

PILGRIM BEATITUDES

Meditations on Matthew 5:3-10 and Luke 6: 20-26

For tenor, baritone, SATB choir, strings, 2 percussion, and piano

Text by Euan Tait (b. Berlin, 1968)

Music by John Muehleisen.

Prelude: The Outcry (The Seven Cries of the Stranger)

STRANGER

Hear me!

I am hungry...

Oh, the agony of my thirst! ...

My clothes are torn to pieces...

I am wounded...

I am a stranger...

I have no name...

PART ONE: Meeting the stranger Word.

1. That we are blessed

CHORUS (*in shock, in awe*)

Blessed? Blessed? Blessed?

That we are blessed?...

This stranger came among us.

He was covered in dust,

He was bleeding,

And he sang

These songs of love to us,

Beatitudes,

And we are blessed.

PILGRIM (*to the Stranger*)

Who are you?

STRANGER

There are none here

Who can answer that;

I came from the desert,

Burnt by hate, hungry;

I lay exhausted, torn

By the devil's laughter.

I was never welcome
In my own country:

Human laughter.
I have nowhere,

Nowhere to rest:
I am always a stranger.

PILGRIM
Why have you no home?

STRANGER
How can I be at peace?
Love seeks no happiness.
Troubled by outcries,
I cannot rest.

CHORUS
Scurrying foxes have dens,
Wing-beat birds have nests:
But the Stranger
Has nowhere to rest.

2. The poor in spirit.

STRANGER
Blessed are the poor in spirit,
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

CHORUS
You are blessed,
Having nothing,
Wanting nothing:
You already live
In Love's new life.

PILGRIM
Love's gaze worries
Every ache of my prayer.
My words hurt me to sing:
My broken, bitter Amens.

Love searches me out; I
Should make love real

For you, naked one,
Shivering in the cold.

Beatitudes pour like water
From Your heart, Love. Your gaze
Persists, even when You
Contract in pain as you sing -

STRANGER
Blessed are the poor in spirit:
For theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.

CHORUS
Your souls are poor:
From you pours
Love's new life.

STRANGER
It was nothing to you, my cry.
You passed me by, and I
Was nameless, a suffering
You could not face, a stench
Of tears, of dread. Was I nothing
To you, when you passed by?

CHORUS
O vos omnes,
transitis per viam,
attendite, et videte:
Si est dolor similis
sicut dolor meus.

*O, all ye
that pass by
attend and see:
If there be any sorrow
like my sorrow.*

CHORUS
You lack nothing,
Having love:
You are love's living water.

STRANGER
Blessed are the poor in spirit:
for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.

3. Those mourning.

STRANGER

Blessed are they that mourn:
For they shall be comforted.

CHORUS

Tears stain your face,
Your clothes:
You cannot stop them.
Only the One
Wounded by hate
Can help you,
Cradling your agony
In His rejected heart.

STRANGER

Child, come close to me:
Your soul is burnt with tears,

Your heart of stone wears
Year after year, to a cold

Bedrock of anger: child,
No wonder you fled

From a life no longer lived:
You are not pilgrim,

But runaway.

PILGRIM

To those I loved,
I was always unknown:

My anger is my confusion,
My rage a scattered fire of love.

CHORUS

Those who mourn, are blessed
By the tears of the Wounded One.

STRANGER

Blessed are they that mourn:
For they shall be comforted.

4. *The mysteries of Love.*

STRANGER

Child, come close to me.

Look: don't you recognise me?

PILGRIM

How can I know you?

No, you are stranger to me.

STRANGER

You do not know me,

Understand my mysteries?

Truly I am a stranger here.

Pilgrim, what God

Becomes wordless,

Utters the holy

As a cry of need,

Hunger and trust,

What God speaks

As infant to the world?

PILGRIM

The Love I fear,

The Love I defend myself

Against, the Love I cannot

Accept. I am guilty.

STRANGER

What God consents to die?

What Love lay down His life,

Because Love's people die in pain?

What do they want of me?

PILGRIM

A love wandering

In the desert of human hearts,

Saying, welcome me,

For I am your stranger.

STRANGER

Child, look at me again.

Do you know who I am?

Do you know my name?

CHORUS

The quiet holiness
Of those who love
Unseen, every day
Is the heartbeat
Of earth, love's holy city.

Those who cry out
Because love
Cannot be satisfied
Cannot be eased
When human greed
Invades, rules
The heart of the world:

They will know me
When Love is known
And acclaimed.

PART TWO: at the anguish of the heart.

STRANGER

Woe unto you that are rich!
For ye have received your consolation.

Woe unto you that are full!
For ye shall hunger.

Woe unto you that laugh now!
For ye shall mourn and weep!

Woe unto you, when all shall speak well of you!
For so did their ancestors to the false prophets.

CHORUS:

Anguish will tear you to pieces,
You fortress rich,
For you have known comfort,
Have given none:
You refuse to share
The burden of Love.

You who have never known the cry:
“How shall I eat? How?”
Oh, then, when scarred Love
Comes again in tears of hunger

And glory, judging the human heart,
Your souls will ache with the longing
You refused to answer.

Anguish will tear you to pieces,
You whose lives are celebration only,
Empty joy, fun without love,
Your walls and windows
impassable, like your hearts:
You refuse to hear
The howl on the winds
Beating against your hard minds;
Oh then, you will shout in pain,
And whine: "love
Is always the same,
So unjust to me!"

Beware of praise,
Believing the myth
You claim, comforts
People give
To ease the pain
Of your broken ego,

For the ego is nothing,
Worthless: when love comes,
And the sky erupts
With tears, glory, song,

You will have nothing to say,
Nothing to claim:
Like the holy child,
Like the Wounded One
Once nothing to the world,
You will be nothing again.

PILGRIM

You accuse me, Stranger,
But I wandered away
From all I knew
When everything I hoped
I was, shattered,
and I knew then
I was nothing,
Always had been
And I trod
On the story
Of my soul,

My claims,
My life, all filth
Under my feet.
I no longer believed
Myself, all I'd said
I was: I was a lie.
I am condemned
By my own heart
To die, to fall away,
A fading whisper,
Then nothing.

STRANGER

Pilgrim,
Who made you judge
Over yourself? You think
You already know
Love's mercy?
Do you judge
As God is judge?
Do I condemn you?

PILGRIM

I cannot receive
This love. I stand,
But the Word
Throws me to the ground
In the legion of my agony:
I think I hear mercy
From God, but I
Condemn myself.

CHORUS

The light shines
In darkness,
But the darkness
Has not overcome it;
The darkness
Has not understood it.
In our mercy, mercy floods us
As living water.

PART THREE: Renewal

1. The way is not home.

STRANGER

Blessed are the poor in spirit:
for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven...

CHORUS

Loves receives
Those who think
They are nothing:
Rejected here,
They are love's citizens.

STRANGER

Look again
at yourself:
what do I mean?

PILGRIM

That you bless me
For having nothing,
For needing Love
Alone.

STRANGER

Blessed are the merciful:
For they obtain mercy.

CHORUS

You are freed
When you free yourself

From the burden
Of judging us,

When mercy
Embraces mercy.

STRANGER

Pilgrim, receive me as a little child:
What do I mean?

PILGRIM

I have no mercy on myself:
Mercy is impossible in me,

None will receive mercy from me.

STRANGER

Blessed are the pure in heart:
For they shall see God.

CHORUS

Blessed are those who look
And see, not what they need
Or desire, or want,
But a whole human story:
A life's wounds,
An entire humanity.

STRANGER

Pilgrim, look at your desire:
What do you mean?

PILGRIM

My brother, my sister,
You are what I want,
What I deserve to have,
And I shall have: so
I whisper in my heart,
again and again...

CHORUS

And now you are proclaimed
Here, as you are, out loud.

STRANGER

Blessed are the peacemakers:
For they shall be called the children of God.

CHORUS

You who make peace
With yourselves,
With your world:

You are love, ceaseless heartbeat,
The children of Eternal Life,
Eternal firstborn of love,

Those who awake
Anew, veil of self
Torn by mercy

In two, remade
From their birth
To their life's end.

PILGRIM
Who dares make peace
With themselves?
Who makes peace
With a stranger?

STRANGER
I know you,
Though you did not know me.

I loved you,
Though you did not love me.

Do you now
know my name?

PILGRIM
Who will see you,
Who will find you,
Who look up,
Who love a man
Condemned and ignored?

Who will ask the name
Of the stranger lying
Torn in the way; you, Jesus,
Your cry reaches out
Its bleeding, wounded cry,
The lonely, homeless Word:

STRANGER (JESUS) + PILGRIM (*to one another*)
So I will seek you,
So I will find you.

2. The calls & the Amen

CHORUS

Use lines 2–4 as a refrain between subsequent stanzas?

Listeners, brothers, sisters,
how will you answer
love calling, once a stranger,
in the deeps of all you are?

Divine love tears bread:
Break bread with strangers.
To make others well fed,
Is to feel hunger's ache.

How will you accept strangers,
Your own poverty of spirit,
Stay with those who mourn,
Even when you are afraid?

How show mercy to strangers
When you struggle to accept it?
How look upon the body
And see the torn, scarred story?

How become an Amen
To the cry of a stranger?

STRANGER (*to the chorus/Pilgrim*):

My children, you were always my Amen.

STRANGER, PILGRIM, CHORUS

How will you answer love calling?
How become an Amen To a stranger?

Amen