

Year C 6th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Jer 17:5-8; Ps 1; 1 Cor 15:12, 16-20; Lk 6:17, 20-26

This Sunday's readings contrast two ways of living and their respective consequences. Life without a living faith in God is barren, fruitless, it does not make one happy. Jeremiah and the Psalm use desert imagery to illustrate this, contrasting the freshness and greenery of a life in the Lord following his ways with the dryness, aridity and emptiness of the one who lives just for material things, the work of human hands. When tested, those who put their trust in the Lord will flourish, while the wicked disappear into oblivion.

The Lucan version of the "beatitudes" includes also "curses," again contrasting two different ways to live. "Blessed" really is a translation of words that in Hebrew and Greek mean "fortunate, happy." Jesus is declaring that despite being poor, hungry, weeping and persecuted, those who in this condition are open to his call will share in the joy of God himself; in fact, even in this life they experience the blessedness of being with Jesus in the Kingdom of God, Lk 18:28-30.

This paradox, that the truly blessed are not those who are strong in the flesh, successful, well-fed and comfortable, but the lowly ones of the world, can best be understood by considering that in the last instance, it is our spirit, not our material attributes, which will be most important and determinative for our fate. Our life is a school of perfection in Christ; it is Christ who lowered himself and was made perfect through his suffering, Heb 5:8-9; Phil 2:8-9. What we become and overcome in our spirit will be everlasting, while worldly success tends to ruin our souls (Mk 8:36) and often turns us away from God and neighbor. True success lies not in accumulating for ourselves, but in building up the community of God (1 Cor 14:12).

The two ways are described by Paul as either "sowing in the flesh" or "sowing in the Spirit," Gal 6:7-8. Christ has shown us that true victory lies in being vindicated by God in the end. The world can bestow its pleasures and admiration for a while, but what truly lasts and fulfills is carrying out God's project in our life, not our own ephemeral projects for ourselves. We must view our life with God's eyes, and not as if all that counts is what can be seen here and now. The risen Christ calls us to look up to where he is calling us from, Phil 3:14.