

## SERMON

Luke 6:17-26

God's Kindness and Favour for those in Need

Nunawading and Waverley, 13-2-22

Dear friends in Christ,

Jesus began to speak to those who followed him about the future for his church. When you raise a family, you try to imagine how things could turn out for them and plan accordingly. Will they be interested in playing a musical instrument or joining a netball team or want to learn and be avid students. Jesus knew what was ahead for his people because he had power to see. Thus, we hear that **he lifted his eyes to his disciples**. He watched as the great mass of people trudged up the hill towards him and settle down **on that level place**. Then he turned to his disciples and gave his attention to them. He wanted to explain to them how things would be and what their role was as they faced challenging situations, such as persecution.

He also shows us that he lifts his eyes on those experiencing trouble.

**Blessed are the poor...blessed are they who hunger now... Blessed are they who weep now...**

**blessed are you when people hate you** and he promises them that he **will satisfy them** and that in his kingdom where he rules in love, they will have an honoured place; **their reward will be immense, they will know gladness** and joy beyond imagination.

We think of our church here as a sanctuary; it is a place of peace. People are built up and not torn down. We welcome others and show concern when they are ill. There is security here, God is present here, and he comes to us in these holy things, in his word, in our baptism and the special meal where our Lord Jesus drinks and eats with us. Jesus is here, alive, with power and help for us, filling us with hope and assuring us of a place at his side.

But he is out there in the fringes, too. It is like the difference between Jerusalem and Galilee. Jerusalem was the capital; it was sophisticated and rich. The temple was there, king Herod's palace, and the governors' military barracks. Just before he died, he also told his people to go to Galilee and be ready to meet him there. Galilee was a wild place where interaction with pagans and Samaritans took place. Galileans were filled with strange ideas and many were not pure Jews. That is where Jesus

commissioned them to go out into the world with the good news about him but he told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for his Holy Spirit to fill them. You can see a pattern here. Jesus was at work in the centre of the country, amongst the rich and the powerful and also at work in the uneducated, mixed-up people of Galilee. He was there in the temple sanctuary but also out there in the far-off places. Sometimes he warned those living in luxury and exploiting others. Perhaps that was a message for Jerusalem. At other times he was consoling victims of injustice, those judged by others and cast aside, especially pertinent for those in Galilee. He preached **blessings and woes**, law and gospel.

We are not like colonists, taking Jesus to places where he hasn't been, like putting a flag in the ground for England and claiming a country for the Lord. Rather, Christ is already there. He operates there amongst the poor, those who are victims, people alone with their tears, people mixed up in crime, people of other faiths and those struggling to make headway in the world. Like Galilee, he is present in the margins. When people are confused, where they have lost those close to them, others are suffering in a dictatorial regime, he is there bringing his word of blessing, lifting people up by his power and showing them the way forward. We go out to these people to simply make them aware of who is already there. We tell them, "**You are blessed**, heaven has opened for you, the Lord will get you through and his victory is yours."

Even those who are rich, who have all the good things of life, are partying and their children are successful, even they have their troubles, as we all do. Behind the sophistication may be an unhappy marriage or a sense of emptiness because nothing seems to have any purpose.

The lonely, the crushed, the victim of abuse are not always attractive to us. We may think, "this person is a handful and will be high-maintenance." Yet, they are the people Jesus died for. We can be quick to condemn someone we think has mental problems or those living on the street, or those hurt by gambling; "it is their fault", we think. But we all have problems. A person can be well dressed and presentable and yet can be in spiritual rags: proud, secure, above others. So, we have to be careful. It is not as simple as black and white, rich and poor, powerful and weak. We adapt the message of Christ for each.

All the blessings and promises of Christ are with us as we meet people, listen to what is happening in their lives and act like a chaplain to them, whether they be rich or poor, or seem so different to us.