

Jeremiah 17:5-10

Luke 6:17-26

1 Corinthians 15:12-20

“They, who delight in God’s Word,
are like trees planted by streams of water.” AMEN!

Last week, you may remember,
we began our sermon with
the desperation preachers feel when
called to wait on the Holy Spirit’s
inspiration for the words to say.

Today, dear people of God,
the fingers cannot type fast enough. :-)

The scribbled notes of teachings and
important insights from the texts leap
out on the rough draft.

With so many details needing the spotlight
it is important to walk them out one
by one quickly.

First, this section of Luke is called
Jesus’ Sermon on the Plain.

That is P-L-A-I-N... Plain.

A level place that Jesus came down
to and spoke to the disciples
and other followers.

In Matthew, it is called
the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew wrote for a mostly Jewish audience
aware that all important events
involving God happened on a mountain.

Places, up there, that are closer to God.

Luke, on the other hand, writes to a
Greek audience.

Luke's experience of God is
more down to earth,
you can say
for that was the way that his
audience related to God events..

God comes to the "lowlands" of our direct lives
and for Luke, the followers of Jesus
aren't as concerned with spiritual quests
or proving Old Testament
scripture prophecies about Jesus.

Luke's gospel is a down to earth one
that comes to the ears of those who are poor,
those who suffer disease, and are
displaced

or rejected outsiders, beggars,
women, the children, the lost
and the drunken.

Luke communicates God's love
to these especially.

“Blessed are the poor,” in Luke.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit,” in Matthew.

In Luke, “Blessed are the hungry,”
the empty belly hungry right now

and in Matthew, “Blessed are those
who hunger and thirst for righteousness.”

Now, I am not speaking to prove one gospel
better than the other but merely the way
two witnesses tell the account about Jesus
with different eyes and they also
have different audiences to speak to,
with different ears to hear.

We can thank God to have both accounts.

Matthew would say people need to fulfill
spiritual hunger with prayer (that's good)

and Luke would say people are
hungry for real food... meat and potatoes
kind of food needs to be given to them.

(Pause)

The question for us this morning is:
Children of God, which one do you love?

I'll admit that I've put the Sermon on the Mount
to memory a time or two but I have never
tried to memorize the Sermon on the Plain.

Is it because I wonder what kind of blessing there is
in hunger, or in being in poverty, or in weeping,
or when people hate me?

What's so blessed about those things?

But, that's misunderstanding the
words and teaching from Jesus.

He did not say being poor is blessed or
being hungry is blessed or weeping or
being hated is blessed.

But, the people who are poor,
the hungry ones, those who are grief stricken,
and the ones who are persecuted are blessed.

The truth is “blessed” isn’t a good translation
for the word “ma-kar-e-a.”

Jesus was turning his listeners, and us,
to see that the poor, hungry, weeping,
and the hated are in truth respectable.

They are the worthy ones to be looked up to.

Not the rich, the full of stomach,
the laughing, the ones that everyone
speaks well of.

Now that’s an upside-down message, isn’t it?

Even in our society we look up to the ones
Jesus tells us NOT to look up to and
we look down on the ones he makes
known to be, in truth, respectable. (Pause)

Jesus’ teaching leaves us shaken
because there is real power behind
his words and they flip us into
experiencing a new way for us
to relate to one another in
the human community.

This hard-hitting Gospel lesson is good
for the hurting but it is tough news for

those who are not.

Yet, here we are, working to wrap our minds
around it because each of us know that at
various times of our lives we have belonged
to each category.

Perhaps you have been on the verge of starvation
or avoided it by running up a credit card
to buy food you couldn't have
afforded otherwise.

The loss of a job, or a partner may have sent you
reeling into poverty.

These realities can happen to any of us and
they do happen, no one is exempt from
weeping in grief or
being excluded and reviled because of
our faith.

So, for our gospel today, Jesus wants
you and me to know that when
we encounter these times in life,

the times when you are poor, hungry,
grief stricken and persecuted because of
your faith, that you are respectable and

You should be looked up to.

And with that Good News we also need to hear
that when we fall into the categories
of Jesus' "woes."

Again, there are problems with this translation.

When I hear the word "woe" I often think of
"woe is me!"

As if I am cursed or doomed, but that is not
the best way to translate the Greek here.

The Greek word "Oy," here is more
like the word "whoa."

Like the word we say when riding horses.

"Whoa, Bessie! Look out!"

Jesus expressed "Oy" to the rich,
the ones full of food, the laughing,
those whom everyone speaks well of...
Look out! because bad news
might be on the way.

It's Jesus way of telling us that we are
in danger of idolatry when we rely on those

things to fulfill us. (Pause)

So, the epiphany for us to hear today is that
Jesus gave us a new world view reminding us
who we ought to be looking up to and
what we need to be looking out for and
to be cautious of.

The message today is truly gospel for all ears...
even if one is in the “look out!” category
because there’s still time to change our ways.
(Pause)

Jesus’ “plain talk” talk today challenges our desire
for an “either/or” way of thinking.

And if you are like me then you also find it
very difficult to not take sides.

I want to know who the good people are and
who the bad people are.

Who is blessed and who is cursed?

It makes life so much easier!

But it is not that simplistic, is it?

No, for we cannot see into a person’s heart

And time and time again we learn
that no one is beyond redemption. (Pause)

I am reminded of some websites that you go to
and you have to check that little box that is next
to the words, "I am not a robot." :-)

Check here, to prove you are a human being!

I'm not a robot, you are not a robot,
that person who we disagree with politically is
not a robot, the police officer is not a robot,
the homeless person is not a robot
and neither are the wealthy.

We have the strength and ability to not give in
to the desire to pigeonhole people into
the either/or categories.

Because that's when it becomes easier
to hurt people. (Pause)

I read an article recently about the way
some people are reacting to the news when
an anti-vaxxer dies from COVID.

The temptation for those who have been masking
and getting the needed vaccines is to take joy
or say, "I told you so!"

Yet, such a reaction hurts us to the core;
it scars the soul.

It erodes our compassion and fractures our call
to communicate Jesus' vision of a new world.

Remember, you are not a robot.

And it is not too late to re-orient ourselves and
be real community, again. (Pause)

And to be real community means that
we can now begin to come together.

If you are vaccinated and where masks and
practice distancing come back to
in-person worship.

I get it, it is nice to stay in jammies and
worship from home... but it is hurting
the church community and damaging
the quality of worship by

distancing ourselves from one another in harmful ways.

But we also want to honor those who are not
ready or those who have fragile immunity
systems or other health risks.

We want to keep the live streaming going
for you because we are all in different places
of response to the pandemic and how
we are willing to risk return.

Regardless, know this, you are respectable and
worth being looked up to...

especially the poor, hungry, grieving,
and persecuted... especially you!

God delights in you!

AMEN!