

All Saints Sunday November 6 2022

Daniel 7:1-3,15-18 Psalm 149 Ephesians 1.11-23 Luke 6:20-31

Gospel: Luke 6:20-31

20Then he looked up at his disciples and said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

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

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

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

23Rejoice 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.

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

25"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.

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

27"But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. 29If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. 30Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. 31Do to others as you would have them do to you.

Sermon:

Believe it or not, Jesus' sermon sounded familiar to the people who first listened to it. The two paths described sound a lot like Moses' address to the children of Israel during their wandering and their formation as a people.

Good sermons, like valuable real estate, rely on location, location, location. Jesus preaches about a level playing field as he preaches on....wait for it....a level playing field!

When Jesus preaches, he echoes his own mother's song in which the poor would be lifted up and the rich sent away empty...the mighty cast down from lofty thrones. If we were reading Luke in one sitting, we'd have turned only a few pages from the point where Jesus read the prophet Isaiah's words to those in synagogue. "the spirit of the Lord is upon me..and I bring good news to the poor, sight to the blind, liberty to the captive"and you might remember how Jesus rolled up the scroll and as rabbis do when they teach he sat down. He said to those gathered, "today, these words are fulfilled even as they reverberate in your ears".

Jesus draws on our memory and kindles the imagination. What would the world be like if the poor and downtrodden finally caught a break? What would the world be like if mercy and justice won out? What would life be like if instead of retaliating or escalating we responded with kindness?

It was a powerful experience to see many from our congregations gather for yesterday's table talk with Bishop Pryse and Rev. Jennifer Hoover who specializes in congregational redevelopment. The question that grabbed me most was "what is it we want to sustain"? Many in the room spoke about the relationships we have with each other and in the community.

Pastor Adam Snook's visit also came to mind...during his informal conversation with us he said the world needs the church...to be in the world.

Being the contrast community Jesus describes in his sermon is what I hope we sustain.

May God sustain the church as it announces that God's realm is here already.

May God sustain the church as The church cares about what Jesus cares about; relief for the poor and those who are put down in society.

May God sustain the church as The church embodies hope speaking of reversals of the way things are-

May God sustain the church as we heed the call to resist the ways of the Empire where only the rich and powerful benefit from earth's abundance.

It's easy to dismiss Jesus' words as campaign promises; easily said, but never acted upon. Jesus has announced that God's governance has already arrived. Saints are the people who live as though that's true.

We won't all be St. Brigit, or Dorothy Day, or Mother Theresa—and we aren't called to be. We are called to be who we are—little reflections of God's audacious and extravagant love.

We are meant to be people liberated by Jesus' resurrection—people who pray for God's realm on earth as in heaven...a people who open ourselves to God making that happen within us and among us.