



Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany, Feb. 16, 2025

St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Coeur d'Alene
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[Jeremiah 17:5-10](#)

[Psalm 1](#)

[1 Corinthians 15:12-20](#)

[Luke 6:17-26](#)

O God, the strength of all who put their trust in you: Mercifully accept our prayers; and because in our weakness we can do nothing good without you, give us the help of your grace, that in keeping your commandments we may please you both in will and deed. Amen.

Our collect for today sums up the scriptures nicely, as collects are meant to do. My first reaction when reading today's scriptures quite literally prompted a series of synonyms in my brain...What is the overarching message? To me, these scriptures tell us that what motivates us, the catalyst, the impetus, our inclination, and what our "attitude" is, our mindset, frame-of-mind are the important things in our relationship with God.

It is by the Grace of God that we can keep our thoughts and actions grounded in furthering God's kingdom here on earth, rather than in personal or power-grabbing gains.

The time frame of our passage from Jeremiah is when the leaders of Judah were forming alliances with Egypt against Babylon. Jeremiah's exhortations are to trust in the Lord not in political or military alliances. And it didn't turn out so well for Judah in the long run as Babylon overran Jerusalem and destroyed the temple, sending all, including Jeremiah into exile.

Blessed are those who trust in the Lord, whose trust IS the Lord. God searches our hearts and minds. He knows how we struggle to trust in him. We can lean into that trust knowing that God gives according to our ways, according to the fruit of our doings. Some of us get there more quickly than others, and our trust ebbs and flows as our lives unfold. Rest assured that God is always there to help us, to draw out our ability to trust. It doesn't mean that everything is going to be successful and perfect. Trust keeps us connected to God, even in the most difficult situations.

I'm living this right now! This last week I received a diagnosis of breast cancer. I've already gone through this once, five years ago. Now, it is showing up in the other breast. I'm really working on the "trust in God" right now and relying a great deal on the hope of God pulling that trust out of me. I'll get there because I know I can't do this without trusting that God is with me.

But is it realistic to think that we can never trust people, mere mortals as our scripture says? I don't think so. There are times when we must trust in people, as I will have to do with the doctors supporting my recovery. The key, it seems to me, is not turning away from God in the process.

Again, it goes back to the motivation and attitude we have. These relationships should not be for personal or power-grabbing gain, without regard to God. Rather is our motivation centered on God. Are our actions representative of how God would have us be toward others? God looks at what we think and where our heart is.

And then we turn to our Gospel: Blessed are you who are poor, hungry, sad, and expendable. Woe to you who are rich, full, happy, and popular. This week's Gospel in a nutshell.

This is a hard scripture. It's not like the beatitudes from Matthew that put particulars around those who receive blessings and doesn't even mention those who will not. Blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. In this scripture Luke goes right for the person – the poor, the hungry, the sad, the expendable. Those who have absolutely nothing left to fall back on receive blessings.

And in our Lukan scripture, a whole series of “woes” with opposing attributes are included. The Beatitudes or blessings as we read in both Matthew and Luke, and the “woe-attudes,” expressing grief, anguish and distress to those who embody the opposing attributes listed in our Luke scriptures.

So, what do we do with this scripture, especially in the context of the those of us who are comfortable and privileged in our lives?

In this passage, Jesus has just come down from the mountain after praying all night. He has chosen his twelve apostles and brought them and the other disciples down to the multitudes who have come to him for healing and to hear what Jesus has to say. Power is exuding from him exponentially to heal all of those who are coming to him. The magnitude of what Jesus is doing leaves me awestruck. Jesus begins to teach, and what we hear opens such a different world view to us than what we could imagine.

In this passage, Jesus is speaking to all – the poor aren't off in one corner, nor the rich in the other. Everyone hears the same thing. It's also not a sorting list of what we are supposed to do. Every blessing and every woe are addressed to every person.

Perhaps this is the message – the human patterns. We live blessings and woes over and over in the course of our lives. In an essay by Debie Thomas, a writer for a website called Journey with Jesus she says, “we invite blessing every time we find ourselves empty and yearning for God, and we invite woe every time we retreat into smug and thoughtless self-satisfaction.”

I don't think that Jesus is saying that we are not to have money, or that we need to starve ourselves, not laugh, or not have people who look up to us. I think it is about what role those things play in our lives.

Last week, we saw Jesus give great abundance when he invited Simon, James and John to put out into the lake and to lower their nets again. This was after a full night of fishing and not catching a thing. Now, the catch is overflowing with fish, so much so that the boats begin to sink. It's not just a few fish; it is an abundance.

It's the same when you think of the many times Jesus was at dinner with friends and those “sinners,” as the Pharisee's would say. I'm sure there was laughter and plenty of food. Or the wedding at Cana. It was a party. People were laughing and having a good time. Jesus replenished the wine, not just with a wineskin or two, but with gallons, and it was the really, really good stuff. Again, abundance to the extreme.

After today's scripture, Jesus goes on to give many examples of how we are to live, what we are to do. I am sure we will be diving deeper into these scriptures in the coming weeks. We are to love our enemies, bless those who curse us, pray for those who abuse us. Be merciful as our Father is merciful. Do unto others as we would have them do to us.

It all goes back to attitude and motivation. What we hear in today's Gospel are promises to those who are suffering in this world. God sees you, loves you, and is intent on your thriving. Jesus' words are also warnings that we are called to live with attention and generosity toward our neighbors, even as God is attentive and generous.

In the comfort of our lives, what does it take for us to remain attentive to those around us? How can we use the incredible gifts God gives us in abundance for those around us who need a helping hand? Where is our attention and what is our motivation? It is the gaps here that we are called to address by this passage for God's sake and for our own.

I pray that God continue to instill and draw out our trust in him, so that we may remain ever mindful to the opportunities that God gives us to live with generosity and attention.