

Connecting with the Sunday Readings

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Gospel Word
Luke 6:17, 20-26

We have heard this Gospel about the Beatitudes in another form. The Beatitudes outline the blessings that Jesus offers those who follow him. While Matthew has Jesus offering them on the mountain, Luke has Jesus proclaiming them on level ground. We can conclude that they are for any situation, anywhere.

The core message is basically the same in both accounts: In God's Kingdom, our lives will be different. The Kingdom is for those in need, the poor and the hungry, and will not easily be grasped by those who already believe that they have everything.

Living the Word

In forming the Beatitudes, Jesus uses the time-honored language of paradox to emphasize his powerful message. Often the New Testament will present ideas that appear as difficult to understand, for instance, "the last shall be first," or, "in dying, we will live." With the Beatitudes, Jesus confronts the complex world of sin and all its empty finite promises with simplicity. In our world, a great deal of attention is placed on celebrities and their lavish lifestyles or on the blessings that come to the rich. Regardless of all the stories of sadness and difficulties that occur among so many of them, we still feel that it would be nice to have what they have. Even in the times of Jesus the well-to-do were envied.

Yet Jesus teaches us that real happiness can come to the poor, the hungry, and those who are ridiculed or insulted because of their connection with Jesus and his ways. It's not enough to hear this just once. We need reminders because the opposite message comes to us daily through advertising and the media.

In line with the spirit of the Beatitudes, as a result of recent economic difficulties, people have been engaged in a kind of examination of conscience about their buying habits. We are seeing more attention being given to what's called the simple life: doing more with less. While this can have a certain self-serving tone to it, it can also be a way of focusing more on what's really important in life, which is doing the will of God in love. Adapting simplicity of life as a Gospel value can help us slow down and enjoy life as it comes. The Beatitudes are not rooted in promises or predictions about the future. They focus on the now. To survive well, one must be mindful and live in the day, and sometimes the minute—right in front of you.

One-line Prayer

Dear God, open us to depend on you and give thanks for the many gifts we have received but often fail to notice.
Amen.