

GOSPEL

Lk 6: 17, 20-26

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

Happy are the poor. Woe to the rich!

Jesus came down with the Twelve and stopped at a piece of level ground where there was a large gathering of his disciples with a great crowd of people from all parts of Judaea and from Jerusalem and from the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon who had come to hear him and to be cured of their diseases.

Then fixing his eyes on his disciples he said:

‘How happy are you who are poor; yours is the kingdom of God.

Happy you who are hungry now: you shall be satisfied.

Happy you who weep now: you shall laugh.

‘Happy are you when people hate you, drive you out, abuse you, denounce your name as criminal, on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice when that day comes and dance for joy, for then your reward will be great in heaven. This was the way their ancestors treated the prophets.

‘But alas for you who are rich: you are having your consolation now.

Alas for you who have your fill now: you shall go hungry.

Alas for you who laugh now: you shall mourn and weep.

‘Alas for you when the world speaks well of you! This was the way their ancestors treated the false prophets.’

■ **The Gospel of the Lord.**

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Reflections on the Gospel

BEING PREPARED TO BE VULNERABLE

Hardly any statements in the Gospels are more challenging than the Beatitudes and Woes with which Jesus begins his sermon. To understand them we have to attend to the context of the sermon and the biblical meaning of beatitude.

The context is that Jesus is instructing his disciples before a great multitude of burdened and afflicted people who have come from far and near to access his healing power. The implication is that the disciples are to be something for this troubled wider group, and Jesus is going to tell them how.

In the biblical tradition ‘Blessed ...’ does not strictly speaking indicate a moral attitude to be adopted. A beatitude declares a person to be in a fortunate or advantageous position. They are ‘in a good place’ because of what will soon come about through the faithfulness of God.

Jesus is not endorsing poverty or hunger. He is insisting that what most people reckon to be advantages and disadvantages are relativised because God is on the side of the poor, rather than the rich and well off, and will move to reverse the situation—as Mary’s *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46-55). What the Beatitudes depict is a preparedness to be vulnerable in view of this sense of God.

This brings us back to the context in which this instruction is given: the afflicted multitude longing for healing. A vulnerable community can become for the afflicted an instrument of healing and life. It is those who approach the wounded with vulnerable love, rather than power, who make the world safe for humanity.

Brendan Byrne, SJ



SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME / C

17 FEBRUARY 2019

FIRST READING

Jer 17: 5-8

A reading from the prophet Jeremiah.

A curse on those who trust in humanity; a blessing on those who trust in the Lord.

The Lord says this:

‘A curse on the man who puts his trust in man,
who relies on things of flesh,
whose heart turns from the Lord.
He is like dry scrub in the wastelands:
if good comes, he has no eyes for it,
he settles in the parched places of the wilderness,
a salt land, uninhabited.

‘A blessing on the man who puts his trust in the Lord,
with the Lord for his hope.
He is like a tree by the waterside
that thrusts its roots to the stream:
when the heat comes it feels no alarm,
its foliage stays green;
it has no worries in a year of drought,
and never ceases to bear fruit.’

■ **The word of the Lord.**

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

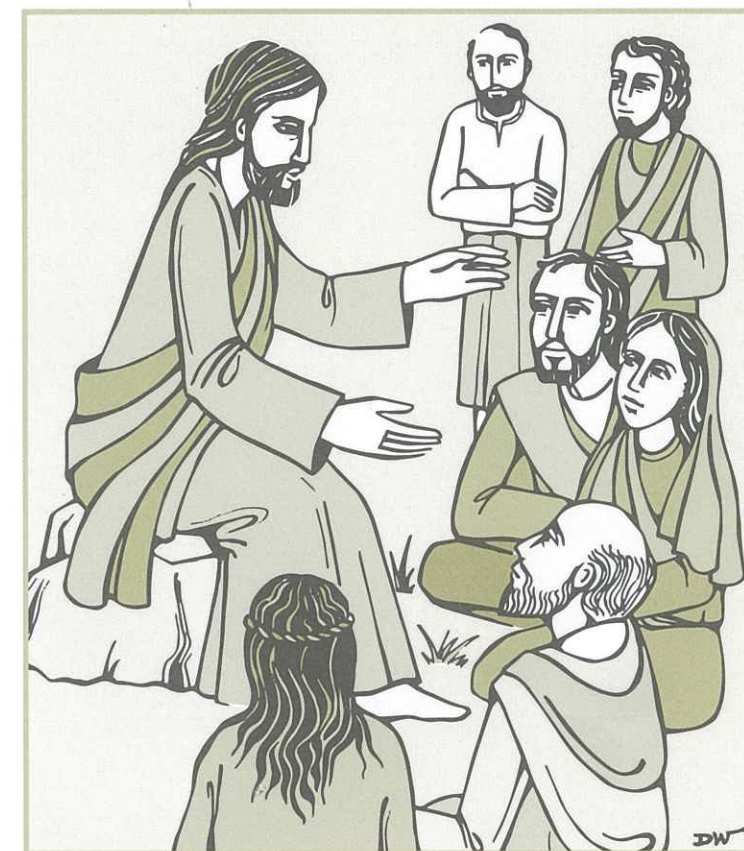
Ps 1: 1-4. R. Ps 39: 5

R. Happy are they who hope in the Lord.

1. Happy indeed is the man / who follows not the counsel of the wicked; / nor lingers in the way of sinners / nor sits in the company of scorners, / but whose delight is the law of the Lord / and who ponders his law day and night. **R.**

2. He is like a tree that is planted / beside the flowing waters, / that yields its fruit in due season / and whose leaves shall never fade; / and all that he does shall prosper. **R.**

3. Not so are the wicked, not so! / For they like winnowed chaff / shall be driven away by the wind. / For the Lord guards the way of the just / but the way of the wicked leads to doom. **R.**



SECOND READING

1 Cor 15: 12, 16-20

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Corinthians.

If Christ is not raised from the dead, your faith is in vain.

If Christ raised from the dead is what has been preached, how can some of you be saying that there is no resurrection of the dead? For if the dead are not raised, Christ has not been raised, and if Christ has not been raised, you are still in your sins. And what is more serious, all who have died in Christ have perished. If our hope in Christ has been for this life only, we are the most unfortunate of all people.

But Christ has in fact been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of all who have fallen asleep.

■ **The word of the Lord.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Lk 6: 23

Alleluia, alleluia!
Rejoice and be glad;
your reward will be great in heaven.
Alleluia!