

23<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday II

**Reading 1**  
**1 COR 7:25-31**

*Brothers and sisters:  
In regard to virgins, I have no  
commandment from the Lord, but I give  
my opinion as one who by the Lord's  
mercy is trustworthy.*

*So this is what I think best because of the  
present distress: that it is a good thing  
for a person to remain as he is. Are you  
bound to a wife? Do not seek a  
separation. Are you free of a  
wife? Then do not look for a wife.*

*If you marry, however, you do not sin,  
nor does an unmarried woman sin if she  
marries; but such people will experience  
affliction in their earthly life, and I  
would like to spare you that.*

*I tell you, brothers, the time is running  
out. From now on, let those having wives  
act as not having them, those weeping as  
not weeping, those rejoicing as not  
rejoicing, those buying as not owning,  
those using the world as not using it  
fully.*

*For the world in its present form is  
passing away.*

**Responsorial Psalm**  
**PS 45:11-12, 14-15, 16-17**

*Hear, O daughter, and see; turn your ear,  
forget your people and your father's house.  
So shall the king desire your beauty; for he  
is your lord, and you must worship him.*

*All glorious is the king's daughter as she  
enters; her raiment is threaded with spun  
gold. In embroidered apparel she is borne*

*in to the king; behind her the virgins of her  
train are brought to you. They are borne in  
with gladness and joy; they enter the  
palace of the king. The place of your  
fathers your sons shall have; you shall  
make them princes through all the land.*

**Gospel**  
**LK 6:20-26**

*Raising his eyes toward his disciples  
Jesus said:*

*"Blessed are you who are poor,  
for the Kingdom of God is yours.*

*Blessed are you who are now hungry,  
for you will be satisfied.*

*Blessed are you who are now weeping,  
for you will laugh.*

*Blessed are you when people hate you,  
and when they exclude and insult you,  
and denounce your name as evil  
on account of the Son of Man.  
Rejoice and leap for joy on that day!  
Behold, your reward will be great in  
heaven.*

*For their ancestors treated the prophets  
in the same way.*

*But woe to you who are rich,  
for you have received your consolation.*

*But woe to you who are filled now,  
for you will be hungry.*

*Woe to you who laugh now,  
for you will grieve and weep.*

*Woe to you when all speak well of you,  
for their ancestors treated the false  
prophets in this way."*

X

Folks, this is as good as it gets. This is quintessential Jesus.

What you read in today's Gospel is Luke's version of the Beatitudes, the blessings that introduce Jesus' famous Sermon on the Plain. If we get this, we get Jesus.

By "getting it", I'm not necessarily talking about understanding. Our most inspiring teachings are mystical, beyond our understanding, but not beyond our embracing.

If you ever have anybody tell you that Jesus says this, or God wants that, if it is not consistent with the Beatitudes, feel free to doubt their authenticity. Recently with the popularity of conspiracy theories, there has been a resurging interest in the so-called Gnostic Gospels.

A popular narrative is that these are ancient writings about Jesus that purport some truth which the powerful Church extinguished in protection of its own self-interest. This was vividly portrayed in a movie a few years ago called the DaVinci Code.

However, these additional gospels are nothing new to Biblical scholars. They include books with titles like: *The Gospel of Mary*, *The Gospel of Judas* and *The Gospel of Philip*. These, of course, are merely attributions. They were not authored by any of these named saints.

*The Gospel of Thomas* is one such gospel. I had a prof at Notre Dame who learned the Coptic language just so he could study the original text. Some scholars think this collection of sayings contains actual Jesus statements not found in our canonical gospels.

But yet, when one reads *The Gospel of Thomas* as a whole, it flunks on the Beatitudes test. *The Gospel of Thomas* was very tough on women and saw them as a distraction to the divine will. Well, that's not the Jesus we know. The early Christians could discern from all of the many writings about Jesus, those which proclaimed the Jesus they knew by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

And so, if these Beatitudes are to be the lens through which we view the rest of our Christian faith, we need to embrace them. Pope Francis says we should know the Beatitudes as well as we know the Ten Commandments. If I'd only memorize them, they'd be available to me when I need to discern any situation through Jesus' eyes.

They promise blessedness. I have also seen it translated as "happiness". They offer a way to live life fully. They assure us of God's most intimate presence in our most dire circumstance. They promise a future of joy in the Kingdom of Heaven.

And, as it is true that the eternal Kingdom of Heaven waits for us after we take our last breath, it is also true that the Kingdom offers heaven in the here and now.

These words not only offer us the way to be truly human, they also reveal the face of God. Imagine a God who weeps... and see Jesus weeping at the death of his friend, Lazarus. Imagine a God who is poor... and see a baby lying in a manger.

I am going to give you a chance to contemplate these Beatitudes. I offer just the "Blessed are..." phrases. Allow 20 seconds of silence after you read each one. Listen to what God has to say to you.

When in your past have you wept; when were you hated? Where was God?

Get comfortable first in your chairs. Take a deep breath and a full exhale. Be still and ask God to speak to you.

*Blessed are you who are poor,*  
20 seconds

*Blessed are you who are now hungry,*  
20 seconds

*Blessed are you who are now weeping,*  
20 seconds

*Blessed are you when people hate you,*  
20 seconds

*Rejoice and leap for joy on that day! Behold, your reward will be great in heaven.*  
X