educational activities, hospital ministries and so on, it is leading to severe criticisms and discomfort.
11. The Seventh Beatitude

“Blessed Are the Peacemakers,  
For They Will Be Called Children of God”119

Modern world earnestly weeps for peace more than anything else. Though there is prosperity and development, it loses inner peace and harmony. Not only the world but individuals such as celebrities, and great personalities over the nations deeply desire peace and inner harmony. Needless to say, peacemaking involves the pursuit of justice and reconciliation; both justice and reconciliation to oneself, others and Almighty. The peacemakers must have certain other qualities such as love, mercy, generosity and justice. In that sense we can say that peacemaking is the responsibility of all the followers of Jesus. So, peacemakers must try to remove injustice and try to establish a just milieu.

But the question arises whether the followers of Jesus actually create peace or do they create peace destructive activities in the society. Does the Church in Kerala initiate any peace making activity? What should have been the role of the Church in this regard?

11.1. Different meanings of Peace

The Hebrew word Shalom is used widely in the OT to refer peace. It has a range of meanings such as: to be intact, whole, peace, peace-offering, sacrifice, paid, settled and welfare. It is a state of being unimpaired and unthreatened, of ease and security, of felicity and wholeness in the broadest sense.”120

This word has different nuances in different books of the Bible. In Pentateuch, it is used as a salutation or greeting. And that is why the brothers of Joseph did not greet Joseph šālôm because of their hatred towards him.121 Šālôm meant “state of well being”, “of being alive”, or could be used as a leave taking formula.122 In the book of psalms we see the people were asked to seek peace. “Seek peace and pursue it”123 Peace refers to the right order of the world.124

In the NT, it denoted as state, i.e., ‘a time of peace’ or ‘state of peace,’…. It can also signify a peaceful attitude.”125 To be in peace is to live in peace and to be in peace with all. This idea is found in different texts.126
11.2. The Peacemakers

In the OT we see people understand that Yahweh is the source of peace and people were praying to him for peace. God is a peace maker.

In Hellenistic culture, peacemaking was considered as the responsibility of those who were in authority. The peacemaking was the title of the Roman emperor and *Pax Romana* was considered the achievement of a ruler. *Pax Romana* meant that Romans understood the very essence of the rule was to maintain and preserve peace in the empire. Whereas, making peace between groups, within families or between individuals, is considered a task of the philosophers.

11.3. The Reward of Peacemaking

The reward as children of God is a fulfillment which is more eschatological, assuring that the honorific title ‘Sons of God’ will be conferred on the faithful in paradise. Not everyone will be honored with the title ‘Sons of God’ but only those who work towards peace among others. The peacemakers will be the sons of God because God himself has set this example. He acts as the great peacemaker.

The promise that the peacemakers will be called the sons of God has great significance. At the eschatological event, the peacemakers will be given a new name. They will be called the children of God. It means they will be sons and daughters of God.

Jesus says:

“Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven”

Dupont observes that love and mercy are qualities required of the peace makers also.

11.4. It is a programme of life

Jesus through this Beatitude proposes a programme of life to the Christian faithful. This is a teaching of Jesus which points to a reversal of social
convention. We know that at the time of Jesus, emperors and rulers were considered as peacemakers and Pax Romana was a great achievement of the Roman Empire. Now this particular task is entrusted to the followers of Jesus and the peacemakers are given the status as blessed. They must have certain qualities such as love, mercy, righteousness and justice in order to fulfill these peaceful activities.

The world is crying for peace and justice. As long as there is injustice, exploitation, cheating, short supply of food, exploitation of the poor by the rich, suppression of the legitimate rights of the poor, there cannot be peace in the world. There is no debate with regard to the fact that economic imbalance disturbs the peace. So, peacemakers must try to remove injustice and try to establish a just milieu.

11.5. Church’s Peaceful Communication Techniques

When the church makes different kinds of efforts to communicate with a society, one of its main objectives is that of making peace. The scenario in Kerala is far from contradicting and conflicting nature of Western Society. Yet, there were many conflicts, of both internal and external nature. There used to be social problems of varying kind, which indeed were social conflicts, though they used to be mostly implicit.

It is at this point that the Catholic Church appears also as a peace maker apart from many other activities of the Church. Hence, Peace becomes yet another technique and plan for the Church to establish communication with Kerala Society.

12. The Eighth Beatitude

“Blessed Are Those Who Are Persecuted for Righteousness’ sake, For Theirs Is the Kingdom of Heaven”

Around the world we witness a lot of persecution and at a time we ourselves may be persecuted. The reasons are varied such as social, economical,
political, religious, communal etc. The situation of India is dangerous in this regard. We had witnessed a lot of brutal activities against missionaries such as Graham Stains and the persecution in the Kandamal district of Orissa. Many feel victimized or persecuted.

12. 1. The Persecuted Ones

The righteous ones who are persecuted are treated as being among God’s favorite in OT:

“Many are the afflictions of the righteous but the Lord delivers him out of them all. He keeps all his bones not one of them is broken.”

“The souls of the righteous are in the hands of God, and no torment will ever touch them.”

This may not refer to killing as such, but may refer to continuous harassment.

We can imagine probably that the Christians of Matthew’s community perhaps, saw themselves symbolized in the suffering righteous man of the OT. Perhaps this reflected the happenings in Matthew’s church which was formally attached to the synagogue. That the community which experiences persecution is also manifested in the mission discourse:

“Beware of men; for they will deliver you up to councils, and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake…”

12. 2. The Righteous Ones

The Psalms speak of the Lord as the righteous one, Lord being the lover of righteous deeds. Very often they refer to proper order and behavior. The Psalmist requests God to judge him according to His integrity and innocence.

While referring to God’s Law, the psalmist praises the laws of God’s righteousness. God’s ordinances, testimonies, and commandments are righteousness.
According to Ezekiel, the righteous one takes responsibility for his own actions and is blameless before God. In the book of Genesis we find Abraham pleading for the righteous. Once again we see that the righteous is one on whom you can impute no guilt. The book of Proverbs and the Psalms very often mentions the just or the righteous one, but these two books do not make explicit as to what makes a person righteous. It is the righteous person’s way of life and its consequences that are continuously contrasted with that of the wicked or the unrighteous.

12.3. The right conducts before God

The concept of righteousness often refers to the right conduct of a person who follows the will of God and is pleasing to Him. It stands for integrity of life before God. Thus Righteousness is closely connected with the fact of intimate relationship with God. The ‘way of righteousness’ expresses the righteous demand of God towards humankind. It is the substance of the will of God. God desires righteousness as the salvation of humankind. Its realization in the word and activity of Jesus has already begun and it now becomes a condition for our realization of salvation.

In Mt. 3:15 righteousness refers to doing the revealed will of God. Jesus by presenting himself for baptism stresses as his mission, right conduct which he will fulfill and which will be acceptable to God. We can do nothing to merit it but is freely given to us by God as a gift. Mt. 5:20 echoes the theme - the righteousness of Jesus’ followers must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees in order for them to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

12.4. Demanded of every disciple

There can be no compromise on the righteousness that is demanded of every disciple of Jesus. The fear of persecution too cannot deter a disciple from his commitment to Jesus. Integrity of one’s conduct and commitment to the divine will alone can set the tone for righteousness as laid down by the Master for his disciples.
In order to endure persecution patiently for righteousness' sake, a person must have love for the truth, be steadfast and firm in virtuous living, have courage and patience, and faith and hope in the help and protection by God.

12.5. Righteousness and Church’s Communication Techniques

For people moving in the path of righteousness, persecution from many quarters could be a normal phenomenon. The church and its followers are also no exception to this. In all kinds of difficulties during all efforts from the church to establish communication with the people and society, this Beatitude shall function as a bonus to all involved.

13. Conclusion

The Beatitudes reveal eight qualities that bring God's blessing. As we study these qualities and integrate them into our lives, we will receive the blessing Jesus promised to his followers then and now.

They are a revolutionary road map for all Christians. By the world’s standards, Jesus’s definition of happiness or ‘blessedness’ is shocking. Any popular magazine or TV program will tell us the reverse: that happiness depends on beauty, wealth or fame. In this context the Beatitudes challenge Christians with decisive moral choices.

The Church understands the Beatitudes to be a gift from God. It recognizes that an individual’s natural desire for happiness can only be fulfilled in living the Beatitudes. It is the gift of grace, sustained by the Holy Spirit which allows Christians to respond to God and to enter into the promised happiness.

The Beatitudes set before us a pattern for living a worthwhile life: they urge us to keep in mind what really makes us happy. Essentially they are positive and encouraging; they challenge and guide us.

As a matter of fact, the Beatitudes are the techniques adopted by Jesus to communicate with people who were mostly ignorant two thousand years ago. He had two tasks at hand primarily: first, the people should not get offended or become suspicious of His intentions as they had already implemented the
Decalogue in letters not allowing interpretations. Secondly, Jesus had to make
the society a better place through changes which were inevitable. For Jesus the
only available methodology to do this was to speak to the people as a Rabbi; and
to communicate in such a manner that the desired changes takes root in the
society. This strategy was available to the Church in general and they found it
much useful to adopt them in their efforts to communicate with the people of
Kerala.
NOTES

2. Matthew 5:3-12.
6. Matthew 5:3
7. Matthew 5:10
10. Ibid., p. 74.


23. St. Matthew 5:4


27. Benedict XVI, Ibid., p. 86.


29. Benedict XVI, Ibid., p.86.


34. Benedict XVI, Ibid., p. 87.

35. Prov. 14:34.


40. Matthew 5:5

43. Sir. 45:4.
44. Numbers 12.7.
46. Matthew 11:29.
47. Matthew 11:25.
49. Matthew 21:5
54. Ps. 37:10-11.
55. Carter W., Ibid., p. 133.
58. 1 Cor 3:21-2.
62. Amos 8:11-12.
63. Is 49:9-10; cf. Rev 7:16-17; Ps 107:4-9
64. Ps 24:3-4; 42:2-3; 63:2-3; 84:2-3
68. Matthew 3:15.
69. Matthew 21:32.
70. Dupont J., Ibid., pp. 219, 239.
71. cf. 2 Cor 9:8-10, Dupont J., Ibid., p. 246.
72. Mk. 3:34; Mt 19:17
77. cf. 25:31-46.
79. cf. Ps. 17:15.
80. Ps. 17: 5.
82. Matthew 5:7.
83. eg., Sarah and Abraham in Gen. 20.
85. 2 Sam 9:1, 3, 7.
86. e.g., Zech 7:9; Ps 109:16.
94. Matthew 5:16 b.
100. Sir 4:1-10, esp. 10.
104. Ez 34:7-22.
105. Matthew 5:1; cf. 4:23-25.
108. Genesis 20:5; Job. 33:3, Psalms 23:4, 24:4, 72:1, 73:1; 1 Timothy 1:5;
114. Michael H. Crosby. Ibid., p.64.
120. Stendebach J., “art. Šalom,” in TDOT, 15. 13-49
123. Ps 34:14.
124. Ps 72:37.


127. Judg. 6:23f; Job 30:2; Ps 35:27; 1Kings 2:33; Ps 122:6.


129. Betz H.D., Ibid.140


131. Matthew 5:45.

132. Dupont J., Ibid- 3.664:


134. cf. Ps 34:19-20; Ps 22.


139. cf. Ps 7:8.

140. vv. 7, 62, 164.

141. vv. 75, 144, 172.


143. cf. Proverbs 10–15; Ps 1:5, 6.

144. cf. Mt 3:3; 11:10.
