

6 Epiphany at St Luke's
 17 Feb 2019
 Jeremiah 17:5-10
 Psalm 1
 1 Cor 15:12-20
 Luke 6:17-26

Today's scripture lessons all point to the truth that our Christian faith calls us to make a choice to live by a different and higher standard than the rest of the world. In Luke's Gospel, immediately before his Sermon on the Plain, Jesus had chosen the 12 he wanted to be his disciples. He gave this teaching to them – to his inner circle - about the choice they would need to make. It was an age-old choice.

The prophet Jeremiah wrote about that choice. 'Curse those who trust in mere mortals and make mere flesh their strength... Blessed are those who trust in the Lord, whose trust IS the Lord.'

King David wrote about the choice in Psalm 1, 'Happy are they who have not walked with the wicked, or sinners, or the scornful.' The psalm describes the blessing of our being like trees that 'bear fruit in due season, and have leaves that do not wither.'

Jesus compared choices that lead to blessings (being truly happy) vs woes. The list seems counter to what we would expect to hear (blessed if poor.) But it makes sense if we see Jesus talking about spiritual values vs. physical conditions.

Poor vs rich: needing God (Jeff Bezos – net worth \$133 B! No philanthropy until 2017, when people commented on it.)

Hungry vs full: depending on God vs. quick fix (chocolate for bad days)

Weeping vs. laughing: wearing no masks, being the same person everywhere. (Christian mask vs office mask, or the same person in both places.)

Hated, excluded, reviled, defamed vs. spoken well of by all: take a stand for God, even if not popular, even if it doesn't make everyone happy (no watered down faith.) (Tom Good – NOT a holiday sale.)

You and I share the blessing of the poor through our offerings of money, food, clothing, and prayers aimed at helping others, not just ourselves.

You and I share the blessing of hunger when we share the Holy Eucharist as a community; not eating to fill ourselves, but to bind ourselves to each other and to God. (The song 'Bind Us Together' is the perfect fit.)

You and I share the blessing of weeping when we pray for each other, and lay hands on each other, providing heartfelt moral and spiritual support for each other.

And you and I share the blessing of being excluded or even hated, when we stand up for values that God clearly places on our hearts, that are more important than any popularity we might want to protect.

So Jesus' list of Beatitudes describes how we have the choice to accept our human weaknesses as opportunities to rely on God in our life. Those who decide that they have no needs, are overlooking their need for God.

Like the disciples, we are to choose what set of values will direct our lives. We are to choose whether to live to a different and higher standard. Jesus wants us to become experts at the choices that bring eternal blessings. Amen.