

King of Glory Lutheran Church
November 5/6, 2022
Year C: All Saints: Luke 6:20-31
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Luke 6:20-31

²⁰Then [Jesus] looked up at his disciples and said:

“Blessed are you who are poor,
for yours is the kingdom of God.

²¹“Blessed are you who are hungry now,
for you will be filled.

“Blessed are you who weep now,
for you will laugh.

²²“Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and
defame you on account of the Son of Man. ²³Rejoice 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.

²⁴“But woe to you who are rich,
for you have received your consolation.

²⁵“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.

²⁶“Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the
false prophets.

²⁷“But I say to you that listen, love your enemies, do good to those who hate
you, ²⁸bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. ²⁹If anyone strikes you on
the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not
withhold even your shirt. ³⁰Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes
away your goods, do not ask for them again. ³¹Do to others as you would have them do to
you.”

Today we hear Jesus preaching his Sermon on the Plains. This is what the Beatitudes in the gospel of Luke are called because Jesus does not speak these words on top of a mountain but down in a level place.

And today Jesus speaks to a large crowd. Now in that crowd there were all kinds of people. People of every age, color and economic background. People with power sitting next to people who were powerless. People who were poor sitting next to wealthier folks. People grieving sitting next to those full of joy. People in need of healing next to those who were caring for the sick.

Have you ever found yourself in a similar crowd? Have you ever worshiped or heard a preacher in such a crowd?

The most diverse crowd I have ever worshiped in was in a Methodist church in Washington D.C.

After I graduated from college I moved to Washington D.C. for a year to be a part of the Lutheran Volunteer Corps. I spent the first few weeks there in D.C. visiting a different church each Sunday. I rarely worked on weekends, so Sunday mornings were free for worship and exploration.

I never meant to choose just one congregation to worship in. I meant to go to a different congregation every week for the whole year so that I could experience all kinds of worship, preaching and people.

But that plan didn't last very long because one Sunday I wandered into a church just a few blocks off of Dupont Circle called Foundry United Methodist Church.

The Foundry dedicated its first building in September 1815. Henry Foxall, a Methodist layman and influential businessman, donated the land and building after his iron foundry survived the British attack on Washington in the War of 1812. The story goes that Henry promised God that if he survived the attack he would dedicate his business to God and make the foundry into a church.

The Foundry was fascinating to me the year I lived in D.C. I was deeply touched from the first moment I entered the building by something I can't even name or truly describe. The worship varied each week from jazz to organ, drums to string quartets, gospel music to Bach. You never knew what to expect when you worshipped at the Foundry.

Except that there was one thing you could expect. And that was that you would always be greeted warmly. The church would be packed and it was often hard to find a seat. There were people there of every age and color. Affluent people mixed with poor people. Tourists mixed with members who had sat in the same pew for 50 years.

And occasionally we all had to walk through metal detectors when the President of the United States came to worship. This was in 1999 and I remember paying extra special attention to the sermon when President Bill Clinton was in attendance.

Knowing what was going on in the world and in D.C. that week, I was always curious what the preacher would say. Would the pastor take the opportunity to either praise or criticize the President's decisions? How would the gospel be proclaimed with the President of the United States in attendance sitting next to people making minimum wage with no particular influence on matters of national and international importance?

It must have been a challenging congregation to preach to I always thought. And yet, the gospel message was proclaimed, with all of us sitting there together week after week.

So when I picture Jesus preaching his Sermon on the Plains today, I picture the Foundry. I picture a crowd made up of all kinds of people. Jesus spoke to that crowd and he had a message for each person there.

Hear Jesus' words again, from Eugene Peterson's *The Message*, "*Then he spoke: 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 the tears flow freely. Joy comes with the morning. Count yourself blessed every time someone cuts you down or throws you out, every time someone smears or blackens your name to discredit me. What it means is that the truth is too close for comfort and that that person is uncomfortable...*"

Now when I think of blessings this isn't the list I usually come up with. I'm guessing it's quite different from your definition of blessings as well.

The people Jesus names are the opposite of what it means to be blessed, right? The suffering, the hungry, the poor, the grieving, the forgotten, the outcasts. Those are not people that the world calls blessed.

And yet Jesus says to each person in the crowd, I see you and I know you and I am with you. He speaks to the people who have lost someone they love and the people who don't have a home and the people who are hungry and the people who are mistreated.

Then Jesus continues, again from the Message, *“But it's trouble ahead if you think you have it made. What you have is all you'll ever get. And it's trouble ahead if you're 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. There's trouble ahead when you live only for the approval of others, saying what flatters them, doing what indulges them. Popularity contests are not truth contests...Your task is to be true, not popular.”*

Again, Jesus says to each person in the crowd, I see you and I know you and I am with you. For those who are comfortable, satisfied and oblivious to the suffering of others Jesus speaks words of warning.

It's trouble ahead, he says, when you depend on yourself and what you own for your happiness because you are sure to be disappointed. If you believe that you are invincible, that you are safe from suffering, that you are in complete control, or that you can control how others see you, then you are mistaken.

As Jesus speaks to this crowd filled with all kinds of people he also speaks to us gathered to hear his words today. And we hear his words on this All Saints weekend. A time when we remember those who have died this past year and in all the years before this one.

We know that those who have died form a great crowd of saints that are made up of all kinds of people. Young and old, rich and poor, serious and funny, broken and complete.

To all the saints who have died and who we remember today, and to all the saints living today, and to all the saints who are to come, Jesus sees us all. He stands before us and says that he knows us and sees us and is with us.

He sees you today if you are grieving. He sees you today if you are filled with joy. He sees you today if you are hungry. He sees you today if you are satisfied.

And to every single one of us in this great crowd of saints Jesus says listen to me. Care for one another, forgive one another, be generous and be compassionate. See and know and be with one another as I am with you.

On this All Saints weekend let us give thanks for those who have gone before us. And let us give thanks for the saints living in our midst today. And let us give thanks for all the saints to come. We are a great big crowd of saints gathered before Jesus. Listen to him, know that he is with us all, calling us to love one another as we have been loved. Amen.