

FEBRUARY 13, 2022
Sunday of the 6th Week in OT
Jeremiah 17: 5-8; 1 Corinthians 15: 12, 16-20; Luke 6: 17, 20-26

“HAPPY IN AND WITH YOU.”

“John D. Rockefeller, Sr., was a millionaire at age 23. At the age of fifty, he was a billionaire. He was the richest man in the world, but he was a miserable, rich man. At the age of 53, he was eaten up with physical diseases and ulcers. He was a grabber, not a giver. He was always trying to get more money and he was a greedy man. Greed had so consumed him, that at the age of 53, the doctors told him he had one year to live. Just one year. Here’s a billionaire, the richest man in the world, and all he could eat that year, all that his stomach could handle was milk and crackers. Milk and crackers. The man could go out and buy any restaurant in the world, buy it; he could have any food before him on the table, but it wouldn’t do him much good. It was in that year, that Rockefeller began to look at his life. He said, ‘I have all these possessions, and I’ve never been a giver.’ That’s when he decided to become a giver. He gave to Churches, to hospitals, to foundations, and to medical research. Many of the discoveries we’ve had in medicine have come from money provided by the Rockefeller Foundation. That man who had only one year to live at age 53, began to live, and began to give, and do you know what happened to him? He started releasing all of the internal negative things that were killing him. He got rid of his stress, his tension, and his ulcers, and he lived to the age of ninety, a saint to many.”¹

My sisters and brothers, we heard again the ‘summary’ of Jesus’ teaching: how to be blessed in the eyes of God. The Beatitudes or the Sermon on the Mount distinguish the real happiness, that is, in the Kingdom of God and the material happiness we can find here on earth. “To those who are considered the ‘haves’ of society, Jesus warns ‘Woe to

¹ stories4homilies.blogspot.com

you!’ – wealth and power are not the stuff of the kingdom of God; but to the ‘have nots,’ Jesus says, ‘Happy and blessed are you’ – love, humble selflessness, compassion, and generosity are the treasure of God's realm. Jesus promises his followers poverty, suffering, persecuting and grief -- but their hope in God will be rewarded with perfect and complete joy. This will be a constant theme throughout Luke’s Gospel: Jesus teaches that wealth and power are not the stuff of the reign of God, but humility, selflessness and compassion are the treasures of God’s kingdom. Luke's version of the Beatitudes challenges everything our consumer-oriented society holds dear. While wealth, power and celebrity are the sought-after prizes of our world, the treasures of God's reign are love, humble selflessness, compassion, and generosity. In freeing ourselves from the pursuit of the things of this world, we liberate ourselves to seek the lasting things of God.”²

My sisters and brothers, is Jesus angry with the rich? Why so hard on the rich? We can see the answer in our First Reading from the Prophet Jeremiah. He said: “A curse on those who puts their trust in other people, who rely on things of flesh, whose heart turns from the Lord.”³ Sometimes, the rich and powerful control others, they use their money to manipulate others, and they do not need God because their wealth is their god. Even when they pray, they ask for more money and power to protect their riches and themselves. But Prophet Jeremiah praised those who put trust in the Lord: “A blessing on the man who puts his trust in the Lord, with the Lord for his hope. He is like a tree by the water’s edge that thrusts its roots to the stream: when the heat comes it feels no alarm, its foliage stays green; it has no worries in a year of drought, and never ceases to bear fruit.”⁴

² ibid

³ Jeremiah 17: 5 Holy Bible NRSVCE Canadian Bible Society

⁴ Jeremiah 17: 7-8 Holy Bible NRSVCE Canadian Bible Society

If there is Jesus' Beatitudes, Satan has its own beatitude, too that goes this way: "Blessed are those who are too tired, too busy, too distracted to spend an hour once a week with their fellow Christians in Church – they are my best workers. Blessed are those who wait to be asked and expect to be thanked – I can use them in my business. Blessed are those who are touchy (impatient and cranky). Soon they will stop going to Church – verily, they shall be my missionaries. Blessed are those who sow gossip and trouble – they are my beloved children. Blessed are those who have no time to pray – for they are my target. Blessed are those who gossip – for they are my secret agents. Blessed are you when you heard (read) this and think it has everything to do with other people, and nothing to do with you – I've got room for YOU at my inn."⁵

My brothers and sisters, Jesus is again reminding us: put aside the woe of our egocentric and self-seeking and adopt the blessedness through seeing ourselves not as the center of humanity but as a means for transforming the world for the goodness, benefit, and blessedness of all. Be a blessing for others.

Let this be our prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, you teach me the Beatitudes to make it my way of life. May I follow your commands to be a blessing for others through my love, humble selflessness, compassion, and generosity for my family, wife, husband, children, friends and brothers and sisters. May I be rich in following you, my true and lasting wealth and not to focus on what the world gives. May I always be happy because of you. Amen."

⁵ stories4homilies.blogspot.com