

Sunday: February 17, 2019
6th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Luke 6:17, 20-26

Jesus came down with the twelve and stood on a stretch of level ground with a great crowd of his disciples and a large number of the people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon.

And raising his eyes toward his disciples he said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for the kingdom of God is yours. Blessed are you who are now hungry, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who are now weeping, for you will laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude and insult you, and denounce your name as evil on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice and leap for joy on that day! Behold, your reward will be great in heaven. For their ancestors treated the prophets in the same way.

But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe to you who are filled now, for you will be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will grieve and weep. Woe to you when all speak well of you, for their ancestors treated the false prophets in this way.

Background:

Last Sunday's Gospel ended with Jesus telling Simon Peter, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." Then Luke states that Simon Peter, James, and John left their boats and all their possessions and followed Jesus. (Luke 5:10-11) Following this, Luke recounts Jesus healing a leper and then a paralytic. Jesus' first response to the paralytic was to forgive his sins, but the scribes and Pharisees objected because they believed that only God could forgive sins. To show them that he did have the power to forgive sins, he then cured the paralytic. Luke then recounts Jesus' invitation to the tax collector Levi to become his follower. Again, the Pharisees objected. This time it was because Jesus was eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners. Further questions led to Jesus teaching why it was inappropriate for his disciples to fast, and explaining their non-observance of the traditional dietary laws. Luke tells of Jesus going into the synagogue on a Sabbath where he encountered a man with a withered hand. Even though it was the Sabbath, Jesus cured him. The Pharisees began to discuss what they should do about Jesus. For his part, Jesus went to the mountains to spend the night in prayer. When morning arrived, he named the twelve who would become apostles. With the newly named apostles, Jesus joined a large crowd of disciples and a great crowd of others who came to hear him teach and to be cured. This is the beginning of the gospel text for this Sunday. In the verses that are omitted from the text for this Sunday, Luke describes Jesus curing those who had gathered:

They came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and even those who were tormented by unclean spirits were cured. Everyone in the crowd sought to touch him because power came forth from him and healed them all. (Luke 6:18-19)

This text has been referred to as the "sermon on the plain," and it is sometimes compared to Matthew's "sermon on the mount." (Matt 5: 1-7, 27). Matthew's text contains nine statements of blessing but no statements of woe. Matthew also puts a spiritual slant on some of his statements. For example, Matt 5:3 and 5:6 state: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied."

Luke portrays Jesus as addressing the harsh reality of the poor of his day. But we should not read Luke from the perspective of our own worldview, because Luke's community understood the world differently. To them, everything was limited: livestock and food, as well as friendship, love, and honor. Those limits were set in place by God. Because there was a limited amount of all things in the world, those who had abundance had a responsibility to share with those who were in want. This would not only have been true for material possessions, but for the intangibles like honor as well. The most important commodity in their society was relationship. A widow who may have had a great deal of property but no husband or adult son to represent her in society was still considered to be poor and without status.

Reflection Questions:

1. As you hear Luke describe those who have come to hear Jesus this day, you...
2. How do you experience the importance these people place on relationship?

3. What comes to your mind when you think of the poor, the hungry, those who are in mourning, and those who are hated?
4. When Jesus describes them as blessed...
5. When Jesus says woe to you who are rich... woe to you who are filled now... woe to you who laugh now... woe to you when they speak well of you...
6. Can you take some time now to talk with God honestly about whatever arose within you as you read this gospel text?

The gospel background and reflection questions are written by Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM. They are edited by Sister Anne Marie Lom, OSF and Joe Thiel. The excerpts from the Sunday readings are prepared by Joe Thiel. To be added to the distribution list, send your name and email address to annemarie.lom@gmail.com

Our Gospel Reflections are hosted by the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity. The homepage is <https://fsc-calledtobe.org/>. The third link there is labeled Franciscan Gospel Reflections. A click on the icon will take you to the Gospel reflections for the upcoming Sunday. By following this link, you will be able to blog or comment on the reflection questions. The material will be posted on Fridays and will be available until the following Friday when the new material is posted.

Excerpts from the Lectionary for Mass for Use in the Dioceses of the United States of America, second typical edition © 2001, 1998, 1997, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Inc., Washington, DC. Used with permission. All rights reserved. No portion of this text may be reproduced by any means without permission in writing from the copyright owner.

Please include this information when printing or forwarding.

Excerpts from the readings for February 17, 2019, the Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Thus says the Lord: Cursed is the one who trusts in human beings, who seeks his strength in flesh, whose heart turns away from the Lord. He is like a barren bush in the desert that enjoys no change of season, but stands in a lava waste, a salt and empty earth.

Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose hope is the Lord.

He is like a tree planted beside the waters that stretches out its roots to the stream:

it fears not the heat when it comes; its leaves stay green;

in the year of drought it shows no distress, but still bears fruit.

Blessed are they who hope in the Lord.

Blessed the man who follows not the counsel of the wicked, nor walks in the way of sinners, nor sits in the company of the insolent, but delights in the law of the Lord and meditates on his law day and night.

He is like a tree planted near running water, that yields its fruit in due season, and whose leaves never fade. Whatever he does, prospers.

Not so the wicked, not so; they are like chaff which the wind drives away.

For the Lord watches over the way of the just, but the way of the wicked vanishes.

Brothers and sisters: If Christ is preached as raised from the dead, how can some among you say there is no resurrection of the dead? If the dead are not raised, neither has Christ been raised, and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is vain; you are still in your sins.

Then those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.

If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are the most pitiable people of all.

But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.

Jesus came down with the twelve and stood on a stretch of level ground with a great crowd of his disciples and a large number of the people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon. And raising his eyes toward his disciples he said:

“Blessed are you who are poor, for the kingdom of God is yours.

Blessed are you who are now hungry, for you will be satisfied.

Blessed are you who are now weeping, for you will laugh.
Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude and insult you,
and denounce your name as evil on account of the Son of Man.
Rejoice and leap for joy on that day! Behold, your reward will be great in heaven.
For their ancestors treated the prophets in the same way.
But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.
Woe to you who are filled now, for you will be hungry.
Woe to you who laugh now, for you will grieve and weep.
Woe to you when all speak well of you, for their ancestors treated the false prophets in this way.”

Excerpts from Jeremiah 17:5-8; Psalm PS 1:1- 6; 1 Corinthians 15:12, 16-20; and Luke 6:17, 20-26