

Typos. When you run across them in your daily reading, they are no big deal. But when the errors occur in Holy Scripture, then you have a problem of biblical proportions.

“Thou shalt commit adultery” is what one Bible known as the Wicked Bible said. I believe I mentioned that misprint in a prior sermon. And that mistake in the 20th chapter of Exodus could have started a sexual revolution.

“Know ye not that the unrighteous *shall* inherit the kingdom of God.” I’m fairly certain that the unrighteousness lobby certainly liked the sound of that one.

“Go and sin on more,” said Jesus in John 8:11. Well, to be honest, Jesus said, “Go and sin *no* more,” but perhaps the printer was looking for a loophole.

“Let the children first be killed.” Must have been written by a frustrated parent. What Jesus really said in Mark 7:25 is “Let the children first be *filled*.”

And in Matthew 5:9, part of today’s passage of Scripture, we hear, “Blessed are the place-makers.” That’s almost as bad as the line that Monty Python misunderstood and mangled into “Blessed are the cheese-makers.” What Jesus actually said was “Blessed are the *peacemakers*,” but a proofreader failed to catch the typo

Fortunately for us today, the Peachtree Editorial and Proofreading Service has worked hard to catch and correct such biblical blunders. According to the Associated Press the company is dedicated to proofreading Bibles and to making sure that such misprints never make it into a Sunday Scripture reading again. You might say that typos are the company’s daily bread.

With an ordinary book, you can put up with more mistakes “because it’s not something you’re basing your whole life on,” says June Gunden, who founded the company along with her husband. “It’s information, but it’s not really life-changing information.” With the Bible, however, people expect perfection.

Just think of the problems that would have arisen if the Gunders had not caught several errors in our most recent edition of the Bible. The phrase “our ancestors” would have been “*sour* ancestors.” Instead of condemning “factions,” the Bible would have called for an end to “fractions.” Not that America’s young math students would have minded that one.

What’s so shocking about today’s passage from Matthew is that it sounds like it is full of typos — even when it is completely accurate. When you read this stuff, it is so counter-intuitive that you figure that there must be some kind of misprint that the printer or editor failed to correct.

“Blessed are the meek”? The *meek*? I don’t think so! The only way to see these words clearly is through the lens of the kingdom of God. A proofreader’s magnifying glass cannot help us to spot the truth here — we need to be looking through the divine optics of the kingdom proclaimed by Jesus Christ. “Blessed are the poor in spirit” ... “Blessed are those who mourn” ... “Blessed are the peacemakers” ... and they are most certainly not prescriptions we can find from the self-help section found at a local bookstore or on Amazon.com. Instead, they are statements of what is true about the new reality that the Lord is inscribing on our world.

After all, there are no typos in our Gospel reading for today. Only the God’s-honest truth. Which begs the question, what can we learn from the counterintuitive realities that Jesus offers us? For starters, we need to realize that the blessings he mentions, known as the Beatitudes, *are not descriptions of human feelings*. When Jesus says that we are “blessed,” he is not saying that we are necessarily “happy.” To be reviled and persecuted because you follow the Lord might turn out to be a blessing, but it is not going to make you feel particularly cheerful. The nine Beatitudes which Jesus proclaims in this morning’s passage are so much more than nine “be-happy-attitudes.”

To be blessed, according to Christ, is to be made privileged or fortunate by the action of Almighty God. It carries with it a sense of salvation and peace and well-being. You might say that the opposite of blessed is not “unhappy.” Rather, the opposite of blessed is “cursed.” To be blessed is to be given the gift of divine favor, a gift that we all have a deep human hunger to receive. Stated in this way, it’s clear that the blessing of the Beatitudes is not about us, and it’s not about how we feel. Instead, it’s all about what God has done for us.

With this perspective in mind, we can get a clearer sense of what Jesus is talking about when he describes his disciples as “blessed.” What he is saying is that these former fishermen are blessed, because they are experiencing the coming of God’s kingdom, and they are in the process of discovering that their lives are being reshaped by that new reality. No longer will the meaning of their lives be defined by the culture of the town of Capernaum, or the expectations of their extended families, or the size of the fish being pulled out of the Sea of Galilee. From now on, the dominant reality in their existence will be the kingdom of God, and the blessing of God will come to all who make a place for this kingdom in their lives.

When you think about it, perhaps there *was* some truth in the typo that read “Blessed are the place-makers.” In other words, Blessed are those who make a *place* for the kingdom of God in their lives.

So, what does it mean for us to make a place for the kingdom of God in our lives today? What kind of blessing will we experience if we allow ourselves to be transformed by the radical new reality that Jesus offers us? What kind of renewal will come our way if we take seriously the invitation to open our hearts and minds to the arrival of God’s kingdom?

We might discover, for example, that we are “poor in spirit” — a term that describes people who find their true identity and security in the One Lord God.

There is nothing weak or pathetic or shameful about being poor in spirit, but instead it means that we are not deluded enough to think that we are masters of the universe and in complete control of our lives. This spiritual poverty is really an excellent quality to have in a world on the brink of War, with international tension and economic uncertainty — it means that we are dependent on God, first and foremost, and that the Lord will reward us with the gift of his kingdom. So, let's make a place for being poor in spirit.

We might also find that we are among “those who mourn.” — people who feel grief as we look around and see pain and crying, suffering and dying. We mourn because there is evil in us and around us, erupting in bedrooms and boardrooms, back alleys and battlefields. There are temptations all around us, and weaknesses deep within us, that make it an everyday struggle to follow our Lord in faith. But the promise of today's passage is that this grim and often grotesque reality is not the final chapter of human history — there is going to be an unexpected twist in the tale, with a turn toward love and peace and justice. God is writing a surprise ending to this story, and he invites each of us to play a part by doing what we can to live by the values of Christ's kingdom. And if we do, we'll be given a sense of comfort we never dreamed possible. We'll find ourselves blessed, not cursed.

Perhaps we are also what Jesus calls “the meek” — gentle people who are trying to reject the power-hungry and violent ways of the world we live in. Or we are men and women who hunger and thirst for righteousness by actively doing the will of God.

Maybe we are “pure in heart,” willing to show the world in word and deed that there is nothing more life-changing than having a single-minded devotion to God. Or we are “merciful,” showing others the very gift that we are so anxious to receive for ourselves.

An elderly Methodist bishop glanced over the line of ordination candidates at an annual conference meeting in Corpus Christi, Texas. He warned them that he was about to ask the “historical” Wesleyan questions long required of such aspirants. First on the list was this: “Are you going on to perfection?”

When he faced a row of avoided eyes and hesitant responses, the irritated churchman snapped, “Well, if you are not going on to perfection, where *are* you going?”

The bishop’s question is a good one: *Where are you going?* The kingdom is alive and well in our midst. Its promise defines who we are as servants of Jesus. It is at the core of our Christian hope and faith, just as the Beatitudes can be understood as — an Introduction to kingdom-living.” They flow from the lips of Jesus himself and the life of the first-century church, and bring us to a basic understanding of what it means for us to live a Christian life as modern day disciples of Christ.

The Beatitudes that Jesus lifts up in his Sermon on the Mount are not mistakes, or misspellings, as strange as they may look, or sound to us. Instead, they are kingdom-based qualities that can open the door to inner peace and everlasting salvation. So, Let’s make a place for them.

The challenge for us is to open ourselves up to God’s kingdom, and receive the radical new reality that Jesus is inscribing on our hearts. Blessed are those who open the door to the kingdom of God, says Jesus — blessed are the placemakers. Those who make a place for God in their lives. And That’s no typo. Thanks be to God. Amen.