

“Saintly People and Places”

Some years ago the Raleigh, North Carolina NEWS & OBSERVER published an article entitled: “How Do You Measure Up As A Man? The article stated that some extensive research had been conducted on the standards for measuring a man’s character. The criteria were interesting. I thought that I might list them for the men here this morning just to see how we measure up. The article said that a man’s character is based on:

1. His ability to make and conserve money.
2. The cost, style and age of his car.
3. (This is my favorite) How much hair he has.
4. His strength and size.
5. The job he holds and how successful he is at it.
6. What sports he likes
7. How many clubs he belongs to.
8. His aggressiveness and reliability.

Jesus Christ also set down eight principles for the measure of a person. His standards stand in stark contrast to the list from the NEWS & OBSERVER. There would appear to be a wide gap between the popular image of the successful person and what God sees as the successful person.

Here is what’s happening in today’s Gospel reading. Jesus had just started his ministry and was gaining in popularity. Large crowds were gathering. He had just picked out his disciples. And in the quiet of the rolling grassy hills of northern Israel by the Sea of Galilee, Jesus delivered a sermon to a multitude. Acres and acres of human faces. The crowd represented a cross section of humanity. There were rich and poor, young and old, doubtless varied races, those who were astute business men and those who were not so successful.

Yet, as different as they all were, Jesus understood that they were all on the same quest. They were all after the same thing. They all wanted happiness. Well, we are just like them aren’t we? Isn’t that what we want for ourselves. Isn’t that what we ultimately want for our children: Happiness

The problem is that we really don’t grasp the true nature of happiness, and because of that it so often seems to elude us. You see, we think that happiness deals with our outer circumstances. We think that the truly happy man is one who has achieved outer success. Our beatitudes read: