

Sunday, February 17, 2019
Sixth Sunday after Epiphany / Lectionary 6

Blessed be - Woe to Thee

Jeremiah 17:5-10; Psalm ;1 Corinthians 15:12-20; Luke 6:17-26

*Delivered to St. Stephen's Lutheran Church
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*May the words of my mouth and the meditation of all our hearts be acceptable
in your sight o God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.*

Amen

*Grace and peace to you from God who was, and God who is, and God who
will be forever.*

Amen.

I am going to come down here with you all - down from my mountain top to a...how does the Gospel put it...level place.

When Matthew recalled Jesus' sermon it was on a mount...but when Luke tells the story of that day he remembers Jesus standing on a level place...a place not above others...but a more intimate place amongst others.

Can you imagine??

Can you imagine that Jesus chose to not just stand with, but to stand among the people that were in desperate need of his message...

He stood amongst and within the crowd...and the radiance of God was so strong...so filled with a passion that the very presence of Jesus was enough to heal the multitude of people around him...

They were...they were reaching towards him...not even able to touch him...and they were healed!

That is the power of God among us...**that is the power we have to be Christ to others...to be the light of Jesus in a world that is drowning in darkness.**

I don't know if you hear...but there is a state of emergency...there is a state of emergency...and I am not talking about the one that was announced in the Rose Garden the other day...

I'm talking about a real emergency of faith...of compassion...of justice...

I'm talking about a real emergency...a true crisis of the soul of not a nation...but a soul of a generation of people living and breathing and suffering in this world.....now...in the here and now...an emergency that is going unaddressed by the developed countries of this planet and ignored by the purchasing of power with the cost of human lives and the very life of this world entrusted to us millenia ago when God so painstakingly called this place into existence and trusted us with its wellbeing.

It seems that somehow we have been lied to...we have been told that to not have...to be poor is a bad thing...to be rich beyond belief is a good thing...and while there is an economic equilibrium...a basis of comfort to money...we cannot purchase our way into God's grace or heaven...we cannot even purchase happiness if our souls are seeking something more.

Our culture and the culture of the world goes about in such a way that values the economics of finance...where the almighty dollar...or pound...or Euro...or Benjamins...dictate just what you can have and what you may not have.

There are those of us...many in this room...that feel broken, exhausted, rundown and weak because we so desperately want to see the world exist in another way. Our spirits may seem poor...our bank accounts might concur...our faith might be challenged by the daunting reality of our present...but you know what??

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

Woe to you if you keep trying to purchase your way into happiness and faith - for you have only your earthly goods...but what about your spirit? If you believe you have it all...then that is all you have.

“Blessed are you who are hungry now,
for you will be filled.”

This is a ravenous hunger...one that bread alone cannot fix...for if bread alone feeds you then what about the meal of Christ himself...what about Communion - the only meal that can truly fulfill your hunger.

When your hunger is for justice and mercy - when you are fed at this table you will be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.

“Blessed are you who weep now,
for you will laugh.”

I hate to break it to you...but there is suffering in this world and we are called to face it...and sometimes to endure it. But if we turn from it...if we ignore it and act like it does not exist...trust me...you will see it.

{Count yourself blessed every time someone cuts you down or throws you out, every time someone smears or curses your name to discredit Jesus. perhaps it could be because the truth of the Gospel is too much to bear or just makes them uncomfortable...}

{There's trouble ahead when you live only for the approval of others, saying what flatters them, doing what indulges them. Popularity contests are not truth contests}

Jesus was preaching to a world that was in crisis...when the emergency was the very soul of the people...and he preaches to us now...because our souls are on trial here...we are being tested by all the evil the world can throw our way...and we are faced with a conundrum of what we should do...

The psalmist today reminds us that the Lord knows the way of the righteous...that the Lord teaches us how to be righteous and how to be just...

But oddly enough it is the words of Jeremiah that remind us all is possible...that we can rest in the blessings of the Lord as we embark on this holy journey to bring this dream into a reality...

Trust...trust...trust...

Blessed are those who trust in the Lord,
whose trust is the Lord.

If you but trust in the Lord - you be blessed - and if you are blessed you will be fed the food of the Spirit and will never be hungry again.