

Sermon - February 13, 2022  
"Blessed are you"

Gospel reading: Luke 6:17-26

[Jesus] came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. And those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. And all the crowd sought to touch him, for power came out from him and healed them all.

And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. "Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied. "Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. "Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.

"But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. "Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry. "Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. "Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.

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In our Gospel lesson for today we have a little different version of the Beatitudes...

This is often referred to as the sermon on the plain, in contrast to the sermon on the mount.

Beatitude means blessedness, from the romantic root word BEATI, which means "blessed" and the suffix "TUDE" which in French and Latin operates the equivalent suffix "-NESS" in English...

As in the words Multitude, Magnitude, Altitude, Attitude...

One hears the words (BE) (ATTITUDE) and maybe it sounds like one should have a blessed attitude, but the word attitude is not related; in this case, the root word is BEATI, Blessed-NESS.

And Jesus lays out for us a list of states or conditions of blessedness: the poor, the hungry, those who weep, and those who are hated for trusting in God. These need a bit more fleshing out, but in Luke... it's just these four. In the Matthew version, Jesus also includes the pure in heart, the meek, the merciful and the peacemakers. But those are not included here.

In this case it's just these four, and even here, there seems to be a difference between "THE simple POOR" and those who are "Poor in Spirit."

Likewise, Jesus invokes four "WOE" clauses that contrast the "blessed" clauses... Woe to the "rich," woe to the full, woe to those who laugh, and woe to the popular. That last one is surprising, as you might expect to contrast, the HATED with the LOVED rather than with those who are spoken well of, or admired. Admiration is a kind of love, I suppose. But as they say, fame is fleeting.

So there you have it... The four Blessed.... And the four cursed? No, "cursed" isn't right. It's more like the four warnings or the four laments. It's funny how these things are not exactly

OPPOSITES... in black and white. Like, you are BLESSED if you do THIS. You are CURSED if you do THAT... No, it's more like shades of gray. As if Jesus is talking to us about the conditions of our hearts and minds rather than telling us what we should DO or NOT DO.

This is dealing with people as they ARE, trying to get his disciples to see themselves and others from a GOD'S EYE point of view. And with this lesson we learn that God sees the world much differently than we see the world.

From our perspective, I think we would say that it is far better to be RICH than to be POOR. Far better to be fat and happy, or at least be full and not hungry and to laugh and be carefree than to mourn and to cry. And ESPECIALLY to be liked and admired than to be hated and ridiculed. Hands down, no contest... it's blessed to be rich and famous, and to eat, drink and be happy! And woe to anyone who isn't. You see, I don't think we look at things like God does at all. I think that is what Jesus is telling his disciples. That in that moment, with everything that was going on, perhaps that was what they needed to hear.

And maybe we need to hear it too.

LOOK at the NEED in this story:

One day Jesus went up a mountainside to pray and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles: Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

Jesus came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. And those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. <sup>19</sup>And all the crowd sought to touch him, for power came out from him and healed them all. And he looked upon his disciples and said....

THESE were the twelve... His apostles, his messengers. They needed to see the world differently.

This wasn't about seeking fame and fortune or eating and drinking and having a good time... Those who are highly favored by God are the POOR, the Hungry and the Broken and the Outcasts.

As Jesus was SENT to THEM... so THEY would be SENT also.

What I find fascinating are the caveats that Jesus tosses in so casually that you might just miss them...

“Blessed are you who are hungry for **NOW**, for you shall be satisfied.

“Blessed are you who weep for **NOW**, for you shall laugh.

“Woe to you who are full for **NOW**, for you shall be hungry.

“Woe to you who laugh for **NOW**, for you shall mourn and weep.

Fortunes change, **NOW**, don't they? You who are hungry **today** may be full tomorrow. You who laugh **today** may find yourselves weeping by the morrow.

I'm reminded of a Facebook post I saw the other day by a young woman, who was trolling an older man on the Hobart page. He had made a casual comment in response to a post about a high school kid who had a pair of \$1000 tennis shoes stolen from his gym locker. He was lamenting about how times had changed and how sad it was that this would happen in his community.

Her response was to tell him that he should just get busy dying because her generation is the future and his is the rotten past. She couldn't wait for the white haired old fogies to die and make the world a better place. As people responded to her she just kept trolling them with sentiments about how she's young and they're old and good riddance...

I know better than to respond to such junk these days, but I just smiled imagining the future... As the sign says, “We get too soon OLD and too late smart.” I thought, “May the Lord bless you in 30 years to meet the same woman that you were...” Maybe that's too harsh. May she learn compassion before that happens.

That is the message here too... that we have compassion.

The poor are blessed by God... HOW? Through us? Yes... It would be good to remember this.

The hungry are blessed by God... HOW? Through us? Yes... it would be good to remember this, too.

Those who are grieving are blessed by God... How? Through us... Yes, as we bring the good news of Jesus and the resurrection from the dead.

Those who are outcasts, but notice... for Christ's sake? How are they blessed by God? That's an interesting one, isn't it? Because it isn't simply to be hated; it's to be hated because you refuse to deny that Jesus is the way and the truth and the life. Jesus answers that one directly... “Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.” In other words, ... you are in good company. And in God's grace.

### **“Mercy, Witness and Life Together”**

There are physical acts of mercy, some of which are indicated in scripture... Feeding the hungry, giving a drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, sheltering the homeless, visiting the sick and the imprisoned, and burying the dead. But there are others, too.

Then there are spiritual acts of mercy. Number one is forgiveness, but also teaching, counseling, admonishing and encouraging, as well as being patient with others, bearing their offenses, comforting the afflicted, and praying for one another.

This, too, means seeing the world differently, from God's point of view. We need not guess at what the viewpoint is. He tells us clearly what it means to be blessed. And God admonishes us to heed what we are making our priorities and from where we are seeking our comforts. Woe to those who are too comfortable in their own priorities. This is simply another way of saying... Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness. And all these things you are looking for and not finding will be added unto you. In Jesus name, amen.