

**Sunday: February 13, 2022**  
**6<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
**Luke 6:17, 20-26**

Jesus came down with the twelve and stood on a stretch of level ground with a great crowd of his disciples and a large number of the people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon.

And raising his eyes toward his disciples he said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for the kingdom of God is yours. Blessed

are you who are now hungry, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who are now weeping, for you will laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude and insult you, and denounce your name as evil on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice and leap for joy on that day! Behold, your reward will be great in heaven. For their ancestors treated the prophets in the same way.

But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. But woe to you who are filled now, for you will be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will grieve and weep. Woe to you when all speak well of you, for their ancestors treated the false prophets in this way.

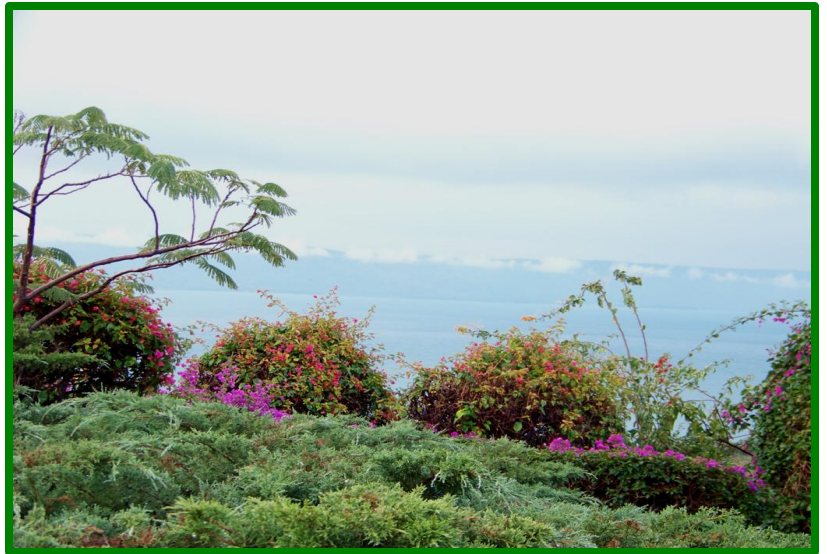
### **Background**

Last Sunday's Gospel ended with Jesus telling Simon Peter, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." Then Luke states that Simon Peter, James, and John left their boats and all their possessions and followed Jesus (Luke 5:10-11). Following this, Luke describes Jesus' healing of a leper and then a paralytic. Jesus' first response to the paralytic is to forgive his sins, but the scribes and Pharisees object because they believe that only God could forgive sins. To show them that he does have the power to forgive sins, he then cures the paralytic. Luke then recounts Jesus' invitation to the tax collector Levi to become his follower. Again, the Pharisees object. This time it is because he was eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners. Further questions lead to Jesus teaching why it is inappropriate for his disciples to fast at this time, and explains their non-observance of the traditional dietary laws. Luke tells of Jesus going into the synagogue on a Sabbath where he encounters a man with a withered hand. Even though it was the Sabbath, Jesus cures him. The Pharisees begin to discuss what they should do about Jesus. Jesus, for his part, goes to a mountain to spend the night in prayer. When morning arrives, he names the twelve who become apostles. With the newly named apostles, Jesus joins a large crowd of disciples and others who came to hear him teach and to be cured. This is the beginning of the gospel text for this Sunday.

In the verses that are omitted from the text this Sunday, Luke describes Jesus curing those who had gathered:

[They] came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and even those who were tormented by unclean spirits were cured. Everyone in the crowd sought to touch him because power came forth from him and healed them all (Luke 6:18-19).

This gospel text has been referred to as the "sermon on the plain" and is sometimes compared to Matthew's "sermon on the mount" (Matt 5:1-7:27). Matthew's text contains nine statements of blessing but no statements of woe. Matthew also puts a spiritual slant on some of his statements.



Looking out across the Sea of Galilee from the Mount of Beatitudes. Photo: Bro Alan – Israel 2012

For example, Matt. 5:3 and 5:6 state: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied."

At the beginning of the gospel, Jesus descends the mountain with the newly appointed apostles. There he addresses the twelve, in the midst of his disciples, with a large crowd looking on as he speaks of the harsh realities of his day.

While the vast majority of people who listened to Jesus that day were poor peasants, we should not read Luke from the perspective of our worldview. Luke's communities understood the world differently. They believed that everything was limited: livestock and food, as well as friendship, love, and honor. Those limits were set in place by God. Because there was a limited amount of all things in the world, those who had abundance had a responsibility to share with those who were in want. This would be true not only for material possessions but also for the intangibles like honor. The most important commodity in their society was relationship. A widow who may have a great deal of property but no husband or adult son to represent her in society was still considered to be poor and without status. Also, everyone was expected to live their life with a certain dignity, satisfied with the position in society to which they had been born.

### Reflection Questions

1. Can you imagine yourself standing among those listening to Jesus in this story? Can you picture the kind of day it is, and the temperature? Is it cloudy or bright and sunny? What noises do you hear, and smells? Are people passing by not even noticing those gathered around Jesus, or are people seeing a crowd and coming over to see what is happening? Where are you? Right next to Jesus so you can hear every word, or standing off more as an observer? What is going on inside you as you listen?
2. What is Jesus' attitude when he says: "Blessed are you who are poor...," and then goes on to say, "for the kingdom of God is yours."
3. Does Jesus go on right away to say, "Blessed are you who are now hungry," or does he wait?
4. What is happening to Jesus as he speaks each blessing? How are people responding as Jesus speaks? What is happening within you?
5. Does Jesus' expression change as he begins to say, "Woe to you ..."? How do the different people respond when they hear each woe? How do you experience that within you?
6. Can you take some time now to talk with God honestly about whatever arose within you as you heard Jesus speak these blessings and woes, in the quiet of your imagination?

The gospel background and reflection questions are written by Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM.  
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