

## Worship Resources - *How Much Is Enough?*

6<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany, Year C,

13<sup>th</sup> February, 2021

Jeremiah 17:5-10 NIV / Luke 6: 17-26 NIV

Intro/Prelude [\*Be Thou With Me\*](#)

JS Bach

## Welcome Guests / Announcements

Pass the Peace [\*Ave Verum Corpus\*](#)

W.A. Mozart

## Intro / Call to Worship (responsive)

One: Happy are we

**All: when our treasures cannot be quantified.**

One: Happy are we

**All: when our knowledge is tempered by mystery.**

One: Happy are we

**All: when our pain is held in the balm of love.**

One: Happy are we

**All: when our delight comes from beyond ourselves.**

## Invocation (resources)

Compassionate God, we recognize that our world is a broken place, hurt by poverty, famine and disease. We admit that sometimes we make the world a broken place, tolerating prejudice, conflict and self-interest.

We confess that our hearts also suffer with anger, resentment and jealousy.

Renew us in Your love, O God, and heal us with the comfort of Your abundant love.

Awaken us to the role we can play in healing Your creation. Strengthen us through the power of the Holy Spirit to hear Your word and move forward in faith. Amen.

Opening Music - [\*Holy Spirit, Come With Power #26\*](#) (Lyric Video)

text by Anne N. Rupp, music attributed to B.F. White,  
performed and posted to YouTube by  
University Mennonite Church, State College, PA

## First Testament Reading: Jeremiah 17:5-10 NIV

This is what the Lord says: “Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who draws strength from mere flesh and whose heart turns away from the Lord.

That person will be like a bush in the wastelands; they will not see prosperity when it comes. They will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives.

“But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him.

They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of Drought and never fails to bear fruit.”

The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?

“I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind, to reward each person according to their conduct, according to what their deeds deserve.

### Hymn [\*Don't Be Afraid\*](#) (Lyric Video)

written by John Bell, performed and posted to YouTube  
by St. Andrews Episcopal Church Choir, New London, NH

## A Time of Prayer

### Joys and Concerns

### Pastoral Prayer (resources)

God of life and of truth, our Son invites us to see the world through your eyes and we find ourselves disoriented:

You bless the poor You bless the meek You bless the pure in heart. You turn our world and its values upside down.

We have signed on to follow your Son but this is strange territory. It doesn't look anything like the life we have been taught to yearn for, to work for, to believe will bring us happiness.

Yet, You know the despair that besets so many of our young people who fear that their future has been mortgaged by our greed and carelessness. You hear the cries of those who have traded their souls for power and money and now have emptiness as a friend. You see those who are caught in lives that lead only to weariness and anxiety.

Set us at Jesus' feet so we can learn to judge our lives differently. Awaken in us that hunger and thirst for you which will lead us to your will and your peace.

Open our eyes to see your unexpected blessings. Open our hearts to welcome you when you come to us in strange ways.

Then make us into a community of blessedness that beckons this neighborhood into your joy.

We ask these things in the name of Jesus who blesses us with your living presence and fills our lives with your life-changing truth. Amen.

## **Gospel Reading: Luke 6: 17-26 NIV**

He went down with them and stood on a level place. A large crowd of his disciples was there and a great number of people from all over Judea, from Jerusalem, and from the coastal region around Tyre and Sidon,

who had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. Those troubled by impure spirits were cured,

and the people all tried to touch him, because power was coming from him and healing them all.

Looking at his disciples, he said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.

Blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man.

"Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their ancestors treated the prophets.

"But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort.

Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep.

Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you, for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets.

## **Message - *How Much Is Enough?***

Pastor Glenn

How much is enough? When we think of our journeys of faith, what exactly is required? The prophet Micah tells us that we must act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God. But how much should we give? Is it tithing 10 percent? More? Volunteering, serving on committees or church board? What do we need to give? It's certainly not a new debate. I

would wager this has been a topic of discussion and debate as long as there have been communities of faith. Judging from Paul's writing to the Corinthians, there seems to be a disparity in thought between those who had much and those who had little. In Acts, we are given a very socialistic view of how the early church communities viewed sharing resources and wealth. What is the right answer and where do we find it?

Well, we can get some insight from our gospel reading this morning with Luke's Sermon on the Plain. We often see this passage in Luke, just as Luke's take on the Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew. While it is clear that they describe the same event, there are a number of major differences between the stories that have a significant impact on how each is interpreted. In Luke's version, Jesus speaks to "a great crowd of his disciples" unequivocally of God's blessings on the poor, the hungry, the reviled and, conversely, of God's judgment on the rich, sated, the comfortable.

In Luke, Jesus lays out what the fulfillment of the promises of Isaiah mean in terms and tones that are direct and terse, pointed and searing. The God of the prophets is speaking and creating a new, unsettling, upsetting order in the world. The depth and impact of this new order, this realm of God, has always been difficult for the church to fathom, and easy for it to neutralize. Ever since Matthew spiritualized the poor in his Sermon on the Mount, the inclination has been to domesticate the radical pronouncement so that it comfortably fits "us" who by no means meet the criteria. And don't get me wrong, Matthew 5 is probably my favorite chapter in the entire bible, but it's important to recognize how we use certain scriptures to make ourselves comfortable.

When we read Matthew's Beatitudes, we like how we can find ourselves in the "out" group. Surely we are all "poor in spirit." We hunger for righteousness, for right to prevail. Perhaps we have even been reviled at some point. Over generations in hallowed sanctuaries the prophetic word became hollow and even more watered down than Matthew had rendered it. Often those lofty ideals were seen as unattainable goals to always strive towards, but not possible to actually reach.

In Luke, God breaks down the doors, splinters them, and Jesus boldly proclaims to the disciples, the crowds, the church, the coming of a dramatically different realm. Here Jesus stands "on a level place" with the disciples and the multitude, not on a mountain above them. He declares to those who have left everything to follow him that theirs is the kingdom of God, regardless of how reviled and defamed they might be. And he warns those who do not follow in this way that their lives will be woeful. God is turning the world upside down, and taking discipleship far beyond a simple "follow me" to a level of sacrifice that is nothing less than daunting.

New Testament scholar John Dominic Crossan makes the point that in this passage, Jesus is blessing not just the poor peasants in the crowd, but the destitute beggar, the utterly reviled and expendable of the human family. God wants the entirety of our lives. The destitute poor have nowhere to turn but to God. God watches over them and blesses them abundantly in God's way, not the way of the world: they will be filled, and they will laugh

and they will inherit the kin-dom of God. To be disciples is to follow in this way. To be blessed is to have nothing but God. This is not exactly the “good news” we like to hear, is it? God also makes clear that those who remain well off and full and self-satisfied, those for whom God is an afterthought, will reap woe upon woe. Yet we are attracted to those who would tell us that God showers material blessings on those who are faithful, that to have substance is OK if you are living your life right.

The prosperity gospel is alive and well today, and quite profitable. But how do we reconcile that to our mission as the bearers, teachers, and preachers of God's word? Are we not the body of Christ, the church, the living witnesses to God's love made manifest through Jesus Christ? Indeed we are, and therein lies our woe. God does not take kindly to halfheartedness. God does not bless us as we maintain the status quo, quietly maintaining tradition and ignoring the prophetic voices that call us back to God. The realm of God rests among those who have nothing but God.

Jesus' Sermon on the Plain, these wondrous yet stark beatitudes, are meant to jar us out of our faithful complacency. The God Jesus speaks of is not always the God we proclaim. We like to fit God into our own small definitions, cultures, and places. But God is always breaking down those barriers, and working outside the box. God is calling us back, reminding us we must empty ourselves, turn away from the ways of the world, and then, and only then, by God's grace, can we receive the fullness of blessings God offers the utterly destitute, the marginalized, the expendable. In Luke, a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people came to hear him. Power came out from him. The power of God among the peoples of God. What they heard and what they saw is and will always be heard and seen when God's word is truly unleashed and God's work is truly done, the upbuilding of the realm of God with and among the blessed of God.

So what does that mean for us? Do we need to lose everything to be blessed by God? Certainly we need to give thought to what we value, and what guides us in our choices. Do we just go along with the comfort and ease of the status quo, or do we walk a more difficult path to changing systems that marginalize? Do we buy into consumerism or live a simpler life not judging value and success by the world's standards? We live in a world with an awful lot of suffering people with too little, while many of us, as individuals and as communities and countries, spend an awful lot on things we don't need. As a community of faith, what are our priorities? Is it the comfort and ease of the status quo, or is it thinking of God outside the box we've built for our Creator, seeking possibilities that might fall outside what we're comfortable with, or that might involve change we find uncomfortable, or maybe even radical? I hope and pray we find ways to leave behind the distractions of this world, and work together to create God's realm in the here and now, however uncomfortable and unfamiliar we may find it. Amen.

## **Reflection on the Word**

## A Call to Serve

How shall we show your love, your pardon to believe?  
You bid us share as we are blessed and give as we receive.

## A Time for Reflection - Musical Interlude [Traumerai](#)

Robert Schumann

## The Prayer of Thanksgiving

Benevolent God, you see those who are hungry, poor and marginalized, who too often we overlook. You recognize their humanity and their suffering, and promise to overthrow the rejection they encounter in our world. Help us be part of that transformation. Take our gifts to feed the hungry and sustain the poor. Multiply our gifts to erase the margins of our society, embracing us all in Your inclusive love. Amen.

## Hymn [We Are The Light Of The Word](#) (Lyric Video)

written by Jean Greif, posted to YouTube by Anna Maria

## Benediction

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.  
May you be like trees planted by streams of water,  
which bear fruit at just the right time, and like them, may you prosper in all you do.  
May God bless you and give you peace.

## Postlude [Faith](#)

Felix Mendelssohn