



## BLESSED ARE... WHO?

(LUKE 6:17, 20-26)

Stained glass window depicting Jesus, in the Cathedral of St Rumbold in Mechelen, Belgium

In Luke's Gospel account, before any important event or decision, Jesus withdraws for a period of prayer. At the beginning of our episode today, Jesus comes down from the mountain where he had spent the night in intense communication with God before selecting his twelve special disciples.

In Matthew's account, aware of the Jewish symbolism, Jesus is presented as going *up* the mountain, as Moses went up to receive the Law. Luke is writing for a Gentile audience and shows Jesus coming *down* the mountain with the Twelve and teaching, on "level ground", a great crowd of disciples and others from the wider region who had come to hear him and be cured. Jesus here is more the prophet and wise teacher than the lawgiver like Moses.

Luke's version of Jesus' sermon contains only four Beatitudes and these are accompanied by four warnings ("alas!") to those who do not take the message to heart. His account is very much focused on the material and practical aspects of Jesus' teaching. Whereas Matthew talks about "the poor in spirit", here Jesus speaks directly to "you who are poor". This concern for people who are at the bottom level of society, in all sorts of ways, is a major theme in the Third Gospel.

The evangelist brings in the notion of being rejected, which was introduced in Simeon's prophecy to Mary. God accepts those whom most people in society do not. To be popular may be a sign that an acknowledged prophet may not be bringing the true word of God. ■

### LEARN

Jesus' Sermon in Luke's account is situated on "level ground", the *plain*, rather than on the *mount*.

Luke has four Beatitudes, instead of Matthew's eight: he also includes four Woes.

Luke concentrates on people's material situation, rather than their internal spiritual dispositions.

### REFLECT

Luke keeps the focus of Jesus' teaching on those who are materially poor. He does not spiritualise by talking about "the poor in spirit", but concentrates on those who are objectively badly off in financial and social terms. This theme is one which we will encounter often in our Gospel readings at the Eucharist.

The notion of being rejected is one which Luke introduced in his overture to the Gospel, the Infancy Narrative, where Simeon predicted that this would happen to Jesus. Throughout the narrative, we find that, for one reason or another, people decide not to accept the challenge of Jesus' teachings and this finds its ultimate expression in his being crucified.

The priest and writer Michael Hollings once remarked that Catholics, and by implication Christians in general, were perhaps influenced by the idea that going to church was a sign of respectability. This has been suggested as one of the reasons for the decline in attendance at Sunday services, especially among women. Being seen in the company, or at least the presence of apparently undesirable people may be something that may make some folk uncomfortable. This can include individuals who might seem not entitled to take part in public worship for social reasons.

Today's Gospel challenges us to examine our assumptions about other people. It also tells us that we should be concerned about those who are poor, hungry and in grief and to do what we can to help them. ■

### DO

Is there a St Vincent de Paul Society in your parish? If so, find out more about what they do. If not, think about setting one up.

### SAY

**Blessed is the person who has placed their trust in the Lord!**

(Psalm 39:5)

**ENTRANCE ANTIPHON**

Be my protector, O God,  
a mighty stronghold to save me.  
For you are my rock, my stronghold!  
Lead me, guide me, for the sake of your name.

**GLORIA**

Glory to God in the highest,  
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,  
we bless you,  
we adore you,  
we glorify you,  
we give you thanks for your great glory,  
Lord God, heavenly King,  
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,  
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,  
you take away the sins of the world,  
have mercy on us;  
you take away the sins of the world,  
receive our prayer;  
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,  
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,  
you alone are the Lord,  
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,  
with the Holy Spirit,  
in the glory of God the Father.  
Amen.

**COLLECT**

O God, who teach us that you abide  
in hearts that are just and true,  
grant that we may be so fashioned by your  
grace  
as to become a dwelling pleasing to you.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of  
the Holy Spirit,  
God, for ever and ever.  
Amen.

**FIRST READING**

Jeremiah 17:5-8

A reading from the prophet Jeremiah.

The Lord says this:

"A curse on the man who puts his trust in  
man,  
who relies on things of flesh,  
whose heart turns from the Lord.  
He is like dry scrub in the wastelands:  
if good comes, he has no eyes for it,  
he settles in the parched places of the  
wilderness,  
a salt land, uninhabited.

"A blessing on the man who puts his trust  
in the Lord,  
with the Lord for his hope.  
He is like a tree by the waterside  
that thrusts its roots to the stream:  
when the heat comes it feels no alarm,  
its foliage stays green;  
it has no worries in a year of drought,  
and never ceases to bear fruit."

The word of the Lord.  
Thanks be to God.

**PSALM**

Psalm 1

Response:

Happy the man who has placed  
his trust in the Lord.

- Happy indeed is the man  
who follows not the counsel of the wicked;  
nor lingers in the way of sinners

nor sits in the company of scorners,  
but whose delight is the law of the Lord  
and who ponders his law day and night.(R.)

- He is like a tree that is planted  
beside the flowing waters,  
that yields its fruit in due season  
and whose leaves shall never fade;  
and all that he does shall prosper. (R.)

- Not so are the wicked, not so!  
For they like winnowed chaff  
shall be driven away by the wind.  
For the Lord guards the way of the just  
but the way of the wicked leads to doom.  
(R.)

**SECOND READING** 1 Corinthians 15:12, 16-20

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the  
Corinthians.

If Christ raised from the dead is what has  
been preached, how can some of you be  
saying that there is no resurrection of the  
dead? For if the dead are not raised, Christ  
has not been raised, and if Christ has not  
been raised, you are still in your sins. And  
what is more serious, all who have died in  
Christ have perished. If our hope in Christ  
has been for this life only, we are the most  
unfortunate of all people.

But Christ has in fact been raised from the  
dead, the first-fruits of all who have fallen  
asleep.

The word of the Lord.  
Thanks be to God.

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

Alleluia, alleluia!  
Blessed are you, Father,  
Lord of heaven and earth,  
for revealing the mysteries of the kingdom  
to mere children.  
Alleluia!

**GOSPEL**

Luke 6:17, 20-26

A reading from the holy Gospel according to  
Luke.

Jesus came down with the Twelve and  
stopped at a piece of level ground where  
there was a large gathering of his disciples  
with a great crowd of people from all parts  
of Judaea and from Jerusalem and from the  
coastal region of Tyre and Sidon.

Then fixing his eyes on his disciples he said:

"How happy are you who are poor: yours is  
the kingdom of God.

Happy you who are hungry now: you shall  
be satisfied.

Happy you who weep now: you shall laugh.

"Happy are you when people hate you,  
drive you out, abuse you, denounce your  
name as criminal, on account of the Son of  
Man. Rejoice when that day comes and dance  
for joy, for then your reward will be great  
in heaven. This was the way their ancestors  
treated the prophets.

"But alas for you who are rich: you are  
having your consolation now.

Alas for you who have your fill now: you  
shall go hungry.

Alas for you who laugh now: you shall  
mourn and weep.

"Alas for you when the world speaks well  
of you! This was the way their ancestors  
treated the false prophets."

The Gospel of the Lord.  
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

**PROFESSION OF FAITH**

I believe in one God,  
the Father almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,  
the Only Begotten Son of God,  
born of the Father before all ages.  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made, consubstantial with  
the Father;

through him all things were made.

For us men and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven,

*(all bow during the next three lines)*

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the  
Virgin Mary,  
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under

Pontius Pilate,  
he suffered death and was buried,

and rose again on the third day  
in accordance with the Scriptures.

He ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory  
to judge the living and the dead  
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,  
the giver of life,

who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who with the Father and the Son is adored  
and glorified,

who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and  
apostolic Church.

I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness  
of sins

and I look forward to the resurrection of the  
dead  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

**PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

May this oblation, O Lord, we pray,

cleanse and renew us

and may it become for those who do your will  
the source of eternal reward.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

**COMMUNION ANTIPHON**

They ate and had their fill,  
and what they craved the Lord gave them;  
they were not disappointed in what they  
craved.

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Having fed upon these heavenly delights,  
we pray, O Lord,

that we may always long  
for that food by which we truly live.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

