

Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> Feb 2022

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday before Lent Luke 6 v 17 -26, 1 Corinthians 15 v12-20

*Teach us your ways O Lord and we will walk in your truth*

Our passage from Luke is his interpretation of The Beatitudes slightly different to Matthew's (this passage is sometimes referred to as 'The Sermon on the Plain' as opposed to 'The Sermon on The Mount'). Luke has Jesus praying on the mountain during the night, and when morning comes, he goes down to the level area and he calls his disciples to him. There were many disciples following him, they had all been traveling with him and watching his ministry unfold throughout the recent journeys they had taken. Listening to him preach in the synagogues. So, when he come down from praying, he chooses 12 from the many that are there, and each one is named by his own name, but Luke writes that they are named as apostles' rather than disciples. An Apostle being one of the 12 chief disciples.

Luke paints a very vivid picture of this crowd. This large crowd had come to hear Jesus and to be healed, they knew who he was and what he was able to do. Luke then offers the familiar words of the Beatitudes. The word in Latin means blessings. Some think that these words were said at different times and then collected together by the gospel writers. These are words show God's care for the poor, the hungry and the suffering and that his love for us all has power is used to comfort and renew. It is a power that works, some have seen it for themselves when the withered man's hand is healed earlier in the passage. Jesus focuses on Blessings, why blessings? Our understanding of a blessing are words that consecrate or affirm.

I wonder if his followers were confused as to why the poor are blessed, but just maybe having heard these blessings for the first time there is recognition that the poor, and hungry and suffering are not forgotten. There is hope and promise that there is better waiting for us. Renewed encouragement that there is someone who loves and cares for us. It might have been a 'light bulb' moment for many that they are not invisible or forgotten. It is a sermon for the followers showing what is required to be a follower whilst grappling with the constraints of a fragile world.

It is not so different for us and our society today. When we say to those, we meet let's count our blessings, because for some there are very few blessings.

Our young people are encouraged to get qualified to work hard and then get a good job, the pressures that are there are many. We know how hard it is today for many to keep out of debt or feed their children or heat the house. Things seem to go well for the privileged few, there are many examples of how our society is becoming an 'us and them' society. The increasing need for the foodbanks shows us not everyone has what they need to live without hunger.

So, we go back to what we do believe, that God is the one that keeps us grounded.

Paul is never backwards at getting to the point. His words are true for us today as they were when he wrote to the group in Corinth. He expressly tells them that what they need to believe in is a Christ that was resurrected. If we don't grasp this concept, then we are being false to our faith. This is the affirmation of God's power it can't be a matter of debate, either you believe, or you don't. If it is not true, then we have no foundation on which to put our trust in God. To put our trust in God makes sense to those of us with faith.

The passages we read and preach about bring the meaning and the truth out of the words we read and study. Blessings are offered to us all. Poor, hungry, sick, and unsure. Blessings draw us close to a loving Christ and even to all who are rejected.

So, let's be glad that we are being blessed and go and be a blessing to others.  
Amen

Lord, thank you for the many blessings we have recognised today.

Forgive us for the times that we are too busy to notice all that you pour upon us.

We pray for blessing on our church, the community as a whole and every precious individual member – bless us with your wisdom and understanding.

We pray for blessing on our local community – help us to be a source of blessing; help us to recognise ways that we can show and share your love. We know there are often barriers. When we are the barrier – perhaps through our fears, our worries, even our greed – give us the strength to overcome, that your blessing may overflow to all around us. **Amen.**

