

Sermon Title: Beautiful Attitudes for Hard Times
Text: Micah 6:6-8; Matthew 5:1-12 The Beatitudes
By: Rev. Terry Carty
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Place: Kingston Springs United Methodist Church
Season: 13th Sunday after Pentecost; Proper 19, Ordinary 24, Gifts & Graces Celebration

Main Point: God gives us gifts and graces to be used with a "Beautiful Attitude."

It was such a beautiful morning - 9-11, 2001. The sun was shining and there was a clearness in the sky. As I was driving into work I heard a news report of an unconfirmed accident involving an airplane having hit the World Trade Center. When I walked into work I saw the second plane hit.

We could not have guessed what the next ten years would bring to our country and to each of our lives. All this week the internet, TV and radio have been filled with recollections and repercussions of that day.

The Church was there in the days following 9-11. I remember seeing people in church who had not been there for quite a long time. I remember meeting with our youth group and viewing a Powerpoint show of images of the terrorism, praying, and talking through the loss of life. How could anyone do something so atrocious? People in the church held each other - for a while at least.

As the shock set in, some people wanted to cast blame and others wanted the American people to accept blame. Someone must be blamed. Attitudes changed with shock and grief. And then some pretty ugly attitudes set in. Ugly attitudes are not helpful in hard times.



Ten years after we find ourselves surviving. Our country is much more security conscious. Our economy is in terrible shape. Our political environment is anything but unified. But we are surviving.

Here at Kingston Springs UMC, we are more than surviving - we are thriving in many ways. Most of you who are members now were not here ten years ago. Episodes of loss have been met by compassion and outreach. This church has been a light shining in the community and in the lives of many. The helping attitudes of the members of this congregation are contagious.



For the past two months we have been focusing on the gifts and graces within this congregation and on our giving. Today we refuse to slip into melancholy because of the terrorism or the economy or the losses we have suffered. Instead we celebrate because of the wonderful giftedness this congregation has to offer to our community and our world.

Please take a minute to look around this room. Consider individuals who are sitting here and think about their giftedness.



Yesterday morning a collection of church members gathered to apply their gifts to the house next door. People were trimming, hanging, scrubbing all around the house to get it ready for the next family who will live there. This morning I have watched teachers and students work together to combine gifts for greater understanding together.

These are the things that happen when gifted people bring their graces together. In fact, good things usually happen when people bring their gifts and graces together in collaboration. But great things happen when this is done with beautiful attitudes.

In today's scripture passages, we re-view two texts that we have visited earlier in the year. One is from the Old Testament book of Micah. The prophet Micah, having grown up in a poor village, had a particular view of life and of God. As the fortunes of his country suffered, he did not call the people to turn to power and law that had been used to support and corrupt the kings of Israel. Instead he reminded them that God requires is a good attitude: do justice, love kindness, walk humbly or wisely with God.

And Jesus spoke to the people gathered there on the side of the mountain about attitudes - we call these attitudes the Beatitudes - beautiful attitudes.

Poor in spirit — humility

Those who mourn — the repentant

The meek — not being a push-over but having controlled strength

Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness — those who yearn for (and work for) truth and righteousness (inwardly and outwardly)

Merciful (no interpretation needed)

Pure in heart — those who intend to lead a holy life (as defined by Wesley's Christian perfection)

Peacemakers (no interpretation needed)

Persecuted for righteousness (no interpretation needed)



'Ten years after' - there are so many people in hard times. Economy is bad, joblessness is high, relationships are suffering. This community needs God more than ever. This community needs our church more than ever.

What will our church look like tomorrow if we check our attitudes the way we have been checking our gifts and our giving? I think that our neighbors will begin to see us as more than a little white church on Main Street. They will see the beauty that lies within. Humility, mercifulness and righteousness combined with giftedness is a sure recipe for something beautiful. And great things happen with beautiful attitudes.