



St Mark's  
**Review**

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# Preaching before a watching world



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# Editorial

The Beatitudes from Jesus' 'Sermon on the Mount', as recorded in Matthew's Gospel, are among the more widely known and warmly regarded verses of New Testament Scripture. Some might attribute their popularity and appeal to their apparent mystical quality. Others might, perhaps, be fascinated by their somewhat contradictory character. But could it be that readers like the Beatitudes because they do not regard them to be as demanding as Jesus' instructions such as 'Go now and leave your life of sin' (John 8:11) or 'Sell everything you have and give to the poor' (Luke 18:22)?

But demanding they most assuredly are, when read or heard as Jesus intended them to be understood and enacted. The Beatitudes, which introduce Jesus' message to his disciples delivered on the mountain (Matthew 5–7), present key components of what life will be like when the Kingdom of God comes in its fullness. They take the form of moral and ethical demands of all people who decide to follow Jesus, then and now. It is to the benefit of the readers of this edition of *St Mark's Review* that so many complementary perspectives on this element of Jesus' teaching are presented to inform and inspire us.

Five of the articles in this edition examine the 'Sermon on the Mount' and illuminate Jesus' challenging teachings. The interpretive strategies outlined by Geoff Broughton are illustrated by the three articles that follow, presenting sample sermons and a children's talk. These reveal yet other perspectives on the Beatitudes and how they may be applied creatively for different age groups across an array of contexts.

From where, we might ask, did Jesus draw these eight 'Blesseds' (Matthew 5:3–10)? There is an evident repetition of the Hebrew Scriptures in some of them but not all are re-statements or paraphrases of what had been taught. 'Enemy-love' and a call to radical discipleship are clearly two facets of the unique message of Jesus the Messiah. More can be found in the article by Geoff Broughton.

The article by David Neville takes the reader from the Beatitudes through the other two major sections of Jesus' 'Message on the Mountain'. This, together with David Neville's earlier article on 'Things new and old: Preaching from Matthew in Year A'<sup>1</sup>, pilot a preacher through the full span of Matthew's Gospel.

Another article which builds on and should be read in conjunction with its predecessor is that by Graeme McLean: 'The futility of our minds'. Graeme McLean's earlier article, 'The imagination of our hearts',<sup>2</sup> contributed to our arsenal of tools for the day-to-day work of apologetics; this second article is equally as useful, just as thought-provoking and certainly as encouraging.

This edition of *St Mark's Review* begins with two articles which could be grouped under a heading: 'Preaching as public engagement'. Michael Gladwin has researched sermons delivered in Australia from the beginning of European settlement to the early twentieth century and discusses their contribution to public conversation. These resources have been under-examined by historians and scholars. Michael Gladwin suggests they provide significant insights into facets of Australian cultural, intellectual and social history. Tom Frame's article addresses twenty-first century 'community homiletics' with suggestions as to how we might approach an opportunity to speak a word from God in community commemorations, taking a lead from the Apostle Paul.

St Mark's Preaching Seminar (which was to have focussed on the Beatitudes) did not proceed in 2013, a consequence of events which had nothing to do with the presenters' readiness to deliver their papers. We intend that this edition of *St Mark's Review* reaches you well before the Year A Lectionary's appointed time for chapter 5 of Matthew's Gospel to appear in Sunday readings. My request is that you do not put it aside in favour of less-demanding holiday reading but rather that, in your Christmas reading list, this edition be afforded highest priority. May keener spiritual insights be your reward.

## Endnotes

1. David Neville, *St Mark's Review*, No. 216, May 2011 (2), pp. 25–41.
2. GR McLean, *St Mark's Review*, No. 221, September 2012 (3), pp. 1–13.