

Most of you know I enjoy the writing of Max Lucado, and appreciate his insights into the scriptures and the Christian faith.

Here is one of Max's musings:

Tolerance. A prized virtue in today's world. The ability to be understanding of those with whom you differ--- is a sign of sophistication.

Jesus, was a champion of tolerance:

\*Tolerant of the disciples when they doubted.

\*Tolerant of the crowds when they misunderstood.

\*Tolerant of us when we fail.

But there is one area where Jesus was intolerant. One area where he was unindulgent and dogmatic. . .

As far as Jesus was concerned, when it comes to salvation – there aren't several roads – there is only one road. . . There aren't several paths – there is only one path. And that path is Jesus himself – he is the way, the truth, and the life.

That is why it is so hard for people to believe in Jesus. It's much easier to consider him one of several options – rather than THE option. But such a way of thinking – is not an option.

The end of Max's musings. . .

When we finally reach the realization that we are broken – and that we live in a broken world --- And then start looking for a way to mend our brokenness and the brokenness of the world --- there are not several options open for us – there is only one option: Jesus, who is the way, the truth, and the life.

Jesus, if we are willing to listen to him --- gives us the "schematic" – the way – the blue print – which allows us to transform the crosses of our lives into vehicles of resurrection – to realize the purpose of our lives within the challenges and complexities we encounter ----

it is only through Jesus that we can discover wholeness and meaning--- as we repair and replace the broken pieces of our lives and of our world.

So that's why we will listen once again to the story of Jesus – this year as it is told to us by St. Matthew.

In Matthew's Gospel – we have Jesus the teacher – par excellence – Matthew structures his Gospel around 5 large teaching sections ---

the best known of them – the sermon on the mount – we just read from – and we will continue reading for the next several weeks.

So today, the Beatitudes. We need to see in them --- lessons--- to put into practice in our lives – lessons, that if lived well – can give our lives meaning and purpose.

We can find---- that in helping others heal their pain and brokenness---- we also can heal our own. . .

We can find --- that as we mourn, hunger and thirst for righteousness, make peace with others and endure persecution for our beliefs --- we can become filled with meaning and purpose – all the while seeing that Jesus is not just one of many options for us – but the option for the way we can pattern our lives.

Last November as the Year of Mercy was winding down – Pope Francis did some reflecting on the Beatitudes as the "identity card" of the saints – ways in which the holy men and women who have gone before us worked to create bonds of unity and fellowship with others: as they repaired and replaced the broken pieces of their lives.

Pope Francis also thought new situations require new energy and a new commitment – and so he offered a new list of beatitudes for modern Christians. These are:

-Blessed are those who remain faithful while enduring evils inflicted on them by others and who forgive from their heart.

-Blessed are those who look into the eyes of the abandoned and marginalized and show them compassion and welcome.

-Blessed are those who see God in every person and strive to make others also discover him.

-Blessed are those who protect and care for our common home, the earth.

-Blessed are those who renounce their own comfort in order to help others.

-Blessed are those who pray and work for full communion between Christians.

The Beatitudes, those given to us by Jesus and those of Pope Francis – are lessons on God’s mercy and tenderness. Those who practice them, Pope Francis said, “surely will receive from God their merited reward.”

May the Beatitudes be the first of many lessons we learn from Jesus on how to live our lives -- as we journey through St. Matthew’s Gospel this year. . .

These lessons Jesus will teach us -- will help us mend the brokenness in our lives and restore us to hope--- despite our fears and doubts – so that we may be about the work of reconciliation and peace Christ calls us to.