

resurrecting

religion

Finding Our Way Back
to the Good News

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appendix

the beatitudes, paraphrased

THIS IS MY PARAPHRASE OF THE BEATITUDES—what I think those crowds of sick, desperate people thronging around Jesus on the hillside might have understood him to say:

Blessed are the spiritually bankrupt, for all the riches of the Kingdom are available to bail them out.

Blessed are those whose life is a litany of loss and destruction and who are so blasted by grief they cannot stand, for they will find a new and strengthening intimacy among others who grieve and with the Comforter by their side.

Blessed are the shoved out, put down, and ripped off, for they will discover that everything—everything!—belongs to them and nothing can restrain them.

Blessed are those who are starving for justice, dying of thirst for someone to treat them right, for a feast is coming.

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Blessed are the guilty ones who, knowing their own
guilt, show mercy to others; they'll receive mercy
too.

Blessed are those whose whole being—body, soul,
and spirit—is so focused on discovering God for
themselves that nothing in this world ever seems
good enough; they'll find what they've been
looking for at last.

Blessed are the ones who stand in the middle of other
people's disputes and are hated by both sides;
it's a horrible place to be, but it's where they are
claiming their identity as children of God.

Blessed are those who are battered and bruised because
they try to treat others well; they are displaying
their citizenship in the Kingdom of God here and
now.¹

notes

INTRODUCTION

1. See Matthew 5:17.
2. John 14:15, ESV.

CHAPTER ONE: *bad religion*

1. James 1:26.
2. Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2006), 18–19.
3. Consider Thomas Asbridge, *The Crusades: The Authoritative History of the War for the Holy Land* (New York: HarperCollins, 2010). The subtitle presents a bold claim for a one-volume account, but it's highly readable and covers the main era and theater of the Crusades, and the opening line makes it clear that the battles had nothing to do with the Crusaders protecting hearth and home, as some have recently tried to claim.
4. Martin Luther, *On the Jews and Their Lies*, quoted in Robert Michael, "Luther, Luther Scholars, and the Jews," *Encounter* 46, no. 4 (Autumn 1985): 343–44.
5. Frank Newport, "Protestants and Frequent Churchgoers Most Supportive of Iraq War," Gallup, March 16, 2006, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/21937/protestants-frequent-churchgoers-most-supportive-iraq-war.aspx>. And Aaron James, "Report Claims Blair's Christian Faith Influenced Iraq War Decision," *Premier*, July 6, 2016, <https://www.premier.org.uk/News/UK/Report-claims-Blair-s-Christian-faith-influenced-Iraq-War-decision>. This report indicates that Prime Minister Tony Blair supported the US initiative in part, at least, because of his "Christian" convictions.
6. Max Fisher, "Map: How 35 Countries Compare on Child Poverty (the U.S. Is Ranked 34th)," *Washington Post*, April 15, 2013, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2013/04/15/map-how-35-countries-compare-on-child-poverty-the-u-s-is-ranked-34th/>. This United Nations Children's Fund report shows the child poverty rate in the United States is 23 percent. For Canada and the United Kingdom, it's under 15 percent.
7. Sophia Kerby, "The Top 10 Most Startling Facts about People of Color and Criminal Justice in the United States: A Look at the Racial Disparities Inherent in Our Nation's Criminal-Justice System," Center for American Progress, March 13, 2012, accessed May 16, 2017, <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/race/news/2012/03/13/11351/the-top-10-most-startling-facts-about-people-of-color-and-criminal-justice-in-the-united-states/>. One in three African American men can expect to be

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incarcerated during their lifetimes. African Americans represent about 30 percent of the general population and 60 percent of the incarcerated population.

8. Mia Dauvergne, "Adult Correctional Statistics in Canada, 2010/2011," Statistics Canada, updated October 12, 2012, accessed May 16, 2017, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2012001/article/11715-eng.htm#a7>. The report states that "27% of adults in provincial and territorial custody and 20% of those in federal custody involved Aboriginal people, about *seven to eight times higher* than the proportion of Aboriginal people (3%) in the adult population as a whole" (emphasis added).
9. See Richard Twiss, *Rescuing the Gospel from the Cowboys: A Native American Expression of the Jesus Way* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2015) for a pithy summary and indictment of the church's participation in this shameful business.
10. See 1 John 3:16.
11. Although I have obscured his identity elsewhere, I have written about Mike in some of my other books.
12. Mike passed away, at peace, in his own apartment, on July 30, 2016. He was, as he said often to me in those last months, "ready to go home." About 150 people attended his memorial, including the Jones House boys.

CHAPTER TWO: *spiritual or religious?*

1. "Growth of the Nonreligious," Pew Research Center, July 2, 2013, accessed May 17, 2017, <http://www.pewforum.org/2013/07/02/growth-of-the-nonreligious-many-say-trend-is-bad-for-american-society/>.
2. "2011 National Household Survey: Immigration, Place of Birth, Citizenship, Ethnic Origin, Visible Minorities, Language and Religion," Statistics Canada, updated May 9, 2013, accessed July 18, 2017, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/130508/dq130508b-eng.htm?HPA>.
3. Emma White, "Religion in England and Wales 2011," Office for National Statistics, December 11, 2012, accessed July 18, 2017, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/religion/articles/religioninenglandandwales2011/2012-12-11#changing-picture-of-religious-affiliation-over-last-decade>.
4. Robert Ricciardelli, "God Transforming Lives, a 10-Stop Journey by George Barna," *Patheos: The Converging Zone*, March 17, 2017, accessed May 17, 2017, <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/robert Ricciardelli/faith/god-transforming-lives-a-10-stop-journey-by-george-barna/>.
5. "Three Spiritual Journeys of Millennials," Barna, June 3, 2013, <https://www.barna.com/research/three-spiritual-journeys-of-millennials/>.
6. Not their real names.
7. See Ephesians 6:15.

8. See Philippians 2:12-13.
9. Acts 4:32.
10. Romans 8:20-22, ESV.
11. Colossians 1:20, ESV.
12. Luke 4:18.
13. Ibid.
14. See 1 John 4:8, 16.
15. From the Latin *uni* (“one”) and *com* (“with”). See also *Merriam-Webster’s* definition at <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/community>.
16. From the Latin *forma* (“shape”) and *con* (“together, with”), inferring “with the [same] shape” or “shaped together.” See also *Merriam-Webster’s* definition at <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/conformity>.
17. John 13:34; 15:12, 17, ESV.
18. Paul Muggeridge, “Which Countries Produce the Most Waste,” World Economic Forum, August 20, 2015, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2015/08/which-countries-produce-the-most-waste/>.
19. Galatians 5:22-23, 25.
20. Matthew 6:10, KJV.
21. See Matthew 25:34-40.

CHAPTER THREE: *dry bones*

1. See 1 Corinthians 15:7.
2. See especially Acts 15:13-21 and Galatians 2:9-10.
3. See Matthew 5:17.
4. Mark 2:27.
5. Mark 12:18-20.
6. James 1:26-27.
7. See Matthew 6:16-18.
8. Isaiah 58:3-7, emphasis added.
9. For example: Leviticus 10:13, 14; Deuteronomy 18:3.
10. Matthew 6:33, ESV.
11. Acts 26:5.
12. Colossians 2:18-19.
13. James 1:26-27.
14. *Online Etymology Dictionary*, s.v. “religion,” <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=religion>.
15. *Online Etymology Dictionary*, s.v. “ligament,” http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=o&search=ligament.
16. Ezekiel 37:1-3.
17. Ezekiel 37:4-6.
18. Ezekiel 37:9-10.

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CHAPTER FOUR: *bad religion can feel so good*

1. See Jeremiah 32:35.
2. John 7:5.
3. Luke 8:19, 21.
4. Mark 6:2-3, emphasis added.
5. See Mark 6:5.
6. See 1 Corinthians 15:4-7.
7. There are likely at least three different people called James in the New Testament, and they're not always clearly distinguished from one another. It's hard to know for sure who did what and when.
8. See Galatians 1:19.
9. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325*, vol. 8, (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1903), 218.
10. Hegesippus, "Fragments from His Five Books of Commentaries on the Acts of the Church," *Early Christian Writings*, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/hegesippus.html>.
11. The "Charlie Hebdo" attack in 2015. Other attacks have killed many more since, polarizing Muslims as well as Christians.
12. Jack Sommers, "Murdered Police Officer Ahmed Merabet's Brother Malek Says Charlie Hebdo Terrorists 'Pretend to Be Muslims,'" *Huffington Post*, January 12, 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/01/12/ahmed-merabet_n_6456328.html.
13. James 1:1. This is one of the reasons some commentators think somebody else wrote it. But on a number of levels, I think it makes perfect sense that he doesn't trade on his status. To do so, in fact, would be counter to what he teaches in the letter itself. His introduction is beautifully humble—an example of living out what Jesus taught.

CHAPTER FIVE: *believe it or not*

1. Luke 8:21.
2. James 1:22-25.
3. Matthew 15:8-9.
4. James 2:12-13.
5. Luke 10:27-28, paraphrased.
6. John 13:34; 15:12.
7. John 8:36.
8. Luke 9:23-24.
9. Luke 9:25-26.
10. James 2:14-17.
11. Matthew 25:40.

12. Vanessa R. Wight, Michelle Chau, and Yumiko Aratani, "Who Are America's Poor Children?: The Official Story," January 2010, National Center for Children in Poverty, http://www.nccp.org/publications/pdf/text_912.pdf, 3.
13. Campaign 2000, "Let's Do This; Let's End Child Poverty for Good: 2015 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Canada," Family Service Toronto, <http://campaign2000.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/C2000-National-Report-Card-Nov2015.pdf>.
14. James 2:18-19.
15. James 4:17.
16. See Matthew 21:28-31.
17. A critical part of the founding and early life of Sanctuary as a community was the work of a band called Red Rain, of which I am a member. Some of that story can be found in my earlier books.
18. James 2:16.

CHAPTER SIX: *living the beatitudes*

1. James 1:27.
2. James 2:5.
3. Matthew 5:3-10, emphasis added.
4. Kenneth E. Bailey, *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008), 68.
5. Matthew 20:16.
6. In particular, "dispensationalism."
7. See Matthew 4:23-25.
8. *Strong's Concordance*, s.v. "*ptócho*," <http://biblehub.com/greek/4434.htm>.
9. Matthew 11:29.
10. Exodus 22:22-24, ESV, emphasis added.
11. See John 18:28.
12. James 2:1-9.
13. Galatians 2:10. Paul comments that this was "the very thing I was eager to do."
14. James 2:6-7.
15. See Mark 10:17-31.
16. Matthew 23:13. Almost the entire chapter is a blistering rant against the false religion practiced by the Pharisees.
17. Matthew 23:25.
18. Matthew 23:16-17.
19. Luke 18:24.
20. I told this story on my blog. Greg Paul, "Eulogy for the Ones Who Never

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Had a Chance,” *Sanctuary* (blog), March 4, 2016, <http://sanctuarytoronto.ca/2016/03/04/eulogy-for-the-ones-who-never-had-a-chance/>.

21. Matthew 4:24.

CHAPTER SEVEN: *the leveling effect*

1. Luke 3:4-6, quoting from Isaiah 40:3-5.
2. Jennifer Wells, “Lost Boy: The Death of Darcy Allan Sheppard,” *Toronto Star*, December 26, 2013, https://www.thestar.com/news/insight/2013/12/26/lost_boy_the_death_of_darcy_allan_sheppard.html.
3. James 5:1-6.
4. Furthermore, the mere fact that you, whoever you are, are reading this suggests that you also may be a rich person. Even if you don’t feel as if you are. If you slept in your own bed last night, aren’t afraid of losing your place at the end of the month, and don’t ever really worry about where your next meal is coming from, you’re wealthier than most people in this world. According to www.globalrichlist.com, if your entire income from all sources last year exceeded \$20,000 (US), you’re in the top 3.65 percent in the world. About 220 million people make more than that, but that leaves more than 7 billion who do not.
5. Two other interpretations of this saying are commonly offered: (1) There was a gate known colloquially as “the Eye of the Needle.” Because it was so narrow, it required camels to be stripped of their burdens before being able to pass through. This gate is supposed to have been found in Jerusalem itself, or in Damascus, but has proved impossible to confirm and may be apocryphal. (2) The Aramaic word Jesus would have used is the same for both *camel* and *rope*. Greek translators may not have been aware of this and assumed he meant *camel*, when in fact he meant *rope*. Clearly, you can’t thread a needle with a rope—although you probably could with a strand of the fiber from which the rope was made. Both interpretations strengthen the necessity of being divested of dependence on wealth in order to enter into the Kingdom of God. The second interpretation is a slightly gentler form of the humor I posit here.
6. See Luke 9:46; 22:24.
7. See 2 Corinthians 8:9.
8. James 1:10-11.
9. Luke 14:12-14.
10. Matthew 19:26.
11. James 1:9.
12. Acts 4:32.
13. Acts 4:33-34.
14. Luke 18:10-14.
15. James 4:4.

16. James 4:10.
17. Barna Group, "Americans Are Misinformed about Poverty, but Widely Involved in Helping the Poor," Barna, June 25, 2007, <https://www.barna.com/research/americans-are-misinformed-about-poverty-but-widely-involved-in-helping-the-poor/>.
18. James 2:8-9.
19. Galatians 3:26-28.
20. Frank and Louise are not the individuals' real names.

CHAPTER EIGHT: *watch your mouth!*

1. James 1:26.
2. James 1:19-21.
3. "James 1:21," *Interlinear Bible*, <http://biblehub.com/interlinear/james/1-21.htm>.
4. James 3:3-5.
5. James 3:5-6.
6. Mark 7:6-7, 9, emphasis added.
7. See James 3:7-8.
8. Mark 7:20-23.
9. See Luke 12:16-21.
10. James 4:1-3.
11. James 5:12, emphasis added.
12. Luke 6:27-28.
13. Acts 15:1.
14. Acts 15:5.
15. Acts 15:8-11.
16. See Acts 11:1-17.
17. Acts 10:11.
18. Acts 10:13.
19. Acts 10:14.
20. Acts 10:15.
21. Acts 10: 26, 28.
22. Acts 10:34-35.
23. Acts 15:13-15, 19.
24. Acts 15:31.
25. See Matthew 13:24-29.

CHAPTER NINE: *the surprise in submission*

1. Karl Marx, "Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right." Originally published as an essay in *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* (Paris, February 1844). The popular quotation "Religion is the opiate of the masses" isn't accurate. Here's the context: "Religious suffering is, at one and the same

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time, the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people.” See, for example, https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Marx_Critique_of_Hegels_Philosophy_of_Right.pdf.

2. James 1:1.
3. James 1:2-4.
4. John 15:1-2, 5, 9-11.
5. Mark 15:34.
6. James 1:5-6.
7. James 1:12.
8. See James 1:13-16.
9. Mark 7:23.
10. James 4:1-4.
11. See Galatians 2:11-21.
12. James 4:7-10.
13. James 4:13-15.
14. The ancient Hebrew title of God, *El Shaddai*, is usually translated as “Almighty,” but it’s a poor translation that reveals our predilection for dominative power. A better rendering would be, as here, “All-Sufficient,” because the word indicates the powerful, complete sufficiency of a nursing mother for her infant.
15. James 5:7-8.
16. I used to be much clearer on this. But my earlier eschatological beliefs are among many convictions I’ve had to release in submission to a God who grows daily bigger and more difficult to explain by theological/doctrinal systems.
17. See Matthew 13:24-30.
18. Matthew 25:34-36, 40.

CHAPTER TEN: *a twenty-first-century reformation*

1. Lawrence’s hometown, in what is now northern Spain.
2. Leonard Foley, OFM, ed., “Lawrence,” *Saint of the Day, Lives, Lessons, and Feasts*, revised by Pat McCloskey, OFM (Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2009), 228–29.
3. The first “complete” account of the martyrdom of St. Lawrence, as related here, dates to the seventh century. Fragments of the story can be found in various sources throughout the intervening 350–400 years.
4. If you weren’t aware of this, search “sermon outlines” on the Web. You’ll be astonished.
5. Mark 6:15.

APPENDIX: *the beatitudes, paraphrased*

1. God bless Dallas Willard, gone too soon, whose work in *The Divine Conspiracy*, together with that of Kenneth Bailey's in *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes*, inspired and (alongside simple lexical study of the text) informed this admittedly very "free" version of the Beatitudes.