

**6 OTC.19**; Jer 17:5-8; 1Cor 15:12-20; Luke 6:17-26; *Deciding to be Happy*

**What a strange Gospel! ‘Blessed are the poor. Blessed are the hungry. Blessed are those who weep. Blessed are those who are persecuted.’**

### **What is Jesus really saying?**

\*When he says, ‘**Blessed are you who are poor**’, he is not saying that poverty is a good thing in itself. Poverty is an evil. And when we see abject poverty ... it is very disturbing, especially for us as Christians.

**Jesus is pointing out the danger of wealth.** Some of the rich place their hope in their riches. *They build their kingdom in this world.* The kingdom of God becomes distant and hazy. The poor, on the other hand, are blessed because they place their hope in God.

Only God can satisfy the longings of our hearts.

When he says, ‘**Blessed are you who are hungry now**’, he is not saying that physical hunger is a good thing. Hunger is a great evil, and its effects are shocking. When he met hungry people he fed them.

And he told us that we should do the same.

### **Jesus is saying that human beings don’t live on bread alone.**

There is a kind of hunger that is good - a hunger for the food that God gives. A hunger for Peace & Justice, for Truth & Compassion. Those who hunger for this food are truly blessed - their hunger will be satisfied.

*Only God can fill our emptiness.*

When Jesus says, ‘**Blessed are you who weep now**,’ he is not saying that sorrow is a good thing. He had compassion on the sorrowing and dried many a tear. **He is talking about those who put their trust in God.** They may have many sorrows in this life, but they will not be disappointed

**... because God will fulfill their hopes and dreams in the Kingdom.**

These three beatitudes refer to three aspects of the same distressful situation. We may ask: **what merit is there in being poor or hungry or afflicted?**

**Quick answer: there is none.**

The ‘**blessedness**’ of the poor lies in the fact that God is their champion. The 4th beatitude, ‘**Blessed are you when people hate you**,’ was addressed to suffering and persecuted disciples. It was a way of encouraging them in their difficulties. Jesus is not saying that it is a good thing to be spoken ill of. Abuse and false accusation are very difficult things to deal with. They have been known to destroy people.

**Why then are the persecuted *blessed*?**

They are blessed because they know their cause is right.  
They are blessed because God is on their side.  
They are blessed because they are in very good company.

**2** Those whose main goal in life is to be popular, *will inevitably betray their ideals*. Those whose main aim is to live a virtuous life are blessed, even if it brings trouble on them, as it inevitably will. Those who suffer in *the cause of right* draw strength from the *example of Jesus*. To suffer for your values and faith, or for doing the right thing, (which for a believer amounts to the same thing), is the Way to the closest possible companionship with Jesus.

**To follow Jesus is a decision to love, a decision to live fully in this world, a decision to believe that *Creation* is still an on-going reality.**

**And, it is a decision to participate, to be HAPPY!**

And Jesus said ... *“for the kingdom of God is yours.”*

\*Here’s a true story. *Maya Angelou* tells how her aunt was once a live-in housekeeper for a wealthy couple in California. The couple lived in a huge mansion with 14 bedrooms. Her aunt’s main job was cooking. Every day she cooked and served a light breakfast, a good lunch, and a full dinner to the couple and their frequent guests. *But the years passed & the couple grew old*. They stopped entertaining. Eventually their evening meal consisted of scrambled eggs, toast, and weak tea. **They ate it in silence,**

**... hardly seeing each other at opposite ends of the large table.**

*On Saturday nights the housekeeper used to invite a few of her friends into her own quarters in the basement*. They enjoyed plain but good food and a few drinks. They played records, danced, and finally settled down

... to a game of cards. **There was lots of laughter.**

One night the door opened. Her employers asked her to come out. In the hallway the wife said to her, *‘We don’t mean to disturb you. But you all seem to be having such a good time. We’d just like to watch you.’* Then the husband added, *‘If you’ll just leave the door ajar, your friends don’t need to know. We won’t make a sound.’* Her aunt readily agreed. But she found it sad that her employers owned a large house, a swimming pool, three cars,

**... but had no joy.**

(\*New Sunday Liturgies, Year C, F. McCarthy)

Paul reminds us, **“But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.”** We will rise from the Dead.

There is so much more *Life* to come, than this world presently reveals to us.

Material acquisition can be isolating. Self-absorption is not life-giving. It leaves us alone. **It's when we lack, when we "have-not"**, that we are drawn to look *beyond* ourselves. ***Our poverty, our hunger, our sorrow***, can lead to greater riches because they invite us into relationship, into community. They call us to a deeper friendship with ourselves, God, and others. They call us to compassion, to communion. They open us to encounter Jesus, the Christ, who transforms ***our lives and our world*** into Reality, the Kingdom of God.

*At this Liturgy of the Blessed* decide to be happy.