

6th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME; Cycle – C; Feb. 16th 2025
Jeremiah 17: 5-8; 1Cor. 15: 12, 16-20; Luke 6: 17, 20-26

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

There are hardly any statements in the New Testament more challenging and provocative than the Beatitudes, which we have just heard from Luke's Gospel. What is usually called the "Sermon on the Mount" in Saint Matthew's Gospel is generally referred to as the "Sermon on the Plain" in Saint Luke's Gospel. Both Gospel texts include what are known to us as "the Beatitudes," which are the secret route to Blessedness or happiness. Apparently, Jesus takes the accepted standards of blessedness and happiness and turns them upside down. The people whom Jesus called happy or blessed, the world would call them wretched and cursed. Just imagine anyone saying, **"Happy are the poor, and Woe to the rich!"** We may wonder; is Jesus promoting the social evils like poverty, hunger and sorrow in the world as something good? By these revolutionary statements, is he not creating unnecessary enmity between the rich and the poor? But in reality none of these is true. Jesus neither hates the rich people nor considers material richness as something bad.

Today poverty is one of the worst evils the entire world faces. Even, in America, the richest country in the world, 11% of the population or 37 million people are poor. According to the WHO more than 20,000 children die daily due to the lack of food, especially in the third world. The gap between the **have and have-not** is widening. No man with normal logic and reasoning can ever appreciate poverty, hunger and sadness as the source of happiness or blessedness. So in a way, Jesus threw a bomb shell in the common ideology of his time through his Beatitudes, picturing the poor, the hungry, the weeping and the outcast as blessed or happy. Remember, during the time of Jesus the Jews considered the wealth as the blessing from God and poverty as the curse. So the rich condemned the poor.

Where then is the key point? **It comes in verse 24, "Woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation."** Jesus says that the rich have already received their consolation. What Jesus says is that if you set your heart and bend your whole energies to obtain something in the world definitely you will get it in full. But then you don't have time or energy left to think about a life beyond this world where our real consolation remains.

On the other hand the poor, hungry and the sorrowful don't have anyone to trust, other than God. From the words of Jesus it is clear that people who strive for the eternal life may not be very comfortable and happy in their material life, but considering the life

to come it is worth to undergo some inconveniences and troubles in the world. Those who have absolute trust in the science, technology and money will consider them as their gods and in many ways they give them satisfaction and happiness in the world for some extent. But there comes a time they realize that the material things and science are limited and they fail at the critical moment when help is needed the most. Naturally, such people get disappointed and in the last moment, they don't know how to turn to God in whom they had no trust or faith.

The people who are depicted by Luke are not materially full, they are sorrowful and rejected by others. **Matthew begins the Beatitudes with the saying, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." Whereas, Luke says, "Blessed are the poor; means materially poor.** But these are the people, though helpless apparently, have their trust in the Lord and God gives them the strength they need. **As Prophet Jeremiah says in the first reading, "Cursed is the one who trusts in human being, who seeks strength in flesh, whose heart turns away from the Lord. Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose hope is the Lord."** They are also rewarded with the eternal joy, for their faith and dependence on God. Jesus never promises us a materially happy life in the world. But at the same time he promises a fully happy life beyond this world. We need material goods for our wellbeing in the world. But when they become our masters or gods we become their slaves. They won't allow us to rely on God. We came to this world empty handed. But in course of time we filled our houses with large amount of material things. But towards the end of our life these things don't give us any pleasure and finally we end up in a one bedroom assisted living or nursing home with minimum things around and one day we have to leave this world empty handed. I know; some of you have already started downsizing your material things. The more we are detached from this world the closer we come to the eternal world of happiness. The Psalmist makes it clear in Ps 146: 5, **"Happy those whose help is Jacob's God, whose hope is in the Lord, their God."**