

**Upside Down:
A Different Way
to Live**

Daily Readings

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UPSIDE DOWN: A DIFFERENT WAY TO LIVE
DAILY READINGS
by Jacob Armstrong

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Week 1: Happiness Redefined

O God, I give you thanks that you stop to speak to me today. Let my heart feel moved with compassion at the sight of your people. Open my heart to what it may mean for me to live differently as a follower of Christ. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Matthew 5:1-12

Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up a mountain. He sat down and his disciples came to him. He taught them, saying:

“Happy are people who are hopeless, because the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

“Happy are people who grieve, because they will be made glad.

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“Happy are people who are humble, because they will inherit the earth.

“Happy are people who are hungry and thirsty for righteousness, because they will be fed until they are full.

“Happy are people who show mercy, because they will receive mercy.

“Happy are people who have pure hearts, because they will see God.

“Happy are people who make peace, because they will be called God’s children.

“Happy are people whose lives are harassed because they are righteous, because the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

“Happy are you when people insult you and harass you and speak all kinds of bad and false things about you, all because of me. Be full of joy and be glad, because you have a great reward in heaven. In the same way, people harassed the prophets who came before you.”

Day 1

Matthew 5:1

Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up a mountain. He sat down and his disciples came to him. He taught them saying . . .

Every day I see different people. On the walking trail by my house, I pass my neighbors. In the grocery store I see people from my community. On my street corner the homeless hold signs. At the gas station we stand, but we do not speak. If I'm honest, I see a lot of people and think very little about them. I have my stuff to do, and I am on my way. If I'm honest, some days I hope that I don't have to stop or speak because my day is planned, my mind is preoccupied, and my heart is busy.

On the day that Jesus shared what is now known as the Sermon on the Mount, he saw a lot of people. A huge crowd had followed him.

Jesus didn't see the crowds and keep walking. Jesus didn't see the crowds and try to get away.

When Jesus saw the crowds he was moved to do something for them, something with them. He went up on the side of a

mountain (presumably to a place where his voice could be heard better), sat down (the seated position would have been the authoritative way to teach), and began to share with the crowds a message that they did not expect.

Jesus shared what is commonly known as the Beatitudes, a term which means happy or blissful. Jesus began to share the way to happiness to a crowd that he loved. This week we will look at these teachings that were upside down from the common thinking of that day and of our day.

Before we do that, though, let's note that when Jesus saw the crowds he didn't keep on walking. He stopped. He gathered them. He loved them.

Different people raise different emotions in us. A beloved family member, an old friend, an annoying co-worker, a stranger on the street—they all elicit different responses in our hearts. From deep devotion to indifference. From fondness to disdain.

Don't miss that when Jesus saw the crowds he was moved with compassion to share with them a different way that would be *the way*. *The way* that they had been looking for, longing for, hoping for.

As we look at a Jesus who calls us to a different way—a way that is upside down from what our culture has taught us is the way to happiness and success—remember that he stops and speaks to us because he loves us.

HAPPINESS REDEFINED

What do you think Jesus sees when he sees you?

If you knew that today Jesus was stopping to share with you a different way to live, what would be your response?

How can you view the crowds that you see today differently?

O God, I give you thanks that you stop to speak to me today. Let my heart feel moved with compassion at the sight of your people. Open my heart to what it may mean for me to live differently as a follower of Christ. In Jesus' name. Amen.