**Upside Down** Feb 16, 2025 Lk 6:17-26, 1 Cor 15;1-11; Jer 17-5-10

* Recall some years ago when we were doing a video course called Christianity 101 (Harold Percy)
* Harold Percy, in the first session, starts right at the beginning and explores the Biggest questions of life – questions that every human being has:
* ***Why was I created? What is the purpose of life? What happens after I die?***
* He then summarizes by teaching how we are all created in God’s image and for God’s glory. He teaches how we are all created to be in relationship with God & only in that relationship do we get our true meaning.
* But he then illustrates how, in reality, this is **not** how it is.
* How something has gone wrong which affects us individually as well as the world
* And, as a result of what has gone wrong, the world is in chaos & confusion.
* To illustrate this chaos, he asks us to imagine a large department store such as you would find in downtown Toronto or Montreal.
* The way these stores are laid out is that the less expensive things are on the bottom floor – esp. on the basement floor where things can be in the $1.99 to $25.00 range.
* But as you go to the higher floors, the merchandise gets much more expensive (furniture, appliances, furs & expensive jewelry)

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* In his illustration, he imagines that when the store closes one night, some gremlins come in and switch all the price tags.
* He says, you can imagine the chaos & confusion the following morning when the store reopens & customers discover small plastic goods with a price tag of thousands of dollars and expensive diamond rings with a price tag of $1.99.
* Everything is turned upside down.
* In today’s gospel reading, Jesus seems to presenting something like that.
* Everything seems to be upside down -at least in the understanding of our society
* Blessed are the poor? / Happy are the hungry? / Blessed are those who weep?
* As a rule, it is seldom that we meet happy, contented poor people.
* Its not too often you will ever hear someone say, “***Isn’t this great, I’m starving!***”
* And then comes the part about the woes.
* **“*Woe to you rich!*”**
* In the 1st century world, richness was considered God’s blessing on the person while poverty was considered God’s curse
* So here Jesus is really turning things upside down.
* To understand Jesus here we need to realize first that these Beatitudes are not commands that we should strive to follow – rather they are simply statements of fact – how things will be.

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* I believe the understanding of these Beatitudes are found in both the OT reading in Jeremiah and the message from Paul in 1 Corinthians
* In Jeremiah we read : “***Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength andwhose heart turns away from the Lord.***”
* This is simply making a statement that this is the way it will be if we trust in man for our strength & direction – if we trust in the flesh.
* We will be under a curse, but a curse that we have placed ourselves under.
* Once we throw God out of our lives, we are left to the wisdom of man & what Scripture is saying is that will lead to a curse.
* Sad thing is that many e/e are living under a curse & don’t even realize it.
* I once had a person say to me, (& this person was in earnest). He said that the only important thing in life was that we follow our hearts.
* Not according to Jeremiah!
* Our reading from Jeremiah today says this: “***The heart is deceitful above all things***.” (Jer. 17:9)
* Our hearts **are** deceitful. Why? Because they are self-centered.
  + Only a heart that is truly in union with God would be trustworthy.
  + Jesus is stating, blessed are the poor, the hungry and those who weep because it is when a person

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has exhausted the ways of the world and come to the realization that the ways of the world are not the answer and then they turn to God. To realize that only in God will we find answers that matter, is truly to be blessed.

* In today’s reading from 1st Corinthians, St Paul is reminding us, as well as the people of Corinth of our only source of hope.
* When our hope is based only on what the world has to offer us, we may prosper materialistically for a while, but we soon realize just how futile that hope is.
* When we believe & trust that there is much more than what today’s world offers, then we have hope that is founded in the truth & the security of God.
* That is the truth that St. Paul is reminding the Corinthians, - that Jesus defeated death & the power of sin, & that the resurrection is real for them.
* When we get caught up in the ways of the world & lose sight of the resurrection, then we begin to put our trust in man.
* St. Paul wants us to be absolutely sure.
* He then sums it all up in verse 19 where he says: ***“If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.”***
* Our hope is so much more than what the world has to offer.