

Turning the Other Cheek

11.6.16

Luke 6:20-31 New Living Translation (NLT)

The Beatitudes

20 Then Jesus turned to his disciples and said,

“God blesses you who are poor, for the Kingdom of God is yours.

21 God blesses you who are hungry now, for you will be satisfied.

God blesses you who weep now, for in due time you will laugh.

22 What blessings await you when people hate you and exclude you and mock you and curse you as evil because you follow the Son of Man. 23 When that happens, be happy! Yes, leap for joy! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, their ancestors treated the ancient prophets that same way.

Sorrows Foretold

24 “What sorrow awaits you who are rich, for you have your only happiness now.

25 What sorrow awaits you who are fat and prosperous now, for a time of awful hunger awaits you.

What sorrow awaits you who laugh now, for your laughing will turn to mourning and sorrow.

26 What sorrow awaits you who are praised by the crowds, for their ancestors also praised false prophets.

Love for Enemies

27 “But to you who are willing to listen, I say, love your enemies! Do good to those who hate you. 28 Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you. 29 If someone slaps you on one cheek, offer the other cheek also. If someone demands your coat, offer your shirt also. 30 Give to anyone who asks; and when things are taken away from you, don’t try to get them back. 31 Do to others as you would like them to do to you.”

The Word of God for the People of God

Thanks be to God!

Turning the Other Cheek

Today in the church, we also celebrate and rejoice! Not winners and losers. But, on this All Saints Sunday, we rejoice with all the saints and we also hear and respond to God’s Word and what it means for us to be saints ourselves, disciples of Jesus, citizens of God’s kingdom.

This morning, we come to a familiar passage of Scripture, where we hear these words of our Lord Jesus, presenting us with the Rules for Christian Living. Standards of Conduct for Christ Followers. Also known as the Beatitudes.

Some of us don't like to follow rules.

Bruce Larson - suggests that some of us might "resist and resent rules... yet (at the same time) something in us demands rules."

There's a little rebellion in each of us, isn't there? Especially when someone in authority wants to guide how we live or act or dress. (Communicator's Commentary, Bruce Larson; © 1983, Word, Inc; Luke, volume 3 NT, ch. 16 "Living Without Rules" pp. 121 -125)

Some of us need rules more than others.

Story of seminary student

Well, even if we did understand the rules of Christian living, most likely we would become overwhelmed and discouraged that we could not possibly keep them all.

Or, it is possible that we may become like the Pharisees and scribes who smugly believed they have kept all the rules, even since childhood.

Perhaps others of us might use this opportunity to find loopholes in the rules.

Still others might use the Knowledge and the keeping of the rules as a way to exclude others. *"I know the rules and you don't. Therefore, you are out."*

(Communicator's Commentary, Bruce Larson; © 1983, Word, Inc; Luke, volume 3 NT, ch. 16 "Living Without Rules" pp. 121 -125)

Scripture - Luke 6.20-31

Jesus said: *"God blesses you who are poor... are happy... who weep... are hated.. Excluded.. Mocked... cursed...*

"When that happens," He says, "rejoice! (for) a great reward awaits you in heaven..."

The Beatitudes (Luke 6.20-23; Matthew 5.3-6; 11-12)

In the end, God will reward and bless the poor, the sad, the oppressed and scorned... all those whom the world pushes away and mistreats, abuses and neglects. These will be blessed with God's love and compassion. (Interpreter's Bible, © 1952 Pierce and Smith; Abingdon Press; NY, Nashville' Vol. viii, Luke/John; pp. 117- 122.)

Blessings and Woes (Luke 6.22-26)

After the four blessings, come the woes, curses, troubles.

Jesus said: *"What sorrows, troubles, woes await the RICH, FULL, HAPPY, PRAISED."*

Those who find complete satisfaction in worldly wealth will be excluded from God's Kingdom.

Those content to satisfy their physical needs will experience famine.

Those who enjoy pleasures in this life will experience deep distress in the new age.

Those who hear words of flattery will be like the false prophets of old.

(Interpreter's Bible, © 1952 Pierce and Smith; Abingdon Press; NY, Nashville' Vol. viii, Luke/John; pp. 117- 122)

Perils of Prosperity (vv. 24-26)

In these words, Luke records warnings to the rich and comfortable.

The Rich young ruler, when he asked Jesus what he needed to do to inherit eternal life, was told to sell all his possessions and give the money to the poor. Of course, Jesus did not tell everyone of means to do the same.

Zacchaeus and Matthew were both wealthy tax collectors. Neither of them was told to give it all away.

But Jesus truly saw the perils of wealth, and He didn't back down from talking about it.

Jesus knew that those rich in the world's goods may fall prey to the temptation to no longer desire the gifts of God, because they already have everything they want.

They may be full now, may laugh now, all because others speak well of them.

Martin Luther said: *"Rich folks' children seldom turn out well. They are complacent, arrogant, and conceited. And they think they need to learn nothing because they have enough to live on anyway."* (Arthur C. McGiffert, *Martin Luther, the Man and His Work*; New York: The Century Club, © 1911; p. 4)

John records Jesus' words in Revelation 3.17 to those whom the satisfactions of this world may be wrapped in soft complacency:

"You say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing; not knowing that you are wretched, pitiable, blind and naked." (Rev. 3.17) (Interpreter's Bible, © 1952 Pierce and Smith; Abingdon Press; NY, Nashville' Vol. viii, Luke/John; pp. 117- 122)

Then Jesus offers these challenging words:

"...Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you. Pray for... those who curse you... who hurt you. If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn the other cheek... Give... to anyone who asks... Do for others as you would like them to do for you." (Luke 6.20-31)

Friends, it is so difficult to follow Jesus.

His standards are so high.

He changes everything. A great reversal of our perceived reality.

The poor, hungry, sad and ridiculed are blessed.

The rich, full, happy and praised experience Troubles, Woes and Sorrows.

He tells us to LOVE OUR ENEMIES. PRAY FOR those who hate and hurt us. TURN THE OTHER CHEEK when slapped. GIVE to all who ask. TREAT OTHERS AS WE WANT TO BE TREATED.

Isn't this the description of the saints?

All Saints Day Isn't just about those who have died, but rather, those who have lived, or are living, Faithful Lives.

Isn't this about CHOOSING How We will live?

Story of Viktor Frankl

How will we choose to live our lives?

George Burns Story

It doesn't have to be anything that extraordinary. It can be working for a worthy cause, performing a needed service, or just doing something that helps another person."

How are we called to live as Christ's Followers?

Serve others.

Isn't this is a picture of the Saints?

Love your enemies.

Do good to those who hate you.

Bless those who curse you.

Pray for those who abuse you.

Offer the other cheek after being struck once.

Give to those who steal from you even more than they sought.

Fight back, but only with the weapons of overwhelming love and kindness.

These concrete practices provide the context for the final saying in this day's gospel reading:

Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

Dawn Chesser: Living as a Christ Follower, a Disciple, a Citizen of God's Kingdom

“requires courage, patience, gentleness, wisdom, graciousness, longsuffering, mercy, generosity, persistence, and love—in short, “sainthood” -- holiness of heart and life.” (John Wesley)

That's what we celebrate this day. Not so much the saints, but God's kingdom running free in this world *making saints* out of all kinds of people—saints who are making a difference in their corner of the world.

This morning, we *“remember those of our members who have died in the past year, and these are the things we remember about them this day. And this is what we pray that we may all become as Christ dwells in us and among us through bread and wine, in Spirit and truth.”*

(Discipleship Ministries, Dawn Chesser)

As God's Beloved Children, we are dearly loved and accepted just as we are. Since God desires that we treat others with respect, kindness and love, let us live in such a way that others will know we are Children of God. Followers of Jesus Christ. Citizens of God's kingdom. May we live as the Saints.