

### **13 February 2022: The Sixth Sunday after The Epiphany 6: Luke 6:17-26**

*“Blessed are you who are poor....Blessed are you who hunger....Blessed are you who weep....Blessed are you when people hate you...revile you...; Rejoice....leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven.”*

Anyone who thinks Jesus preached a ‘prosperity Gospel’ or assumes the Church exists for comfort and security, has not read the Bible. In the Gospels, Jesus is a tornado wreaking havoc on the comfortable and safe. Theologian F.R. Maltby wrote, *“Jesus promised his disciples three things: that they would be completely fearless...absurdly happy, and...in constant trouble.”* How refreshing! Jesus transforms our lives, impelling us to be joyfully valiant in service to others, for God’s glory, being a nuisance to those whose lives are built on selfishness, power, exploitation, and violence.

Action reveals faith. We have a prodigious facility for self-deception. Actions reveal the real person behind the words. Jesus makes clear the path of faith: it is the way of humility, forgiveness, kindness, generosity, mercy, patience, service, love, and sacrifice.

A traveler to Ireland, wanted to see Roscommon; she asked for directions. An Irishman, scratching his jaw, replied, *“Roscommon, is it? Well, if I was going to Roscommon, I wouldn’t start from here!”*

Jesus always ‘starts from here,’ where you are in life today. Begin with having less so you may share more with those who have little; begin with sorrow for the world’s sins, and your own; begin with willingness to be embarrassed, discriminated against, persecuted because you follow Jesus. Begin with sacrifice: sacrifice your need for consolation, your attempts to be filled with things; sacrifice the desire for insulation from the world’s troubles; abandon notions that religion is for safety, comfort, and escape.

We will, of course, fail at such radical trust in God; we are only dust (Psalm 103:14). Yet because God loves us, our failures are a sure pathway to Jesus; in failure we may finally sacrifice self-reliance; our need to succeed, to be right, to be seen as good lads, good girls. We will sacrifice posing as holy.

There is an open secret for getting from here to there. The secret is whispered at the Last Supper and screamed from the Cross; it is the secret held in resurrected nail-pierced hands, on Easter morning. It is the secret that God loves you with a passionate, everlasting, infinite love; it is the secret that our failings, our self-deception, our raging narcissism are to God what a fly is to Niagara Falls, what an anthill is to Everest. It is the shattering truth that there are no depths to which God will not sink for love of you, and everyone. Our sins are nothing; we are loved. We are loved with a height and depth and breadth we cannot imagine. It is not our sins that keep us from God but our refusal to let them go and turn to Him. We are loved, while we are sinners. You are the treasure of God’s heart, the apple of God’s eye. As an anonymous medieval spiritual master wrote: *“For with His merciful eye God looks upon neither what you are, nor what you have been, but what you wish to be”* (Cloud of Unknowing).

To get from here to there, from a life no longer ‘me’ centered, no longer concerned with progress, success, accomplishment, looking good or any of that—this journey begins and continues simply with the desire to let nothing stand in the way of God’s love working in your life. To want, in your soul, to be an effective, active instrument of God’s love in the lives of those around you, so that they, too, may walk the path with and to Jesus. St. Augustine wrote, *“All the life of a good Christian is nothing except holy desire.”*

To go from here to there, let alone run, get rid of the junk weighing you down. As you come up for Communion today, as every Sunday, you will hold out your hands. Today and from now on, as you hold out your hands do so not only to receive but to give. Surrender your cares and worries, your sins and failures, anything and everything that hinders you from loving Jesus and serving him with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength. And if you find yourself hesitant or skeptical, then pray God to help you give every obstacle to Him, so that you become empty enough to receive His mercy and grace.

We can get there from here, with God’s help. And blessed is everyone who runs on the path of salvation. Today I end with this prayer: *“Lord my God, rescue me from myself, and give me to you. Take away everything that draws me from you and give me all those things that lead me to you; for the sake of Christ our Lord (Abbot Louis de Blois). Amen.*