

Scripture Study

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle C



Opening prayer

Jeremiah 17:5-8

(Psalm 1:1-4,6)

1 Corinthians 15:12,16-20

Luke 6:17,20-26

Overview of the Gospel:

- Since last Sunday's reading (Luke 5:1-11) Jesus has gone about teaching and healing the sick (Luke 5:12—6:11)—actions that have brought him into his first conflicts with the Pharisees. He has also chosen his Apostles (Luke 6:12-16).
- Jesus addresses a large crowd in what is known as the Sermon on the Plain. It is similar to the much longer Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew (chapters 5—7); it contains Matthew's eight beatitudes (or blessings) compressed into four. Modern scholars propose that the Gospel writers are relating different versions of the same speech. However, it is not unreasonable to conclude that Jesus repeated the same teachings several times over the course of his ministry, adapting it to his specific audience, as any good speaker will do.
- Jesus seems to be generally directing his instruction to two groups: the poor and the rich. When Jesus speaks of "the poor" in verse 20, he is not primarily speaking of the materially poor, but of those who place all their confidence in God (Luke 11:28; Psalms 1:1-2). Conversely, when he speaks of "the rich," he is speaking primarily to the *unrighteous* rich, who love and trust in their riches instead of God.
- Along with the blessings pronounced in the Beatitudes, Jesus' Sermon on the Plain also contains four "woes." These woes are cries of impending distress, similar to those voiced by Old Testament prophets (see Isaiah 5:8-22; Amos 6:1-7; Habakkuk 2:6-20) as a warning to those who spurn the blessings of God and his Kingdom.

Questions:

- What four qualities ought to characterize "the Blessed" (verses 20-22)? How would you define each of these? What blessing is promised for each? Are these present blessings or future blessings?
- As in the Gospel Reading, two men are described in both the First Reading and the Psalm. How does each man in those readings compare with the two men described by Jesus?
- Who is Jesus addressing in verse 24-26? How would you define each warning he gives here?
- How do the values Jesus talks about in this reading compare with the values you are sold every day on TV? What values do you and your family accept? Reject?
- If you could add another "blessed" or another "woe" to counteract modern values, what would you want to add?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 2444, 2546-47, 520

Closing prayer

A soul who is really resigned to God's will does not become attached to any created thing because he sees clearly that all things are nothing except God. –Blessed Henry Susone

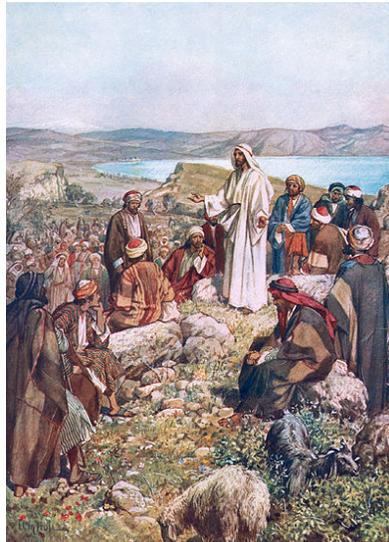
Remember this week to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings!

"Do good to those who hate you, pray for those who abuse you"

Scripture: *Luke 6:17,20-26*

And he 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 he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said: "Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you that hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh. Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you and revile you, and cast out 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 that are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe to you that are full now, for you shall hunger. Woe to you that laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. Woe to you, when all men speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.

Meditation: Can a happy, joy-filled life really be attainable here and now? Jesus addressed this issue with a vast crowd of people, both Jews who came down from Jerusalem and non-



Jesus teaching crowds on a high plain by William Hole

Jewish God-fearers who traveled as far away as Tyre and Sidon (some fifty miles on foot) to hear him preach at the Sea of Galilee. Jesus showed his listeners how sorrow could be turned to happiness for those who truly wanted to live as free citizens of God's kingdom. Jesus' "beatitudes" both amazed and challenged his listeners to discover the true source of happiness and joy. The word beatitude literally means *happiness* or *blessedness*. Jesus' way of happiness, however, demands a transformation from within -- a conversion of heart and mind which can only come about through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

How can one possibly find happiness in poverty, hunger, mourning, and persecution? If we want to be filled with the joy

and happiness of heaven, then we must empty ourselves of all that would shut God out of our hearts. Poverty of spirit finds ample room and joy in possessing God alone as the greatest treasure possible. Hunger of the spirit seeks nourishment and strength in God's word and Spirit. Sorrow and mourning over wasted life and sin leads to joyful freedom from the burden of guilt and oppression. God reveals to the humble of heart the true source of abundant life and happiness. Jesus promises his disciples that the joys of heaven will more than compensate for the troubles and hardships they can expect in this world. Thomas Aquinas said: *No person can live without joy. That is why someone deprived of spiritual joy goes after carnal pleasures.* Do you know the joy and happiness of hungering and thirsting for God alone and his kingdom of peace and righteousness?

"Lord Jesus, increase my hunger for you and show me the way that leads to everlasting happiness and peace. May I desire you above all else and find perfect joy in doing your will."

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