

6th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C

February 16, 2025

The Freedom of detachment (Luke 6:17-26)

“Jesus came down with the twelve and stood on a level place. A large crowd of his disciples was there and a great number of people from all over Judea, from Jerusalem, and from the coastal region around Tyre and Sidon. Looking at his disciples, he said: ‘Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their ancestors treated the prophets. But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort. Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep. Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you, for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets.’”

Luke 6:17, 20-26 (New International Version)

Happiness in puppy’s tail: A puppy said to his old uncle dog, *“From my short experience in life I have learned that the best thing for a dog is happiness and that happiness is in my tail. That is why I am chasing my tail, and when I catch it, I shall have perfect happiness.”* The old dog replied, *“From my research and long experience, I too, have judged that happiness is a fine thing for a dog and that happiness is in his tail. But I’ve noticed that whenever I chase it, it keeps running away from me, but when I just sit or go about my business, it comes to me.”*

Listening to what Christ has to say to His disciples sounds ridiculous. Here He is declaring how happy the poor are, how happy the hungry are, and how happy are those who are weeping. He goes on to say we are happy when we are spurned and rejected, even when we are abused. Then Jesus tells us that those who are rich are going to go hungry, those who are laughing now are going to really hurt, and those who are popular are going to be knocked off their pedestals. This sounds contrary to the standard of life as we experience it every day.

The Sermon on the Mount presents us with high standards and the promise that God will be with us no matter how tough life gets for us. Christ gives a profile of what a true disciple is to be. Those who follow Jesus must operate under a set of values different from and often opposite of that of the world. The Lord explained that a blessed life was not found in “getting” or from “doing” but in **“being.”**

For each of the blessings there is a corresponding woe. The four woes all share a common truth, beware of what you take from life, for you will pay for it. The Point seems to be that life involves choices. We must choose what in life to pursue. Every choice had both benefits (blessings) and a price to pay.

So what is Jesus telling us here today?

First, He is giving us a value system that is radically set over and against this world's values, the values of those unconcerned about God or what God expects of us. Secondly, Jesus is establishing a connection between Himself and His true followers.

To understand this connection, we first must realize that God did not create us to live in poverty. Nor did He create us to be unhappy and miserable, or to live in rejection. Rather God, Christ Jesus, comes to us as we live in those conditions, conditions that the world has created, not God. And where is Christ Jesus to be found? Among those who have received life's cruellest blows. He joins Himself to those whom life has harshly treated, and He is preparing His disciples to experience this world's rejections. Later on Jesus said, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves, for my yoke is easy, my burden light." He yokes Himself to us in carrying our burdens and pulling our loads.

Those who appear to be happy in this world end up by having only what this world has to offer them, nothing more. Those who are rich, those who are satisfied, those who have their bellies filled, and those who have popularity among the worldly, have only what this world offers them and permits them to have, nothing more. They think they have no need for God and for what God can offer them. For them, Christ is nuts, crazy, "out of it", and not to be taken seriously.

(1) "Blessed are you who are poor for yours is the Kingdom of God" Beware of setting your sights too low.

There is nothing innately righteous about being poor, nor is there any automatic evil in being rich. Money is not evil, unless it takes the place that only God should have (1 Tim. 6). In the story of the rich young ruler found in Luke 18 we discover that his money meant too much to him. When forced with the choice of following Jesus or being rich, he chose to remain rich (Luke 18:18).

Jesus follows this teaching of blessings on the poor in a few verses with a corresponding woe in verse twenty-four, "But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation." The word "woe" expresses dismay, regret, and compassion rather than a threat. Jesus expresses disappointment and condemnation for the actions and attitudes of those who will not accept the kingdom he offers.

(2) “Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied” Beware of settling for too little: Jesus blesses spiritual hunger. With his coming, Christ became the source of all satisfaction.

(3)) “Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.” This statement was not an attack on laughter, Jesus does not mean, “Blessed are grim, cheerless Christians.” Humor and laughter are good and necessary for the believer. **Beware of what you laugh at!**

We are called to weep over lost souls, people who will go into eternal darkness rejecting Jesus Christ. We are to weep over the world’s misery, over the injustice that falls on so many helpless people, over the unfairness that victimizes the weak, child abuse, battered spouses, over marriages that have fallen apart, over homes destroyed by divorce, over rejection, over those who laugh now but who, unless they turn to Christ, will suffer.

(4) “Blessed are you when men hate you and when they exclude you, and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man’s sake.” Beware of seeking the world’s approval.

The sad truth is that many Christians are persecuted not for the sake of their faith but simply because they are so unpleasant. Some are rejected because they are thought to be proud and judgmental. There is no intrinsic merit in being rejected and persecuted, but only in being thus treated on account of our service for Jesus Christ. The truth is that everyone who truly follows Jesus will be persecuted. In John (15:20) Jesus states, **“Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you....”** Paul advised Timothy, (2 Timothy 3:12), “Yes, and all who desire to live Godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”

Many prophets in the Bible were persecuted for speaking the truth, including Jeremiah, David, Elijah, Amos, Isaiah, and John the Baptist. Jeremiah was mocked and ridiculed by fellow Jews. He was threatened with death and his adversaries sought to kill him. Jesus Christ was crucified on the cross, the apostles, many saints and martyrs had similar fate.

George Wiegel is a distinguished senior fellow in Ethics and Public Policy Center. He states that, “More Christians died for their faith in the twentieth century than in the previous nineteen centuries of Christian history combined”. He also states that “this is the greatest era of persecution in Christian history. The assault of Christian faithful today is ongoing, extensive, and heart-rending”.

(The New Book of Christian Martyrs, by Johnie Moore, and Jerry Pattengale).

A person who is persecuted because of Christ is the only one truly living. There is an old saying, “Even a dead dog can swim with the tide.” To swim against the tide you have to literally be alive and kicking.

Peter warned in (1 Peter 4:14-16) “If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of Glory and of God rests on you”.

God is All-knowing, All-loving, and All-powerful as well as our most loving Creator and Father. Therefore, it is most fitting to put our complete trust in him. No other person or thing deserves the trust that we place in God. Paul cries out to the wayward Corinthians: If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are the most pitiable people of all. Christ is not the means for us to get what we want. Christians desire Christ, and Christ will provide.

With the recent increase in food starvation around Billings area, St Pius X collection efforts to take care of those in need remain a step in the right direction: Reb Bag Sunday, kids’ backpack program, hosting the Family Promise, the Knights of Columbus program, support to St Vincent De Paul, Family Service, and many others remain our collective response as dynamic disciples of Christ.

Lord, thank you for gathering us together as one family here at St Pius X. We ask that you open our hearts to hear your teachings on true happiness, as found in the beatitudes. Guide us to understand the blessings of living a life dedicated to compassion, forgiveness, humility, and justice, so that we may reflect your love in our daily lives. We make our prayers through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.

Fr. Martin Ezeihuaku, MSP.