

LUKE 6, 17-26. 17 FEB 2019 EYNSFORD

The setting for our Gospel reading this morning took place on a mountain plateau not far from the city of Capernaum. This maybe Luke's account of the sermon that Matthew records in Matthew 5-7 (known as the sermon on the mount), or it may be that Jesus gave similar sermons on different occasions. The part of the reading I want to look at today is called the (beatitudes) taken from the word "beati" meaning blessing.

What are the beatitudes, for those who have done the Pilgrim course, we did 6 sessions on the beatitudes and the course book introduced them by saying "The Beatitudes are a short but profoundly beautiful and influential collection of sayings by Jesus. They sum up his teaching about what it means to live as a child in God's kingdom"

Verse 20 in our reading, says, Then Jesus Turned to his disciples and said,

God blesses you who are poor, for the Kingdom of God is yours.

God blesses you who are hungry now, for you will be satisfied.

God blesses you who weep now, for in due time you will laugh.

Well that's really good news isn't it, and from that, they all lived happily ever after. We all like stories with a happy ending. We read them to our children and our grandchildren. But, as grown-ups, we know that such stories are not true. Living happily ever after only happens in the realms of make believe.

Or does it? In what is one of Jesus' best known teachings, "The Beatitudes" He presents the qualities that make for a happy and blessed life, we are going to look at the 3 beatitudes in our reading today.

In this reading Jesus is showing us how to be supremely happy or supremely miserable. Perhaps you like to be really miserable with all the woes of the world on your shoulders, but it's not what God wants. I've said many times before that being a Christian doesn't take away the problems of life, but knowing God is a means of working through them in his presence.

In this reading Jesus draws a distinct line between His followers and others, and pronounces blessings on the former and woes on the latter.

"Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of heaven"

The poor encompass not only the economically poor but the spiritually poor. They include the disadvantaged, the powerless,

the marginalized. When the world is against everything you do, you are poor. When you strive for faith but fail, you are spiritually poor. This does not mean that all folk who are wealthy cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. There are wealthy people who live lives of Faith, and poor people who DO NOT live lives of faith. Here, I believe, Luke is pointing out the Truth, the Truth is that the Kingdom of God is the reversal of this world. Where you suffer, you shall have relief! What you think is prosperity in this world, is not prosperity in the Kingdom of God! There are far more poor people in this world than "rich". This Beatitudes is a message of Hope to the majority of people in this world.

"Blessed are the hungry now, for they will be satisfied."

The worst thing that can happen to a Christian is for he or she to lose their spiritual hunger. The word Jesus uses is hunger: This describes an absolute craving that cannot be satisfied by a snack. This is a longing that endures that will never be completely satisfied on this side of eternity. Matthew uses the phrase "Hunger and thirst" for righteousness, which are driving forces of the human makeup. We see folk hungering for many things: power, authority, success, comfort, happiness - but how many hunger and thirst for righteousness? To be saved, satisfied and totally absorbed into God's family. One of the best indicators of a healthy physical body is a healthy appetite and this is also true in the spiritual realm.

Question: How many hours do you spend each week in bible study? In prayer? In one on one witnessing? In feeding your mind on things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely and of good report? The good news is at the end of this verse, which states: "...for you will be satisfied..."

If you are not as hungry for the things of God as you once were, or want to be, go to him in prayer and ask him to restore your spiritual appetite, for he is more than willing, he has promised he would. If you feel that way this morning, please go into the side chapel during communion and ask for prayer. Or ask for an anointing for hunger to seek more of God in your life.

"God blesses you who weep now, for in due time you will laugh".

There is one characteristic of the spirit filled Christian life that will always remain constant until we all get to heaven, it's this: Christians hurt! "Blessed are they that mourn..." Mourning, weeping, crying and hurting is as much of the

Christian life as joy, peace, love and mercy. We weep over a fallen world. We weep over lost souls. We weep over our own sinfulness. We weep for our Lords return. We weep for our deceased loved ones. We weep for the injustices that we witness. We weep for the destruction of creation. However, the end of this verse reads: "...for in due time you will laugh." In Matthew's gospel it says, "...for they shall be comforted."

In the Letter of James chapter 1 verse 2, one of my favourite verses, reads:-

² My brothers and sisters,^[b] whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance; ⁴ and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing.

I made a statement at the beginning, "And they all lived happily ever after", can we?

To live happily ever after, you must see that there are two (and only two) ways to live and to live happily you must commit yourself to live under Christ's lordship.

Jesus draws a clear line between two groups of people, those who believe and those who do not, so that you must identify yourself with one group or the other. You can't sit on the fence. On the one hand are those who are poor, who hunger now, who weep now, but identify with Jesus. These folks are blessed because of both present, but mainly future, rewards

Jesus says God promises to Bless the poor, the hungry, and those who weep.

God doesn't make promises He doesn't Keep. God doesn't leave us hanging, to do anything or go anywhere on our own. God is always there but never forces himself on us. He is always ready to step in and take you by the hand; leading you to safety and to the blessings he wants to give you, but he will never drag you down the path that is His will for your life.

The choice is yours. Will you let Him lead? Will you trust God to take you where He knows you need to be, or will He just be in your mind and not your heart.

Let us pray.

Heavenly Father, Take away my stubbornness and doubt and let me put my full trust in you. Amen

