

Thy Kingdom Come  
 Luke's Beatitudes  
 Luke 6: 17-26  
 February 13, 2022  
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*I propose to show that both blessings and woes offer us a path to God's Kingdom, so that those hearing this sermon will use both to sustain and motivate us to not settle for the world as it is. The Kingdom of God is so much more.*

May the God who creates us...

Good Morning!

Jesus is Baptized in the Jordan, then into the wilderness for 40 days, then preaches his first sermon at his home synagogue in Galilee. That doesn't go so well, the congregants almost throw him off a cliff, but then to Simon's house where he heals Simon's mother. News goes out of her rapid recovery and everyone who is sick nearby comes to him that night for respite and relief. He heals them all. Then he escapes off into the country to pray, returns and climbs into boats to escape the crowds. Tells the fisherpeople, go on out into deep water and let down your nets. They do and their boats are swamped with their catch. Back on land he heals more people, word is truly getting around, does some jousting with the local religious authorities. Another trip to get away from the throngs, up a mountain, up a Holy Mountain. He spends all night in prayer, and when he comes back down he calls the ones, the disciples who have been following him, and from them he picks 12 to be his apostles, his chosen ones.

Then today we hear what the author of Luke records as his first words to his designated leaders. He comes down from the mountain, onto the flat land below. He spends hours and hours healing great masses of people who have come from more than 50 miles away. People traveling, longing to see him, be touched by him, to feel his presence and his power in their lives. Amidst these yearning, churning needs of humanity, he lifts his eyes, looks at and speaks directly to the twelve he has just picked, singling them out as he speaks of the advent of a new reality:

*"Blessed are you who are poor  
 For yours is the kingdom of God.  
 Blessed are you who are hungry now,  
 For you will be filled.  
 Blessed are you who weep now,  
 For you will laugh.*

Jesus of Nazareth, a thirty-year-old, son of a local carpenter, says these words after healing hundreds of people, a poor young man from Galilee, who as the people see, may indeed be something more, he says these words, to all who have come to see.

Can you imagine yourself there?  
 Can you feel the energy in the crowd?  
 The unquenched longing lingering in the air...

What do these words mean?

What do they mean to you? To me?  
 Are you poor?  
 Are you hungry?  
 Are you holding back tears?

*Blessed are you who are poor...*

There are lots of ways of being poor. Lots of real ways of being poor.

I think of all the people who are in the midst of this COVID reality and really examining their lives. And not liking what they are seeing. I believe, the great resignation we are seeing in our workplaces is a direct reflection of the poverty people experience in their jobs. A scarcity of appreciation, an absence of recognition, and a never-ending waterfall of needs and as a result now teachers, physicians, nurses and other trained medical personnel, law enforcement officers, EMS technicians, and even clergy are laying down their calls.

The scarcity and poverty of appreciation combined with the grinding responsibilities is just too much.

And then there are those of us who have realized that ground beef is now \$6 a pound, our rents seem to be on an escalator and gas and electricity prices aren't far behind. We know about being poor.

*Blessed are you who are hungry?*

Some of us yearn for food for our bodies and some of us need it for our souls. It has been a long, long, long two years and we are bone weary and starving for hope. We are hungry in our stomachs and our souls.

*Blessed are you who cry?*

Really. I'm tired of crying. Preventable deaths from this virus, from unsecured, misused guns. From the wear and tear of not really being able to be with each other. Tears of frustration as yet another hoped for plan takes a dive.

I can now, once I actually allow myself to feel: poverty, hunger, grief. It's all real.

He said to them, this day, now it is being fulfilled:

*Blessed are you who are poor,  
For yours is the Kingdom of God.  
Blessed are you who hunger now,  
For you will be filled  
Blessed are you who weep,  
For you will laugh.*

Friends can you stand on the plain with the crowd, next to me, and hear this man say these words and believe?

Sometimes I think I've heard some pieces of scripture too much for them to make an impact. This maybe of those pieces. But then a colleague of mine encouraged me to look at Scriptural theologian Eugene Peterson's rendition of these words in his paraphrase of the bible.

Listen with me, to what Eugene Peterson has written

*You're blessed when you've lost it all.  
God's Kingdom is there for the finding.*

*You're blessed when you're ravenously hungry.  
Then you're ready for the Messianic meal.*

*You're blessed when tears flow freely.  
Joy comes with the morning.*

*The Message p 1877*

On that day, Jesus also offered more than blessings. He was also very clear that those of us who are rich, fed and laughing, will find these gifts to be transitory.

Jesus said,

*Woe to you who are rich,  
For you have received your consolation,  
Woe to you who are full now,  
For you will be hungry.  
Woe to you who are laughing now,  
For you will mourn and weep.*

Luke 6:24-25

Or as Theologian Peterson says,

*[But] it's trouble ahead if you think you have it made.  
What you have is all you'll ever get.*

*And its trouble ahead if you are satisfied with yourself.  
Your self will not satisfy you for long.*

*And it's trouble ahead if you think life's all fun and games.  
There's suffering to be met and you're going to meet it.  
-the Message, p 1877*

There's trouble ahead friends if we think the kingdom of God comes easy.  
There's trouble ahead friends if we think we should be satisfied with our world as it is.  
There's trouble ahead friends, if we think suffering is just for other people.

On that day, at the foot of that holy mountain, after healing countless people in pain, Jesus said to those who would be his followers, to those he'd picked to be leaders, Jesus said, to all who stood before him, the kingdom of God, the hope of God and the longing of the people comes when we know our poverty, when we work to end the poverty of others, the kingdom of God comes, and when we say, that we who have been called will not rest until all of us are fed, body and soul, the kingdom of God comes when we who cry and all of us who laugh, dance together with Joy, in the morning.

The kingdom comes when our blessings and our woes, when your blessings and your woes, my blessings and my woes, when all of them, all of us, are woven together and made whole.

The Kingdom comes, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Amen.