

Brothers and sisters, the theme that runs through the readings is **blessed are the poor in spirit**. It is true that the people who are poor in spirit feel insecure and hence depends on God. Today's Sermon on the Plain from Luke is also found in Matthew, both Gospels have similarities and dissimilarities. First, in Luke's Gospel, Jesus addressed his disciples in the midst of the crowd; while, Matthew's Sermon on the Mount is addressed to the crowd. Luke's Gospel sounds more personal than those in Matthew's Gospel, whereas Luke uses the article "you"; Matthew uses "they" or "those." There is also a difference in number: Matthew describes eight beatitudes; Luke presents just four, each of which has a parallel warning. Beatitude is a way to teach about who will find favor with God. The word '*blessed*' in this context might be translated as "happy," "fortunate," or "favored," because the noun "**Beatitude**" comes from the Latin word **beatus**, which refers to **a state of great joy, happiness, blessed, fortunate, or favored**. In other words, Jesus is saying that **divine favor is upon those who are poor in spirit, those who mourn, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness and those who suffer persecution in their search for holiness**. These are not different people, but the same people with different demands made on everyone who wants to be a disciple of Christ.

"Blessed are you who are poor, for the kingdom of heaven is yours"(Lk.6:20). "Poor in spirit" means to be humble and relying on God. Humility is the realization that all our gifts and blessings come from the grace of God. To have poverty of spirit means to be completely empty and open to the Word of God. When we are an empty cup and devoid of pride, we are humble. Humility brings openness and an inner peace, allowing one to do the will of God. Those who humble themselves are able to accept their weak nature, repent, and allow the grace of God to lead them to conversion. It is pride, the opposite of humility that brings misery. For pride brings anger and the seeking of revenge, especially when one is offended. If all of us were humble and poor in spirit, there would be no war!

"Blessed are you who are now weeping, for you will laugh"(Lk.6:21). If we are humble and appreciate that all of our gifts and blessings come from God, we grow in love and gratitude for God. But this can only produce mourning and regret over our own sins and the sins of this world, for we have hurt the one who has been so good to us. St. Gregory describes another reason to mourn: the more one ascends in meditation of **Divine Truth, Beauty, and Goodness**, and then realize the poverty of human nature; man can only be left in sorrow. When one contemplates that we were made in the image and likeness of God and lived in Paradise, the Garden of Eden, and compare that to our present state after the fall, one can only mourn our present condition. Mourning in this context is called a blessing, because mourning our fallen nature creates in us a desire to improve ourselves and to do what is right!

Jeremiah began his ministry with two predominant themes; precisely define true Yahwehism, and imminent danger for unfaithful ones. Today's reading falls into the category of true Yahwehism - faithfulness verses unfaithfulness. **We must always be mindful that there are blessings associated with fidelity to our covenant relationship with God**, and curses associated with infidelity. Thus says the Lord: Cursed is the one who trusts in human beings, who seeks his strength in flesh, whose heart turns away from the Lord... Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose hope is the Lord. He is like a tree planted beside the waters that stretches out its roots to the stream: It fears not the heat when it comes, its leaves stay green; In the year of drought it shows no distress, but still bears fruit (Jer.17:5-8).

St. Paul in the second reading addresses the Corinthians claim that there is no such thing as resurrection from the dead. In the opinion of Paul, Christians are incorporated into Christ by baptism and shares in His resurrection. This final fruit of redemption in Christ will be realized by Christians at the Lord's second coming; when the dead will rise in their glorified bodies. If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are the most pitiable people of all (1Cor.15:19).

Finally, dear friends, as Christians, we should do our uppermost best to be faithful to God at all times. Today's readings might have stirred our sensibilities. Those who are poor, hungry, weeping, or persecuted are called blessed. Those often thought to have been forgotten by God are called blessed. Whereas those we considered blessed by God are warned about the danger of riches, possessions, laughter, reputation . . . these are not things that we can depend upon as sources of eternal happiness. They not only fail to deliver on their promise; our misplaced trust in them will lead to our doom. Let us pray in this Mass to be poor in spirit than depend on worldly things. Amen!