

Sermon 20

St Philip and St James
Palma de Mallorca Spain
13th February 2022
Third Sunday Before Lent

**Theme: Trusting in God is the greatest
blessing in life.**



TEXT: Luke 6:17-26

Introduction

“May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer” Amen. These are beautiful words of prayer from the psalmist found in **Psalm 19:14**. Today we are in the Third Sunday before lent and our minds are gradual shifting towards this important solemn time of fasting and prayer. Today’s sermon is based on a famous passage well known as Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount though in Luke the setting of the sermon is not the mountain but on a level ground. That variation however, does not have a bearing on the message of the sermon. Luke 6:17-49 is one of the longest teaching discourses by Jesus in the Gospel of Luke. These teachings are often known as the beatitudes and are characterized by blessings and curses. In the beatitudes, Jesus follows the pattern of the Israelite laws in the Pentateuch. Luke’s version of the beatitudes differs from Matthew 5:1-12. Matthew has nine beatitudes and no woes, while Luke has four beatitudes and four matching woes.

Exegesis of the Text

Luke 6:17 goes on to say that He is there, not only with his newly chosen twelve apostles, but also a crowd of disciples, and a great multitude of other people from the surrounding regions. The reference to Tyre and Sidon indicate there may have been Gentiles there as well. The last part of **Luke 6:17** says that this multitude of people came for two reasons: to hear and be healed. They came to hear what Jesus had to say, and be healed by Him of their sicknesses and delivered from unclean spirits. Jesus healing ability was drawn from the power of the Holy Spirit at work through Him to heal. His close, intimate connection with the Father as revealed through spending all night in prayer was another factor that allowed Jesus to heal the multitudes. Note that it is not just some of them that were healed, but all. We do not know how many thousands of people were there, but everyone who was sick was healed. Unclean spirits were cast out. Power went out from Him to heal them all. There is no discussion here about their lack of faith, or the amount of faith they do or do not have. Jesus simply and completely healed all who desired it. However,

the focus of today's sermon is not on His healing miracles but his great teachings in the beatitudes. Both the beatitudes and woes are descriptive rather than prescriptive. They describe already established reality instead of calling us to new behavior calculated to garner blessings and to avoid woes. So what do we do? So we need to hear Luke's beatitudes through the ears of a high-standing elite person seeking to know the truth of Jesus' way. What does it mean for such a person to join the Jesus community? What does it mean for such a person to fulfill the words of Isaiah 61:1-2 which Jesus reads from the scroll? Luke's beatitudes are statements consoling and supporting the socially disadvantaged. The beatitudes come after Jesus has formed his group of disciples and before he heads off to Jerusalem because without these lived practices the apostles' ministry would be built on a weak foundation. The beatitudes are also a reversal of who was considered honorable and shameless at the time of Jesus. The bottom line is that the sayings of Christ are challenging. They confront us right at home, and challenge everything we hold most dear. These were the words which were said to the people of that

time who were poor; they were hungry, sick, underfed and overworked. They were mistreated and abused by the Roman rulers and Roman army. They were cheated and lied to and heavily taxed. They wanted freedom from the oppression. And the Messiah was supposed to give it to them, but in his first major public sermon, he says, “Blessed are you poor. Blessed are you when you’re hungry. Blessed are you who mourn. Blessed are you when people hate you.” This should have shocked or confused the audience. Today who would say I am blessed because I am poor? I am blessed because I am hungry? I am blessed because I am sick? Lucky are you if you get one such person in a thousand. Can you feel the tension in this text?

The beatitudes are laid out in an interesting style. There are four blessings and four woes. Each blessing has its exact opposite in the four woes. Each blessing has a counterpart woe. The first blessing is upon the poor. The first woe is upon the rich. The second blessing is for the hungry. The second woe is for the full. The third blessing and third woe are related to weeping and laughter. The fourth blessing and

fourth woe are about how we are viewed by other people of this earth.

Application

Jesus is not describing how things are; He is describing how things will be in this world for the true disciple of Jesus Christ. What Jesus is teaching can be seen as a manual for discipleship. There is great cost in following Jesus, but the blessings are greater than the cost. What he presents seems backwards and upside down, but this is how true disciples of Christ will appear in this world. Most of Jesus' apostles came from a rich background but because they chose to follow Jesus, they became poor. They experienced hardships, trials, persecutions, nakedness, danger and sword. All of the apostles except John were martyred for their faith. They were hated and eventually killed for the sake of Jesus. Jesus promises them that if they endure these physical conditions, if they persevere under trial, if they are content to have little or no food and possessions, then they will receive great spiritual blessings in this life and the life to come. The important thing here is that they

trusted in God even when things were very difficult for them. Beatitudes should be understood in the context of putting all our trust in God. Do you trust God in your circumstances, or do you not? Whatever circumstances you find yourself in – trust God. Blessings come by trusting the presence of God in any circumstance. Trusting in God is the greatest blessing in life. Amen.

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