

A reading from the book of the prophet Jeremiah.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

Thus says the Lord:

“Cursed is the one who trusts in mere mortals
and makes mere flesh their strength,
whose hearts turn away from the Lord.

That person shall be like a shrub in the desert,
and shall not see when relief comes,
but shall live in the parched places of the wilderness,
in an uninhabited salt land.

Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord,
whose trust is the Lord.

That person shall be like a tree planted by water,
sending out its roots by the stream.

It shall not fear when heat comes,
and its leaves shall stay green;
in the year of drought it is not anxious,
and it does not cease to bear fruit.”



PAUSE for **THREE** seconds
then look up at the people
and say SLOWLY:

The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

A reading from the first letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

If Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead,
how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead?
For if the dead are not raised,
then Christ has not been raised.
If Christ has not been raised,
your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.
Then those also who have died in Christ have perished.
If for this life only we have hoped in Christ,
we are of all people most to be pitied.
But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead,
the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.



PAUSE for **THREE** seconds
then look up at the people
and say SLOWLY:

The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL READING – C 06

The Lord be with you.

And with your spirit.

A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus came down with the twelve and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon.

Then Jesus looked up at his disciples and said:

“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.

Blessed are you when people hate you,
and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you
on account of the Son of Man.

Rejoice in that day and leap for joy,
for surely your reward is great in heaven;
for that is what their ancestors did to the Prophets.

But 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.

Woe to you when all speak well of you,
for that is what their ancestors did to the false Prophets.”



The GOSPEL of the LORD.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

SCRIPTURE IN DEPTH

Reading I: Jeremiah 17:5-8

This poem of two stanzas consists of a woe pronounced upon those who trust in human beings and a beatitude upon those who trust in Yhwh. The woe and the beatitude are accompanied by two corresponding comparisons (a shrub in the desert and a tree by the waterside).

The poem differs from the usual prophecies of Jeremiah because of its wisdom character and its corresponding lack of direct connection with Israel's salvation history.

Whether Jeremiah wrote it or not is disputed by Old Testament scholars precisely because of its unique character in this respect, but there seems to be nothing in it that is contrary to Jeremiah's teaching elsewhere.

Some scholars have tried to give the poem a concrete situation in Jeremiah's ministry but without success.

The choice of this reading for today seems to have been governed by considerations of form rather than of content, for the Gospel reading consists of our Lord's beatitudes and woes from the Great Sermon (note, though, that they occur in reverse order).

The people designated for blessing and woe, however, are not exactly the same as those in the reading from Jeremiah (but see below).

Responsorial Psalm: 1:1-2, 3, 4 and 6

This psalm is an obvious choice to go with the poem from Jeremiah because it uses precisely the same comparison as the second stanza of the poem: the person who hopes in the Lord is like a tree planted by streams of water.

In the third stanza of the psalm, however, the wicked are compared to chaff, not to a shrub in the desert, as in the poem.

But there is a far more significant difference between the psalm and the poem from Jeremiah.

The psalm (first stanza) emphasizes the Torah (law) as the ground of human trust in Yhwh, while the poem says nothing at all about this. This shows that the psalm was written from a later, postexilic perspective than the wisdom poem.

Reading II: 1 Corinthians 15:12, 16-20

Having stated the kerygma, Paul first turns upon the Corinthians and reproaches them for their inconsistency. If they accepted the proclamation, or kerygma, of Christ's resurrection, how then can they deny the resurrection of the dead?

What the Corinthians meant by denying the resurrection of the dead was discussed in last Sunday's comments. The bodily resurrection of Christ and that of the departed believers (this is what is meant by "the dead"; Paul is not expounding a generally valid anthropology) depend on one another.

On the one hand, Christ's resurrection depends upon the validity of the Jewish apocalyptic hope, for to say that Christ has been raised from the dead makes sense only if we grant the validity of that hope (1 Cor 15:16).

Christ's resurrection is not an episode in his own individual biography but the first of the resurrections from the dead for which the apocalyptists had hoped and the one that determines all other resurrections.

He is the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep (1 Cor 15:20), and conversely, since he is the first fruits, the others will also be raised because of his resurrection.

Verses 17-20 merit particular attention. Here Paul is arguing existentially. To deny the resurrection of the dead is not to hold an incorrect theoretical philosophy of life; rather, it is to undercut the reality of our own present Christian existence: "your faith is futile and you are still in your sins."

The Christian hope of resurrection is not a philosophical opinion but an inference from present Christian experience.

We are forgiven sinners. We have been brought into a new relationship with God through Christ, a relationship that, if it is real, must issue in an ultimate consummation beyond this present existence.

Faith in our resurrection cannot be argued on theoretical grounds; it depends on the reality of the present Christian experience of forgiveness.

It is not just that we hope to go to heaven when we die or that we believe that the souls of all persons are intrinsically immortal. These things may or may not be true; they lie outside Paul's perspective.

It is rather that God has forgiven us in Christ, and nothing, not even death itself, can deprive us of that new life.

Gospel: Luke 6:17, 20-26

In Luke (unlike Matthew) the Great Sermon is delivered “on a level place.” If you go to the Holy Land, you will be shown the “Mount of the Beatitudes.” This mountain, however, exists only in Matthew’s redaction and is symbolical: the new law is given on a new Sinai. Luke probably follows his Q source in placing the sermon on a plain.

The Sermon on the Plain is delivered “where cross the crowded ways of life”—where crowds are seeking to hear Jesus and to be healed of their diseases. Thus, verse 17 gives the Lucan setting for the sermon.

The sermon is addressed, not to the crowds, but to the disciples in the presence of the crowds (Lk 6:20). This means that the ethics of the Great Sermon are not meant for the world in general but for those who have already decided to follow Christ. They presuppose grace.

This is not a general law but the demands upon those who have already been enabled by grace to fulfill them. Hence Jesus’ lack of concern for whether his disciples will be able to fulfill such a demanding ethic.

Only insofar as persons are “in Christ” (to use the Pauline equivalent of the synoptic “Follow me”) will they reproduce this kind of life in their own lives.

In both Matthew and Luke, the Great Sermon opens with a series of beatitudes. There are nine in Matthew. But in Luke there are four beatitudes, followed by four woes. Each beatitude has its corresponding woe

Beatitude	Woe
poor	rich
hungry	full
weeping	laughing
hated	spoken well of
(like prophets)	(like false prophets)

There is a sociological aspect to the beatitudes and woes in Luke, but we should not interpret them exclusively in sociological terms. The poor, the hungry, etc., include the underprivileged of society, but not them only.

In the last analysis, Matthew is correct when he glosses “poor” with “in spirit,” and “hungry” with “for righteousness,” for ultimately it is a question of human beings’ relationship with God.

The poor and the hungry are those who know that they have nothing in and of themselves to entitle them to a right relationship with God. They know themselves to be the have-nots.

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