

Matthew 5:1-12a

Seeing the crowds, Jesus went up the hill. There he sat down and was joined by his disciples. Then he began to speak. This is what he taught them: 'How happy are the poor in spirit; theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Happy the gentle: they shall have the earth for their heritage. Happy those who mourn: they shall be comforted. Happy those who hunger and thirst for what is right: they shall be satisfied. Happy the merciful: they shall have mercy shown them. Happy the pure in heart: they shall see God. Happy the peacemakers: they shall be called sons of God. Happy those who are persecuted in the cause of right: theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 'Happy are you when people abuse you and persecute you and speak all kinds of calumny against you on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.'

“Jesus speaks to that deepest longing in each man's heart – his search for happiness. To be 'blessed' or happy is to experience God's special love and favour. On the face of it, it might appear as if the beatitudes look for happiness all in the wrong places – in the struggle for peace, in rejection, in doing what is right, in 'mourning'. But this Christian happiness is no pie in the sky. It is something within ourselves, something for which and towards which each person keeps working. It comes from the conviction that God's kingdom, his saving life and love, is present to us and will finally encompass us if we respond to the word and example of his Son. Jesus lived and taught what it means to trust the Father (poor in spirit), to lead a God-controlled life (meek), to have a single-mindedness and sincerity in the service of God (pure in heart), to make and preserve peace among men and to have that outgoing kindness to the heart of God (mercy). Hope and God's strength are held out to sad and suffering disciples.”

Martin McNamara – Homilies for Weekdays of the Year

Prayer After Communion

Nourished by these redeeming gifts, we pray, O Lord, that through this help to eternal salvation true faith may ever increase.

4th Sunday in Ordinary Time
29th January 2023

The Good News of the Master, Meek and Humble of Heart



Already it's the fourth Sunday of the year & we have covered much ground. Jesus, after John the Baptist' arrest, has begun preaching: announcing repentance, for the Kingdom of God is at hand. He has called his first disciples to follow him & we have heard a general account of his healing ministry. Today, we begin reading the first of five great discourses found in Matthew's Gospel – the *Sermon on the Mount*. We're actually going to follow this over the next few Sundays. Today's passage acts as an introduction, calling us to a new way of thinking; to a new way of living.

Opening Prayer

Grant us, Lord our God, that we may honour you with all our mind, and love everyone in truth of heart.

Zephaniah 2:3,3:12-13

Seek the Lord, all you, the humble of the earth, who obey his commands. Seek integrity, seek humility: you may perhaps find shelter on the day of the anger of the Lord. In your midst I will leave a humble and lowly people, and those who are left in Israel will seek refuge in the name of the Lord. They will do no wrong, will tell no lies; and the perjured tongue will no longer be found in their mouths. But they will be able to graze and rest with no one to disturb them.

The Book of Zephaniah is a very short book, just three chapters long. It was written between 640 and 627 BC to the people of Judah. For the people of Jerusalem it was comparatively a time of peace and prosperity (Judah would be exiled to Babylon in 597 BC). The rich were growing richer at the expense of the poor and leaders more corrupt. The Prophet predicts the coming day of the Lord, when God will punish the nations, including Judah, for their sinfulness, but will yet be merciful to his people. In today's short passage, Zephaniah calls on people not to work for position and wealth, but to live good lives, seeking goodness, integrity, humility; trusting in the Lord.

Psalm 145(146):6-10

It is the Lord who keeps faith for ever, who is just to those who are oppressed. It is he who gives bread to the hungry, the Lord, who sets prisoners free.

It is the Lord who gives sight to the blind, who raises up those who are bowed down, the Lord, who protects the stranger and upholds the widow and orphan.

It is the Lord who loves the just but thwarts the path of the wicked. The Lord will reign for ever, Zion's God, from age to age.

1 Corinthians 1:26-31

Take yourselves for instance, brothers, at the time when you were called: how many of you were wise in the ordinary sense of the word, how many were influential people, or came from noble families? No, it was to shame the wise that God chose what is foolish by human reckoning, and to shame what is strong that he chose what is weak by human reckoning; those whom the world thinks common and contemptible are the ones that God has chosen - those who are nothing at all to show up those who are everything. The human race has nothing to boast about to God, but you, God has made members of Christ Jesus and by God's doing he has become our wisdom, and our virtue, and our holiness, and our freedom. As scripture says: if anyone wants to boast, let him boast about the Lord.

Paul, in our Second Reading this week, reinforces the message of Zephaniah in our Old Testament reading, that as Christians we have nothing to boast about except Christ Jesus! In Corinth, at the time of Paul, the Greeks were seeking wisdom, the philosophers, knowledge and understanding. Paul says, no. Everything we are and everything we possess comes from God. Let us look beyond ourselves, beyond our gifts and talents, to God for life. And let us imitate God, in serving and in giving ourselves to one another.

Alleluia, alleluia! Blessed are you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for revealing the mysteries of the kingdom to mere children. Alleluia!

Offertory Prayer

O Lord, we bring to your altar these offerings of our service: be pleased to receive them, we pray, and transform them into the Sacrament of our redemption.