

## 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time + 16 Feb 2025 + Jer 17:5-8 + I Cor 15:12-20 + Lk 6:17-26

We live in a time of instant communication. There are some blessings from this situation, such as being able to reach out for help instantly in an emergency. But there is also a dark side of instant communication, and that is that words are so frequent, they run the risk of losing their meaning. So much so that most people think that “talk is cheap,” so are more likely to believe someone’s actions as opposed to his words.

Now if we apply this situation to Christ, we find an interesting result. And that is, while the Gospels recount many good deeds and even miracles performed by the Lord, it also records His words. And His words are anything but cheap. The Lord’s words and His actions are perfectly in sync; there is no duplicity in Him, as we see in today’s Gospel, which is one of the most well-known Gospel passages—the so-called “Beatitudes”. In fact, the Beatitudes are so familiar to most of us, that you might have found yourself zoning out a little as they were read. Or maybe you found yourself thinking, *‘those sound nice, but are just not realistic’*. So what can we learn anew about Jesus from the Beatitudes?

Well, for starters, one of my favorite theological books is entitled “Jesus of Nazareth”, by the late Pope Benedict XVI. In this book, Pope Benedict explains that the Beatitudes present to us a *sort of veiled interior biography of Jesus* (74). In other words, if we really want to know what the Beatitudes mean for us, we should look to Christ’s own life, because He more than anyone else shows us what they look like lived out in real life. Jesus’ own words and deeds show us what it means to be truly “blessed.” A few examples:

Jesus is the one who is *poor*. He has no home, no wife or children. Even more, he has “left the house of His Father,” so to speak, so as to become one of us. He’s not really at home in this world, and neither are we. More on that in a moment. As Jesus says, *‘Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head’* (Mt 8:20).

Jesus is the one who *hungers*. In John’s Gospel, Jesus tells His disciples: *I have food to eat of which you do not know...My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work* (Jn 4:32, 34). Later on, He will instruct His disciples to seek this same food, telling them, *Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life* (Jn 6:27). In a country in which so much food is wasted, and over-eating is a constant temptation, we would be much happier to seek the “spiritual food” of doing God’s will.

Jesus is also the one who *weeps*. In John’s Gospel, we hear that Jesus wept at the news of the death of his friend Lazarus. But remember, Jesus knows He has power over death. I imagine He already planned to bring Lazarus back to life. So why did He weep? Well, in the text, we hear that when Jesus saw Lazarus’ sister Mary weeping at the death of her brother, He was *deeply moved in spirit and troubled*. In Greek, the word used here literally means *to snort like an angry horse*. And so Jesus weeps here most likely because He is *angered* over

the horrible effects of sin in this world, especially death. He is angered because this is not how it was supposed to be. And so His righteous anger leads Him to action; that is, to die *for us*, to break the bonds of sin and death that lock us in the prison of pain and sorrow.

Finally, Jesus is the one who is *hated, excluded, insulted, and His name is denounced as evil*. While we can probably think of many examples of this sad reality from the life of Jesus, during his Passion we see just how hated He was. He was falsely accused of crimes He never committed. He was flogged and beaten. He was jeered and insulted. His closest friends deserted Him. He was put to death, although He never committed any crime.

And so Jesus is teaching us through the Beatitudes that if anyone wants to be “*Blessed*”, that is, to be truly, *lastingly*, fully happy, then they need to become like Him, by living like Him. But if we are honest, we may be thinking that Jesus’ life of the Beatitudes seems more like the way to become miserable rather than happy! After all, who really wants to be poor, hungry, in mourning, or to be excluded or insulted?! How are we to make sense out of these difficult teachings? How can Jesus honestly say that this is the life of the ‘blessed?’

Well, here is the difficult truth: Jesus never promises that by following Him and His way of living, you’ll be perfectly happy *in this world*. Notice how many times Jesus says ‘*will be*’ in our Gospel today: He is making a promise that is not fully to be experienced in this life, but rather a *great reward in heaven*. Because no one, not even the richest, most famous, most powerful person *on this earth* is truly happy. We can never be completely happy in this world of sin, in exile from our true homeland. We will never be perfectly at peace here, because we were made for more. We were made for eternal communion with the Father.

And that also helps us to understand the Lord’s “woes” in our Gospel today. ‘Woe’ is the opposite of blessing. And the rich, the full, the jolly, and the well-spoken of, are “woeful,” because their happiness is only momentary; it hangs only by a thread. How many people throughout history have been on the top of the world in one moment, only to lose everything in the next? By staking their happiness in this life, these folks are the most *pitiable of all people*, as St. Paul says in our 2<sup>nd</sup> reading today. Worldly fortune can cease in an instant, which is why so many people today are so full of anxiety and never satisfied.

Finally, we might ask: so is there no happiness to be found in this life? Well yes there is! The reason why we are blessed *even now* by living the Beatitudes is because it is in *living like Jesus* that we come to *know* Him. And the more we know Him, the more we come to know His heavenly Father, Who, by Baptism, is now also *Our Father*. We hear Jesus say a little later in Luke’s Gospel that *the kingdom of God is among you*. Meaning, the closest we get to the *blessed* life of heaven in this life is by simply knowing Jesus, the Son of God. The Kingdom of God, or heaven, is already present even now, wherever Jesus reigns as Lord in the hearts of His children.