

ARTICLE FOR COUNTRY GAZETTE
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Spring is coming! There are signs of it all around even though it doesn't officially start for several weeks. Primroses are blooming, daffodils are budding, birds are singing, yard waste containers are being set out for pick up, and piles of branches are filling yards. The coming of spring means it is our last chance for late winter pruning to make way for new growth.

There is also a kind of pruning that can take place in our lives to prepare for growth. We can clear out hurtful thoughts, selfish actions, and attitudes that put others down. Jesus gave us a guide for what is needed in our self pruning. That guide is called the Beattitudes. You can find them in the fifth chapter of the book of Matthew. I list them here, each with a phrase that I think helps define them.

Blessed are the poor in spirit. That would be those who are not conceited and arrogant.

*Blessed are those who mourn--*those who love deeply enough to feel their loss.

Blessed are the meek—those who listen before they speak or act, realizing that there is more than one way to look at every circumstance.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness—they put God first in their lives and follow the ways of Jesus, they study scripture and pray and attend worship regularly.

Blessed are the merciful—those who forgive because they know they are forgiven.

Blessed are the pure in heart—they examine their motives and let go of all that is not good, so their thoughts, words and actions arise out of faithfulness.

Blessed are the peacemakers—those who look for creative solutions to problems instead of pitting people against each other, working for “win-win” solutions that benefit everybody.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake—those who fully put God above self interest, so they can face whatever comes with the confidence of knowing they are held in the hands of the Lord.

The Beattitudes were Jesus’ response to the Ten Commandments: look not to the law first, but to you own heart, your own attitudes. I wonder if the judge who embroidered the Ten Commandments on his robe would be willing to do that with the Beattitudes. They have the potential to have a far deeper impact.

So, I invite you to do some pruning. Get rid of the “don’t be attitudes” of arrogance, failing to care about and listen to others, failure to love God and Jesus Christ, a judgmental and unforgiving spirit, lack of faithfulness, divisive and hurtful impulses. Jesus asks us to replace the “don’t be attitudes” with the “be attitudes.” Give it a try and watch new life blossom in you this spring.