



**Contributed by Brother John Cline, C.R.**

Bro. John has ministered for 26 years in Spiritual Care in hospital ministry. Historically he participated also in ministries within Scollard Hall High School and two of our C.R. parishes. He has an active retirement while residing at Resurrection Manor. Bro. John maintains the community cottage at Conestogo Lake and, interested in social justice, he volunteers with Tiny Homes Take Out.

**SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**  
**February 13, 2022**

**GATHERING TIME** (10-15 minutes)

**Introduction to the Word:**

A prominent athlete playing by all the rules and then disregarding travel rules and guidelines; a successful politician accepting procedures and requirements for election and then, when defeated, pushing to appoint favourable scrutineers and more stringent qualifications for voters; a member of royalty following the protocols in public but consorting with sex offenders in private. Life is challenging and we all are influenced by the many and varied values of our society. None of us are immune. C. S. Lewis authored a masterful and astute portrayal in his *Screwtape Letters* as to how we may succumb to the Evil One. Our ego can lead us, and our ego can be deceived. So, how to resist the many temptations? We have the Ten Commandments to guide us, but Jesus calls us beyond the minimum standards. We live in a *material world*, and along with other people of faith, we know we also live in a *spiritual world*. The blessings of this material world can easily distract us. And the more we are blessed in this world, the more we can be distracted by worldly pleasures and success, and consequently lose our focus on our spiritual world. Many are busy spinning their wheels here, and have lost sight of their final goal, i.e. to be at home in our everlasting Kingdom. We are conditioned by our constant exposure to advertising, and social media appeals to our desire to belong ... we admire celebrities who sometimes portray not-so-worthy values. Our readings today bring a focus to the spiritual world. We are reminded that the spiritual world is present here now and for the future. The kingdom of God is within you, Jesus provides the sign posts - the "Blessings".

**Warm-up Activity** (about 8-10 minutes)

I suspect that life's journey for most of us tends to consist of a series of contrasting experiences, of highs and lows, of blessings and woes, of barren times and bountiful times.

Your group is invited to take a few moments to reflect on a time in your life when you had an experience that can best be described as barren, or empty, or hopeless. Share this in your group. Or do the opposite: describe an experience that was especially bountiful. Briefly describe the circumstances of each and the feelings that accompanied it.

## The Table of the Word

### You decide – You choose

Jeremiah today offers us two basic orientations to life: we can choose either to walk in the material world, or walk in the Spirit. To choose the former is to put our trust exclusively in our own human power, ignoring the divine source of our being. To choose the latter—to walk in the Spirit—is to put our total hope and trust in the Lord. The first option may provide us with wealth, power and prestige that Luke prefers to call “woes”, but it will often eventually lead to a life of sterility and emptiness. The latter orientation, however - one that trusts completely in the Lord - will dispose us for God’s ultimate blessings. Each day of our lives provides occasions that require us to make choices between these opposites.

### Penitential Rite:

**Leader:** My friends, sometimes what we hear in the Gospel sounds strange to our modern ears. Today we will hear words from Jesus that probably sounded strange even 2000 years ago. “*Blessed are the poor and woe to the rich*”: these have always sounded somewhat strange in a culture which so much favours those with abundance. Trusting in the power of God’s Word and Spirit to be with us in today’s gathering around His Word, we gather today to better understand and put into practice this “strange” teaching.

**Lord Jesus**, you bless us with the joys of this earth, **Lord, have mercy.**  
**Christ Jesus**, you bless the poor and comfort all those who weep, **Christ, have mercy.**  
**Lord Jesus**, you are *raised from the dead* so that we can enjoy the eternal joys of Heaven, **Lord, have mercy.**

### Let us pray (together)

*Father, not from on high do you summon us, to tasks beyond our power.  
But through Jesus, you came into our midst, not only with promises of blessings  
but also with cautions about woes. Shield us from the false security of blessings and privilege.  
Fix our hearts instead on the blessings promised to those who hear your word  
and trust in you alone. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

## SCRIPTURE REFLECTION TIME (45 minutes)

### FIRST READING (Jeremiah 17:5–8)

Thus, says the Lord: “Cursed are those who trust in mere mortals and make mere flesh their strength, whose hearts turn away from the Lord. That person shall be like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see when relief comes, but they shall live in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land.

“Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. That person shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green; in the year of drought it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit.”

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

## **SECOND READING** (1 Corinthians 15:12, 16–20)

If Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead?

For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have died in Christ have perished.

If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

## **GOSPEL** (Luke 6:17, 20–26)

A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke. **Glory to you, Lord.**

Jesus came down with the twelve and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon.

Then Jesus looked up at his disciples and said:

“Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled.

Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.

Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you and defame you on account of the Son of Man.

“Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.

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

Woe to you who are full now, for you will be hungry.

Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep.

Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.”

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

*(Allow 5 – 10 minutes for quiet and for a brief reflection on a meaningful word or thought)*

## **COMMENTARY:**

### **First Reading**

Jeremiah was a prophet in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries BC and was quite young when God called him. He condemned idolatry, greedy priests, and false prophets. Later he wrote oracles, prophecies of judgement and lamentations. He preached that solutions and hope for life's problems are found in trusting God and God's Word by studying scripture. His society trusted in human leadership, alliances, and idols and a curse is received by those who trust in others rather than God. Ahaz trusted in the Assyrians for deliverance from Syria and Israel. The northern kingdom of Israel and southern kingdom of Judah placed trust in Egypt to deliver them from the Assyrians. In the Old Testament the word for “cursed,” *arur*, indicated a dry desert bush, a stony waste; blessed, *barukh*, translates as an experience of prosperity, success, longevity. The word trust translates from the Hebrew *batach*, meaning to feel secure, to trust, to be confident. Trust should not be limited to human beings alone. God, not humans, provides spiritual nourishment, strength and confidence.

## **Second Reading**

Paul spent eighteen months in Corinth on his second missionary journey and established a church there. This letter is written to provide guidance in response to problems reported in the Corinthian church. Some members of the church were Jewish, and Judaism was divided on the belief in the resurrection. The Corinthian members found it difficult to accept the resurrection of the body. They were influenced by Platonic dualism which divided things into two parts, such as good and evil or matter and non-matter. Plato taught that the body was mortal and bad, and that the soul was eternal and good. So Paul addresses the mystery of resurrection and the futility of belief if Christ was not raised from the dead. And further on in his letter, in verses 42-44, he teaches the natural body is raised to a spiritual body in the resurrection.

Belief in Christ and his resurrection from the dead sustains our hope for the future and also affects the quality of our present life. Motivated by Christ, love influences our family life. Christ's command to love affects our social relationships and community life. We all benefit with love rather than poison in our hearts. We feel a sense of purpose because of our religious beliefs, and better face life's challenges and difficulties, and especially, illness and death.

## **Gospel**

Jesus came down to a plain after appointing His twelve apostles. On this flat area (which some scripture scholars believe is the Plain of Bethsaida near Decapolis), Jesus addresses His followers and describes what it means to be a disciple. These teachings are not just novel but revolutionary, as they take accepted standards and turn them upside down. These Beatitudes (sometimes called 'Blessings') are challenging! Who wants to forgive an enemy? But the message is that one who is a disciple is centered firmly on Jesus and loves all humankind. It teaches that a disciple is merciful, forgiving, and non-condemning—to follow Jesus is to see others as God does, as children of God. Who sees being poor or hungry as a blessing? But a spirit of hunger and poverty fosters a humility more concerned about eternal treasures than earthly ones. As disciples, we search out Jesus and seek to understand His words and to be faithful and persevering.

What Jesus taught was, and is, very disturbing and thought-provoking in terms of what we think is normal. He did not speak what people wanted to hear. The hard truth was that following Him would come at a cost. Prior to delivering this message, Jesus healed many of their diseases and cured those with unclean spirits (v. 18-19, which are not included in today's reading). For the Jewish people, healing power was a sign that God was at work through the one doing the healing. Thus, this multitude could better trust in Jesus and His revolutionary message. The healings reveal the tender and merciful compassion of God and God's infinite mercy. Jesus taught what we need to hear – how things are from God's perspective. Jesus' shocking statements are a revelation to our expectations, and provide insight into the way of the Kingdom. Hunger, poverty, and persecution as a blessing; wealth, being well-fed, and favour as a curse. Not popular, but better to speak the truth than lie to be popular.

The word 'blessed' is for those who have an awareness of being in the community moving toward the kingdom, but not without suffering. Struggles, hatred, rejection and defamation may be encountered following the Son of Man. The woeful may enjoy comfort and prosperity but suffer under the 'curse' in the present and final condemnation. Luke is not necessarily

condemning the wealthy but is pastoral, and his appeal is to the woeful for repentance and sharing their resources at the service of the community. Jesus' kingdom is for this world as well as the next. If we loved each other as ourselves, there would be no material poverty, no hunger.

Pope Francis has said the Blessings are built on the old law and perfect it. Riches are good, but the attachment to riches become idolatry. The Beatitudes take us forward in life while the anti-law, the woes, lead to perdition. Attachment to riches fosters an attitude of "I need nothing"; to vanity, excessive pride or self satisfaction; to importance, like the self-righteousness of some Pharisees or tax collectors.

Jesus said to "learn from me for I am meek of heart". Being meek brings us closer to God. Meekness is not foolishness but the capacity to go deep and understand the greatness of God and worship God.

(Allow about 5 – 10 minutes for the participants to react to the **Commentary** to identify a newly discovered insight or an idea newly described.)

### **Questions for Reflection and Discussion:**

1. (Jeremiah) "*Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose hope is in the Lord.*"

- a) How many scripture passages can you recall that promote trust?
- b) How important is "trust" in your relationship with people generally?
- c) Once you have lost trust in a personal friend, how hard is it to regain that lost trust? Share your experiences.

2. (Jeremiah) "*Whose heart turns away from the Lord?*"

- a) When has your faith made things easier and when has it made your life harder?
- b) Do you spend more time counting your blessings or your woes?

3. (1 Corinthians) "*If our hope in Christ is limited to this life only, we are the most pitiable of people.*"

- a) It is said that "if you think the cross is merely a sad end to a brave life," you have missed the point of Jesus' life and death. What meaning does this line have for you?

4. (Luke) "*Blessed are the poor...*"

Knowing our *needs*, knowing *what we most long for*, is halfway to getting there. Living in a complex culture which offers a host of attractive options, we are forced to make choices. So, discuss in your group a few of the things for which you are most hungry.

## **CARING-PRAYING TIME** (15-20 minutes)

*(This time is reserved for quiet prayer as well as for an action-response to the communal reflections. The intent is to 'outreach' to the larger community. The facilitator should allow for a moderate pause between each of the numbered suggestions for reflection and action.)*

1. **Word for the Week:** **Blessed is the one... whose delight is the Way of the Lord! (Ps. 1)**
2. **Suggestion of the Week:**  
Rejoice in the Lord (Gospel Acclamation)
3. **Intercessions:** (Response: **Lord, hear our prayer**)

**Leader:** Brothers and sisters, it is our duty and our privilege to pray for those who most need our prayers:

**For** those called to leadership, leaders of nations, and those whose decisions affect the lives of many people: may justice and healing guide their choices, we pray...

**For** first responders, health care workers, care givers, and those who tend to the sick and the dying, we pray...

**For blessings** on those who encourage the imprisoned and for those who remember the forgotten, we pray...

**For** the Church: that it may always attend to the poor, and champion their quest for justice and human dignity, we pray...

**Lord, bless** those who have lost their life companion through death or divorce. May the people of God be a saving support and comfort to them, we pray...

**That** prosperous nations may initiate a generous sharing of resources to alleviate famine and starvation, we pray...

**O God,** life after death is a mystery for us; let the resurrection of Jesus and His Spirit among us witness to your eternal love and care for us, we pray...

**We know** your law of love; your Spirit lives within us, let no other rule take precedence in our lives, we pray...

**Let us pray** (together)

*O God, who always gives grace to the humble, hear the cry of the poor  
and oppressed rising to you from every corner of the world.*

*Break the yoke of self-centeredness, that makes us strangers to one another,  
so that by embracing one another as sisters and brothers, we may become  
the living image of a new humanity, renewed in your love and refashioned in your likeness.  
This is our prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.*

**With hands and hearts united in gratitude for God's favours today, we pray that all those in our influence be moved to be open to your Word and your Spirit, while we say as one,**  
**OUR FATHER...**

**Celebrating the Word**, Resurrection Ministries of the Congregation of the Resurrection Ontario-Kentucky Province (including the former Resurrection Centre), 265 Westmount Road North, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada N2L 3G7. (**Celebrating the Word** was founded by Father Frank Ruetz, C.R. deceased 2012). For information: website: [www.resurrectionists.ca](http://www.resurrectionists.ca). Email: [provincialoffice@resurrectioncollege.ca](mailto:provincialoffice@resurrectioncollege.ca). The Scripture version used in this commentary is the New Revised Standard Version (copyrighted by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA).