



A new school year unlike any other is on the horizon. Social distancing. Hybrid learning models. Zoom classrooms. Temperature checks. Face masks. Hand washing. Protocols for sick students and staff members. Quarantines. Choices that make no one happy. Stress levels are through the roof. Public education has again unfortunately, but perhaps predictably, become politicized. And so today's devotional is a Beatitudes for students, teachers, principals, administrators, school support staff, parents, and anyone else who is impacted by the effects of COVID-19 on the education of our children.

Blessed are the **parents** who are trying to hold it together as they juggle working from home, finding child care, helping their kids with school work, and fighting the confusion of choosing an education plan from the many seemingly untenable options.

Blessed are the **teachers** who will attempt to educate their students in ancient buildings and closet-sized classrooms with no air conditioning, poor ventilation, and outdated equipment.

Blessed are the **custodians** for they have the unenviable task of keeping classrooms, bathrooms, offices, and hallways sanitized.

Blessed are the **teachers** with underlying health concerns or are of a "certain age," who face the choice of returning to an environment that may cause them to become seriously ill, or take early retirement from a job they love.

Blessed are the **cafeteria workers** for they will continue to prepare and serve lunches to students with grumbling bellies.

Blessed are the **school nurses and guidance counselors** for the pandemic has increased concerns for students with mental health issues.

Blessed are the **teachers** who yearn to return to their classrooms but will be required to instruct online.

Blessed are the **principals and superintendents** whose creativity to develop workable, sustainable education strategies will be diminished by people who are never satisfied.

Blessed are those who **find it easy to pass judgment**, thinking that just because bars, restaurants, and stores are open that schools should be open too. Blessed are **the short-sighted** who don't understand the complexities of opening schools, for someday they will be given a clearer vision of reality.

Blessed are the **school bus drivers** for each day they will transport students, some of whom will become belligerent, not stay in their assigned seats, bully a fellow student, refuse to wear a mask, and complain about the temperature in the bus.

Blessed are the **educators** who were once viewed as heroes but are now being vilified on social media for being selfish.

And blessed are the **students** who are tired of staring at computer screens, eager to learn, want to see their friends, to play sports, make music, perform in the school play, go to dances, and have life return to normal, for they are watching their childhoods vanish before their very eyes.

**Let us pray. Good and gracious God, your Son Jesus Christ is the Great Teacher. He taught us to love, to show mercy, to grant grace, to bind up the broken hearted, and to always be open to learning the way of peace. At this time when our schools are opening in different and certainly challenging ways, be present with those who teach and those who learn. Be present with those who are charged with coordinating and administering. Be present with those who are feeding, healing, transporting, and cleaning. Let us be gracious to one another, compassionate and forgiving, supportive and understanding. And let us work together during this challenging time so that your love may shine through us. Amen**

In Christ,

Pastor Chuck