

Digging Deeper: A Nerdy Study Guide for “Living the Upside-Down Way”

(Matthew 5 and Philippians 2 with an expanded look at Michael Gorman’s “cruciformity”)

1 Matthew 5 : 1 – 12 — The Beatitudes in Context

Focus	Notes & Resources
Literary Setting	• Mountain motif → echoes Sinai (Ex 19) & Elijah (1 Kgs 19). • Matt 5–7 forms the <i>first</i> of five teaching blocks that mirror the Pentateuch.
Structure	• Eight (or nine, vv 3-10 plus vv 11-12 as epilogue). • <i>Inclusio</i>: v 3 and v 10 end with “the kingdom of heaven is theirs.”
Key Greek Terms	μακάριοι / makáριοι = “flourishing,” “fortunate under God’s favor” (not mere happiness). πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι / ptōchoi tō pneúmati = “the destitute-in-spirit,” i.e., those who recognize utter need. πραῦς / praÿs = “meek, gentle,” used of a bridled war-horse (strength harnessed). ἐλεήμονες / eleēmones = merciful, debt-forgiving (Ex 34:6 echo). εἰρηνοποιοί / eirēnopoioi = “peace-makers,” a creative, active role (cf. Isa 52:7).
Inter-Textual Echoes	• Isa 61:1-3 (poor, mourners, comfort). • Ps 37 (meek inherit the land). • Dan 7 & Isa 53 subtly shape the persecution motif.
Honor–Shame Reversal	In 1st-century Mediterranean culture <i>honor</i> = social capital. Jesus flips the honor code—granting God’s honor to the socially marginal (ptōchoi, penthountes).
Indicative then Imperative	Beatitudes announce what <i>is</i> true under God’s reign <i>before</i> commanding anything—grace precedes demand.
Theological Trajectory	• Eschatological reversal: present tense (“is”) + future passive (“shall be”) ↔ “already / not-yet.” • Corporately forming a kingdom community, not merely individual virtues.

2 Philippians 2 : 1 – 11 — The “Christ Hymn” & Cruciform Identity

2.1 Literary & Rhetorical Features

Aspect	Details
Context	Appeals for unity (1:27 – 2:4) → Hymn (2:6-11) → Application (2:12-18).
Poetic Form	Many scholars see a two-stanza, six-line structure or a concentric chiasmic pattern: A Pre-existence (v 6) B Descent/kenosis (v 7) C Obedience unto death (v 8) C' Exaltation (v 9) B' Universal confession (v 10) A' Glory to Father (v 11).
Key Greek Lexemes	μορφῇ θεοῦ / morphē theou = “form/nature of God.” ἄρπαγμός / harpagmós = “something to exploit/grasp.” κένωσις / kenōsis (“he emptied himself,” v 7) = voluntary self-limitation, not loss of deity. μορφὴν δούλου / morphēn doulou = slave-form → radical status plunge. ὑπερύψωσεν / hyperypsōsen = “super-exalted,” unique NT compound.
OT Allusions	Isa 52 – 53 (servant humiliation) & Isa 45:23 (every knee bow).

2.2 Michael J. Gorman’s “Cruciformity”

Definition: *Cruciformity* is “Christ-shaped life—faithful, self-giving, others-oriented love that reenacts the narrative of the cross.” (Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 2001)

<u>Gorman’s Dimensions</u>	<u>Explanation</u>
Narrative	Believers participate in the <i>story</i> of Christ’s descent and ascent.
Relational	Vertical (God) & horizontal (others) relationships mirror kenotic love.
Missional	The church’s witness is <i>embodied cross-shaped service</i> (Phil 2:15 – 16).
Transformative	Kenosis → Theosis (participation in divine life). God-likeness is displayed by self-emptying love, not by power-grasping (contrast Gen 3).

Gorman argues that Philippians 2 is not a mere illustration; it is Paul’s “master story” (metanarrative) that undergirds all his ethics (cf. Rom 12, 1 Cor 9, Gal 5). For Paul, to be “in

Christ is to be “con-crucified” (Gal 2:20) and “con-formed” (*symmorphos*) to the pattern of the Son (Rom 8:29).

2.3 Socio-Rhetorical Impact

- **Status Reversal:** In Roman Philippi (a colony of retired soldiers), honor competition was rife. The hymn counters *status climbing* with *status descending*.
- **Political Subversion:** Caesar was styled *dominus et deus* (“lord and god”). Paul dares to apply Isa 45’s monotheistic devotion text to *Jesus*.
- **Corporate Imperative:** v 5 “τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖτε” (have the same mindset *among yourselves*) → cruciformity is communal, not privatized spirituality.

3 Bridging Matthew 5 & Philippians 2

Beatitude	Christ Hymn Parallel	Community Implication
Poor in spirit	“emptied himself” (kenōsis)	Humble reliance, anti-triumphalism
The meek	“taking slave-form”	Power re-defined as service
The merciful	“obedient to death—even a cross”	Costly forgiveness, enemy-love
Persecuted	Exaltation after cross	Hope amid rejection; vindication is God’s work

The Beatitudes sketch the kingdom ethic; Philippians 2 supplies the narrative engine and Christological exemplar that empowers it.

4 Word-Level Exegesis Quick Reference

Greek Word	Root Meaning	Meaning
μακάριος	OT <i>’ashrê</i> (happy/fortunate)	blessed; flourishing
πτωχός	crouching beggar	destitute; powerless
πραῦς	mild, gentle	meek; controlled strength
κενόω	to empty, vacate	self-empty

ἄρπαγμός robbery/loot exploit, grasp

ὑπερύψω exalt beyond super-exalt

5 Questions for Advanced Reflection

1. How does reading the Beatitudes against the backdrop of Roman-Hellenistic honor culture sharpen their counter-cultural edge?
2. In what ways does *kenosis* reveal, rather than conceal, true divinity (cf. Gorman's theme "Kenosis Reveals theosis")?
3. Compare the *already/not-yet* eschatology in Matt 5 ("is / will be") with the *already/not-yet* in Phil 2 (Christ reigns / every knee *will* bow). How does this shape Christian ethics?
4. How might Gorman's cruciformity critique contemporary Christian pursuits of "influence" or "platform"?
5. Examine Isa 45:23 LXX in its OT context. What is Paul claiming when he applies it to Jesus in Phil 2:10-11?

Key Take-Home: The Beatitudes and the Christ Hymn are not parallel tracks but one cruciform path. The King who **descends** (Phil 2) creates a kingdom where the **lowly are lifted** (Matt 5). To pledge allegiance to Jesus is to let that self-giving pattern reshape personal ethics, communal life, and public witness.