

Weekend Readings & Reflections February 12-13, 2022 – Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reflection: *The blessings and woes we hear in today’s Gospel mark the perfection of all the wisdom of the Old Testament. That wisdom is summed up with marvelous symmetry in today’s First Reading and Psalm: Each declares that the righteous—those who hope in the Lord and delight in His Law—will prosper like a tree planted near living waters. The wicked, who put their “trust in human beings,” are cursed to wither and die. Jesus is saying the same thing in the Gospel. The rich and poor are, for Him, more than members of literal economic classes. Their material state symbolizes their spiritual state. The rich are “the insolent” of today’s Psalm, boasting of their self-sufficiency, the strength of their flesh, as Jeremiah says in the First Reading. The poor are the humble, who put all their hope and trust in the Lord. We’ve already seen today’s dramatic imagery of reversal in Mary’s Magnificat. There, too, the rich are cast down while the hungry are filled and the lowly exalted (see [Luke 1:45–55](#), also 16:19–31). That’s the upside-down world of the Gospel: in poverty, we gain spiritual treasure unimaginable; in suffering and even dying “on account of the Son of Man,” we find everlasting life. The promises of the Old Testament were promises of power and prosperity—in the here and now. The promise of the New Covenant is joy and true freedom even amid the misery and toil of this life. But not only that. As Paul says in today’s Epistle, we’re to be pitied if our hope is “for this life only.” The blessings of God mean that we’ll laugh with the thanksgiving of captives released from exile (see [Psalm 126:1–2](#)), feast at the heavenly table of the Lord (see [Psalm 107:3–9](#)), “leap for joy” as John the Baptist leapt in his mother’s womb (see [Luke 6:23](#); [1:41](#), [44](#)), and rise with Christ, “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.”*

OPENING PRAYER

Leader: Welcome our discussion on the Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time, let us begin in prayer:

All: Heavenly Father, we implore you to show us what true happiness is. We ask that you open our hearts and remove any desire for wealth, power, and praise that keeps us from pursuing the ways of the Gospel. We thank you for sending us your Son in humility and poverty, showing us a way of life far more beautiful than we could have imagined. We ask all of this through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

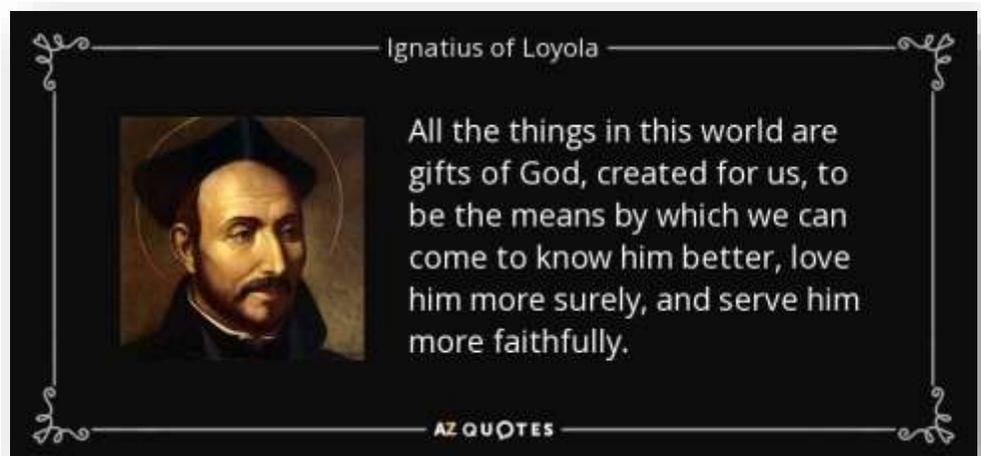
Leader: In this week’s Gospel, Jesus presents us with a roadmap for blessedness. In the Beatitudes, Christ tells His followers that true happiness and fulfillment come from humility and service. As we watch the video, think about how Christ’s views of happiness compares with the cultural perceptions of His time and our time today.

Digging Deeper The Desire for Happiness

“The Beatitudes respond to the natural desire for happiness. This desire is of divine origin: God has placed it in the human heart in order to draw man to the One who alone can fulfill it.” – CCC 1723

“What must we do to gain the happiness of heaven? To gain the happiness of heaven we must know, love, and serve God in this world.” – Baltimore Catechism 4

(Play the video on [FORMED.org](#) -
[Opening the Word – Sixth Sunday in
Ordinary Time \(Year C\)](#))



FIRST READING ~ Jeremiah 17:5-8 ~

Thus says the LORD: Cursed is the one who trusts in human beings, who seeks his strength in flesh, whose heart turns away from the LORD. He is like a barren bush in the desert that enjoys no change of season, but stands in a lava waste, a salt and empty earth. Blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD, whose hope is the LORD. He is like a tree planted beside the waters that stretches out its roots to the stream: it fears not the heat when it comes; its leaves stay green; in the year of drought it shows no distress, but still bears fruit.

Jeremiah shares a blessing and curse prophecy which is frequent in the Old Testament. It is designed to wake us up and help us think. He warns against trusting in mere mortals. Even powerful personalities can lead us astray. Only the Lord is worthy of our trust and when we invite God to guide our lives, even disaster won't destroy us.

- *Allow your imagination to ponder the two images – a barren bush in the dry salty desert versus a tree always bearing fruit beside a stream. What strikes you as you see yourself in these images?*
- *Trust and fear are often linked. What do you most fear losing in life? Talk to God about how that impacts your trust.*

SECOND READING ~ 1 Corinthians 15:12, 16-20 ~

Brothers and sisters: If Christ is preached as raised from the dead, how can some among you say there is no resurrection of the dead? If the dead are not raised, neither has Christ been raised, and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is vain; you are still in your sins. Then those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are the most pitiable people of all. But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

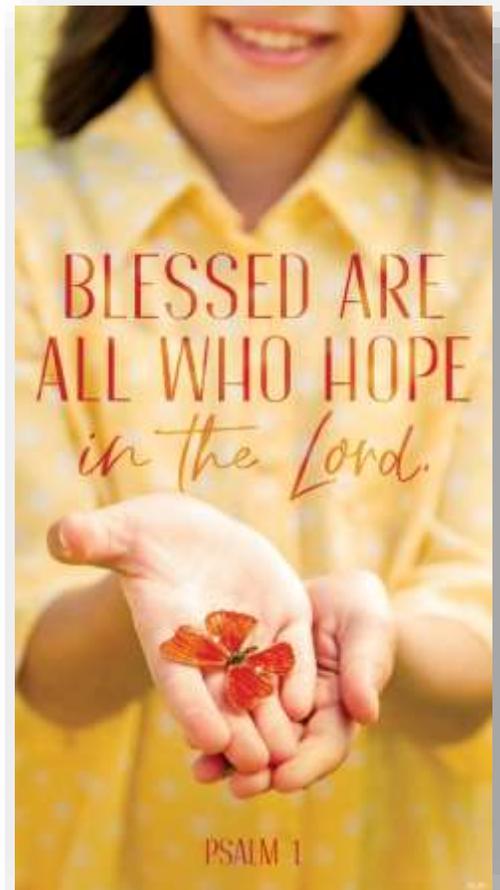
St Paul speaks to some in Corinth who do not believe in the Resurrection.

They struggle to believe that our bodies could be glorified in heaven. St Paul makes it clear that Jesus' Resurrection is central to our Faith which becomes most pitiable unless we believe Jesus is Lord. His birth, life, teaching, death, resurrection, and ascension are one continuous salvation event. God reveals his eternal love and desire that we be with Him forever and then provides the way where we become one with Christ through Baptism and the Holy Spirit.

- *As you reflect on your Baptism, what links can you see between Baptism and Resurrection? N.T. Wright says, "Jesus' Resurrection is the beginning of God's new project not to snatch people away from earth to heaven but to colonize earth the life of heaven." How do you react to that statement?*

We never say Jesus 'has' risen. We proclaim, 'Jesus IS Risen'. "Christ has died, Christ is Risen, Christ will come again." Our belief in the resurrection of our bodies(Creed) is established through the Resurrection of Christ.

- *How deep is your conviction that 'Jesus is Lord' and how does that impact your daily choices and decisions? Who do you really put your trust in? Talk with God about your belief or struggles. Try praying, "Lord I believe, help my unbelief."*



GOSPEL ~ Luke 6:17, 20-26 ~

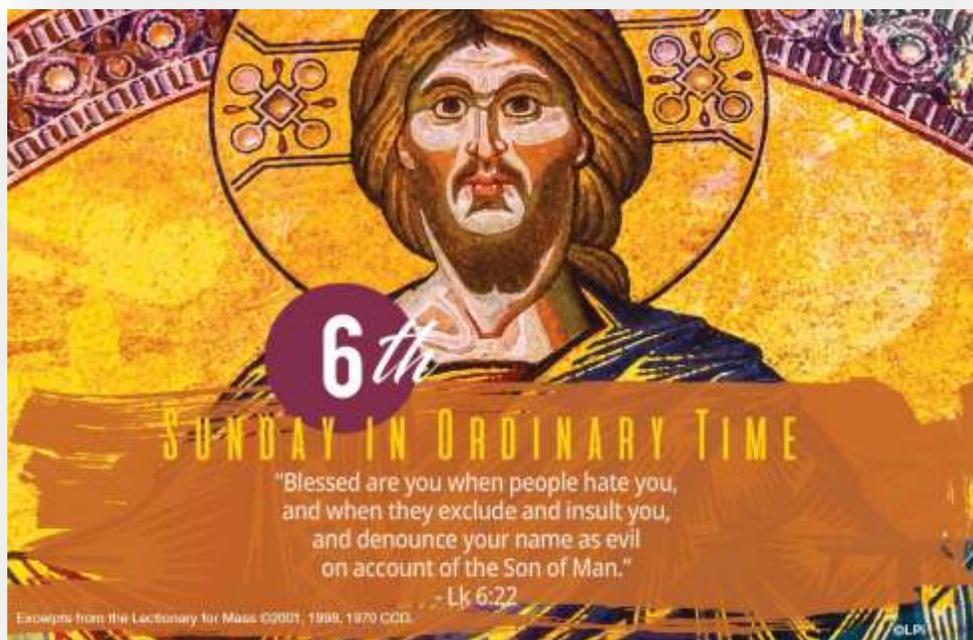
Jesus came down with the Twelve and stood on a stretch of level ground with a great crowd of his disciples and a large number of the people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon. And raising his eyes toward his disciples he said: “Blessed are you who are poor, for the kingdom of God is yours. Blessed are you who are now hungry, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who are now weeping, for you will laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude and insult you, and denounce your name as evil on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice and leap for joy on that day! Behold, your reward will be great in heaven. For their ancestors treated the prophets in the same way. But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe to you who are filled now, for you will be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will grieve and weep. Woe to you when all speak well of you, for their ancestors treated the false prophets in this way.”

Jesus has just spent the night in prayer, chosen the twelve and he sits them down. The stage is set for his most important teaching: The Beatitudes. Nowhere in Luke does the Gospel challenge us so severely. What are my ultimate pursuits? What world order am I living for? What measurement system of success am I committed to? Am I on the side of the poor and hungry or the rich and the full? What does your lifestyle and actions show? Are you good news to the poor? (note Luke means primarily economically poor not the tamer ‘poor in spirit’ of Matthew). We sometimes speak of these teachings as “BE-Attitudes”. It seems that the choices we make ‘now’ will impact us for eternity.

- What do you think Jesus means?

The Beatitudes bring together a clashing of two ideas and worldviews. It causes a conflict within us. All things being equal, to have riches and to be full is a good. But the status quo is unacceptable for God and Jesus’ disciples. Luke’s version of the Beatitudes does not let Christians off the hook. There will be a radical reversal of fortune in God’s judgement. Woe to you who are rich, filled, who can laugh now.

- How can I proclaim, ‘Jesus is Lord’ with integrity and not take this teaching seriously? What is your reaction?



MEDITATION

When you encounter misfortune, grief, or tragic loss, how do you respond? With fear or faith? With passive resignation or with patient hope and trust in God? We know from experience that no one can escape all of the inevitable trials of life - pain, suffering, sickness, and death. When Jesus began to teach his disciples he gave them a "way of happiness" that transcends every difficulty and trouble that can weigh us down with

grief and despair. Jesus began his sermon on the mount by addressing the issue of where True happiness can be found. The word beatitude literally means happiness or blessedness. Jesus' way of happiness, however, demands a transformation from within - a conversion of heart and mind which can only come about through the gift and working of the Holy Spirit. How can one possibly find happiness in poverty, hunger, mourning, and persecution? If we want to be filled with the joy and happiness of heaven, then we must empty ourselves of all that would shut God out of our hearts. Poverty of spirit finds ample room and joy in possessing God alone as the greatest treasure possible. Hunger of the spirit seeks nourishment and strength in God's word and Spirit. Sorrow and mourning over wasted life and sin leads to joyful freedom from the burden of guilt and oppression. Ambrose (339-397 A.D), an early church father and bishop of Milan, links the beatitudes with the four cardinal virtues which strengthen us in living a life of moral excellence. He writes: "Let us see how St. Luke encompassed the eight blessings in the four. We know that there are four cardinal virtues: temperance, justice, prudence and fortitude. One who is poor in spirit is not greedy. One who weeps is not proud but is submissive and tranquil. One who mourns is humble. One who is just does not deny what he knows is given jointly to all for us. One who is merciful gives away his own goods. One who bestows his own goods does not seek another's, nor does he contrive a trap for his neighbor. These virtues are interwoven and interlinked, so that one who has one may be seen to have several, and a single virtue befits the saints. Where virtue abounds, the reward too abounds... Thus temperance has purity of heart and spirit, justice has compassion, patience has peace, and endurance has gentleness." (EXPOSITION OF THE GOSPEL OF LUKE 5.62-63, 68).

God reveals to the humble of heart the true source of abundant life and happiness. Jesus promises his disciples that the joys of heaven will more than compensate for the troubles and hardships they can expect in this world. Thomas Aquinas said: "No person can live without joy. That is why someone deprived of spiritual joy goes after carnal pleasures."

- *Do you know the joy and happiness of hungering and thirsting for God alone?*
- *Do you agree with the meditation that we can find happiness in poverty, mourning, and persecution? How can we live our lives with this in mind?*
- *How do you respond when you encounter misfortune, sickness, grief, or tragic loss?*

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: In closing, let us pray for guidance in finding the joy that can only be found in Christ:

ALL: Lord Jesus, increase my hunger for you and show me the way that leads to everlasting happiness and peace. May I desire you above all else and find perfect joy in doing your will. Amen.

Leader: (if time, let us offer up our intercessions ... St. Michael... Our Father... Hail Mary... Glory Be...)

[Opening reflection was shared from St. Paul Center at <https://stpaulcenter.com/studies-tools/sunday-bible-reflections>]

[video can be found at FORMED.ORG "Opening the Word". Additional reflections can be found at FORMED in "Opening the Word"]

[Discussion questions created by Fr Frank Bird sm, Marist Priest, and distributed by www.maristlaitynz.org, were shared with permission from www.livingtheword.org.nz.]

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