

Homily. 6th Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year.C. 16/17 February 2019.

This weekend's gospel must give every fundamentalist the heebie jeebies. It's St. Luke's version of what in Matthew we call the sermon on the mount, except in Luke it happens on a piece of level ground, a plain, and is much shorter and more direct, consisting only of 4 happy statements followed by 4 contrasting alas warnings. A large crowd are gathered, but Luke tells us that Jesus fixed His eyes on His disciples making them and us the people to which His address was directed.

The words of the happy statements aren't meant to be taken literally, either. There's no particular virtue in being poor, hungry, weeping or persecuted just for its own sake. The point Jesus is making, a point as relevant today as ever it was, is that those who are powerful, rich, happy and highly thought of now, keeping it all for themselves at the expense of the majority, are in for a rough future, a future of woe and alas. On the flip side the victims of this selfishness, the poor, hungry, weeping and persecuted today, can consider themselves happy in having a sure hope for God's justice for God hears them and is on their side.

What Jesus is doing in this teaching is challenging us to think and see as God does, differently from the so called 'normal' expectations of our time and society. It's truly shocking to know that 1% of the worlds people hold over 90% of global wealth. It's criminal that people in power feather their own nests favouring friends and family with contracts and other benefits while neglecting the good of the people they're supposed to serve.

It's indisputably evil that multinational companies and corporations amass huge profits often avoiding taxes by legal loop holes, all the while doing so on the labour of the poor and mistreated who struggle simply to survive. It's a sick, warped situation that armaments and weapons industries flourish while schools, hospitals and basic public infrastructure falls into disrepair starved for money. Such abuses and injustices were happening in Jesus time and every time just as they are today.

His words in Luke's gospel foreshadow the great turning of the tables, a momentous change culminating in the resurrection when the forces of death and darkness were absolutely defeated. This is why in the 2nd reading St. Paul insists on the certainty of Christ's resurrection, for our own renewal and rising absolutely depends upon it. Every Eucharist we celebrate and share witnesses to our belief that Christ is risen and alive. As the bread and wine is changed sacramentally into Him so are we changed into Him until we become Him. All of us are in this process of changing, rising daily up to new light, hope and happiness with the Lord.

Change is at the core of our liturgy because it's at the heart of our faith, celebrating what God is bringing about when the poor, hungry, saddened and persecuted are filled, freed and laughing with joy. This is the right side of history to be on as Jesus has shown. Now, the challenge we have is to make sure that our values and choices are consistent with the message we've heard and in tune with the Lord who gives Himself totally to us and for us.