

## Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time – February 17, 2019 – Good Shepherd Parish

### Scripture Reading: Jeremiah 17:5-8

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.

He is like a barren bush in the desert  
that enjoys no change of season,  
but stands in a lava waste,  
a salt and empty earth.

Blessed is the one 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.

### Responsorial Psalm: Ps 1:1-2, 3, 4 and 6

(40:5a) **Blessed are they who hope in the Lord.**

Blessed the man who follows not  
the counsel of the wicked,  
nor walks in the way of sinners,  
nor sits in the company of the insolent,  
but delights in the law of the LORD  
and meditates on his law day and night.

He is like a tree  
planted near running water,  
that yields its fruit in due season,  
and whose leaves never fade.  
Whatever he does, prospers.

Not so the wicked, not so;  
they are like chaff which the wind drives away.  
For the LORD watches over the way of the just,  
but the way of the wicked vanishes.

### Scripture Reading: 1 Cor 15:12, 16-20

Brothers and sisters: If Christ is preached as raised from the dead, how can some among you say there is no resurrection of the dead? If the dead are not raised, neither has Christ been raised, and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is vain; you are still in your sins. Then those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are the most pitiable people of all.

But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

### Gospel: 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.  
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.”

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### Prayer to St. Michael

St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle.

Be our defense against the wickedness and  
snares of the Devil.

May God rebuke him, we humbly pray,  
and do thou, O Prince of the heavenly hosts,  
by the power of God, thrust into hell Satan,  
and all the evil spirits,  
who prowl about the world  
seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.

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### **INVITATION TO PRAY**

*Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God.*

#### **Proclaim the Scriptures out loud.**

As you listen to the gospel be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

### **INVITATION TO REFLECT**

“The glass is either half empty or broken,” said a discouraged detective in one of Jonathan Kellermann’s mystery novels. Jesus appears to choose the “broken” option this Sunday. The beatitudes he proclaims seem for all the world like shattered glass. Blessed are those who are poor, hungry, weeping, hated, excluded, insulted, and denounced. Are these really beatitudes? Beatitudes were an ancient formula for encouraging people to do good. For instance, in our Responsorial Psalm, the first psalm in the bible, we read, “Blessed is the one who does not take the wicked for his guide, nor walks the road that sinners tread.” Psalm 41 says, “Happy those concerned for the lowly and poor; when misfortune strikes, the LORD delivers them..” Jeremiah 17 has “Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord . . . , he is like a tree planted [next to] water that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green.” Numerous and beautiful are the beatitudes in the Old Testament. They all say, if you do this or that good thing, you will receive blessings. Consolations they were, helping us be a good person.

Jesus seems to have reversed them. Blessed are you if you do the deed of suffering. Wait, Lord, what do you mean? I am supposed to seek to be penniless and sorrowful and in pain? Why would you encourage us to be in such terrible states? There have been many opinions on this reversal through history, but your author has his own guess. A person has to be open and empty in order to let God and others come in. If we want to love and be loved we need to have space at the center of who we are. Consider a rich person who “has everything.” Isn’t he tempted to let his possessions define who he is? “Attack my property and you attack me,” he might say. Possessions become an “instead of.” Instead of love I choose something more stable (so it looks): cars or boats or corporations or just plain power. Instead of eating just what we need, each North American who goes to a restaurant eats enough for five people! Would you like another order of French fries, the waiter asks after we have already finished a steak the size of a serving plate and a triple order of fries (so it seems).

The principle running through all the beatitudes is this: you are blessed if you don’t cram yourself full. Full of food, drink, pride, drugs, fame, sex, visits to the beach, stunning hair-do’s, flattest abs, shiny teeth, fast cars, every kind of wealth, and of course reputation, reputation, reputation. Instead, blessed are you if you stay empty, if you become a spacious home for God, for other human beings, for the long-suffering earth. That’s it. We are built to be quiet receivers, people who know they are empty and yet are patient. There is only one reality, only one Being who can give us the bread of life, who can satisfy our deep capacity for love. Don’t you want to welcome that being into your soul instead of flying around at fastest pace having fun, fun, fun? Blessed are you if you let go into his arms.

### **INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING**

1. Compare and contrast the tree planted beside the water with a barren bush. Do you identify completely with the tree or do you have some of the barren bush in you? Where does choice come into this picture?
2. Resurrection was a new idea for the early Christians and hard for some to believe. How do you handle new ideas? Is it an automatic rejection, automatic acceptance, or do you collect information and study the ideas carefully?
3. Although it is inevitable that disciples suffer, such directives don’t require you to be constantly poor or hungry. Simply realize your need for God, whatever your situation. These demand a choice. Is it a choice you can make once or do you have to make it repeatedly?

### **INVITATION TO ACT**

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

### **CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY**

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another’s openness and sensitivity. Conclude with the following: God our Father, you have promised to remain for ever with those who do what is just and right. Help us to live in your presence. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen