

Sunday, February 16, 2025 - Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany

*Jeremiah 17 and Psalm 1 are very similar in their themes –
The blessings and joy that come from living your life with God in your life
And the sorrow that comes from living your life without God in your life*

*The image of the difference it makes for plant life in whether there is a consistent and reliable source of water should speak powerfully to us who live in the desert.
Think of the difference it makes here in the desert when we have abundant rain after many months of drought.
The riparian areas in Arizona (land that is directly contiguous to a water course) are critical for sustaining wildlife in the state. Riparian areas occupy less than 0.5% of the state's total land area, but 60 to 75% of Arizona's wildlife species depend on them.*

First Reading: Jeremiah 17:5-10

7 - Blessed are those who trust in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD.
8 - They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream.
It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green;
in the year of drought it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit.

5 - Cursed are those who trust in mere mortals and make mere flesh their strength,
whose hearts turn away from the LORD.
6 - They shall be like a shrub in the desert and shall not see when relief comes.
They shall live in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land.

Psalm: Psalm 1

1 - Happy are they who have not walked in the counsel of the wicked,
nor lingered in the way of sinners, nor sat in the seat of the scornful!
2 - Their delight is in the law of the LORD,
and they meditate on God's teaching day and night.
3 - They are like trees planted by streams of water, bearing fruit in due season,
with leaves that do not wither; everything they do shall prosper.

4 - It is not so with the wicked; they are like chaff which the wind blows away.
5 - The wicked shall not stand upright when judgment comes,
nor the sinner in the council of the righteous.
6 - For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked shall be destroyed.

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:12-20

*1 Corinthians 15 is the most complete and comprehensive expression of how absolutely central and essential the resurrection is to the Christian faith.
Without the resurrection, there is no Christian faith, and we have no hope.*

*Verses 12-58 cover three things –
If Christ had not been raised
How Christ could be raised
Since Christ has been raised*

12-14 - Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then –

14 - Our proclamation has been in vain.

14 - Your faith has been in vain.

15 - We are misrepresenting God.

17 - Your faith is futile.

17 - You are still in your sins.

18 - Those who have died in Christ have perished.

19 - We are of all people most to be pitied.

20 - But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died.

Gospel: Luke 6:17-26

Matthew 5-7 is called the Sermon on the Mount. The blessings are more spiritual in nature. Luke 6 is called the Sermon on the Plain. The blessings are more physical/material in nature. Did Jesus give the sermon just once, and Matthew and Luke recorded the same sermon but from their different personal perspectives, or did Jesus give a somewhat similar and somewhat different sermon on two occasions, with Matthew recording one and Luke recording the other?

17-20 - [Jesus] came down with [the twelve] and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon. They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. And all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them. Then he looked up at his disciples and said:

20 - 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.

23 - Rejoice 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.

I can hear echoes of Mary's Magnificat in Luke 1: 47-55 –

48 - He has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed.

49 – For the Mighty One has done great things for me.

51 - He has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

52 - He has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly.

53 - He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty.

Also Luke 4: 18-19 – which is quoting Isaiah 61: 1-2 –

The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.