

“If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are the most pitiable people of all.”
Words from our Second Reading today from the 15th chapter of St. Paul’s 1st letter to the Corinthians – sisters and brothers, may the Lord give to you his peace and his joy.

When people do not know why they are here, they find life meaningless and end up broken and empty. I’d like you to think for a moment of that caveman from all those Geico commercials. If a prehistoric caveman stumbled upon a modern toaster, what do you think he would do with it? He would probably pick it up, shake it, try to hunt an animal with it, and eventually break it. Why is that? He would not know how to fulfill the toaster’s intended purpose because he would not know the reason for the toaster’s existence in the first place. At least he’ll have insurance. But when people don’t know why they are here, they find life meaningless and end up broken and empty, much like a toaster at the hands of a caveman. Intuitively, we know that our lives have meaning, but unfortunately, there’s a lot of people who do not know what their purpose is precisely.

- 1) Some people find their life’s purpose in accumulating yet more wealth, supposing that if one has money they can purchase anything they want in life. For everything else there’s MasterCard, true enough, but some things remain priceless like authentic relationships and lasting memories. Jesus says: woe to you who are rich for you have already received your consolation.
- 2) Some people live for the finer things in life, supposing that acquiring a nice house, a luxurious car, or fine dining alongside taking vacations all across the world will make them comfortable. Yet many people find themselves possessed by their possessions in turn, while their ‘comfort zones’ continuously shrink. Jesus warns: woe to you who are satisfied for you will find yourself hungry.
- 3) Some people make it their life’s purpose to be entertained, coming home to hours of television and social media use, supposing that it will make them happy, only to find that such laughs are only a short-lived diversion while our lives waste away. Jesus cautions, woe to you who laugh for you will mourn.
- 4) Some people chase after success and power, supposing that the influence they have over others will allow them to control their own destiny. How often do we yet face things outside of our control and find history repeating itself in our lives! Jesus advises, woe to you who are praised for the false prophets received the same adulation.

In most of these cases, Jesus doesn’t need to pronounce judgment. The writing is on the wall as people come to discover the emptiness of their own shortsighted goals. When people do not know why they are here, they end up broken and empty much like a toaster at the hands of a caveman.

Why then are the poor, hungry, sorrowing, and insulted declared blessed? Indeed, St. Luke is concerned with the marginalized of society and the injustices they are often made to face at the hands of the rich, the satisfied, the content, and the praised. But St. Luke is not advocating for social redistribution as a solution here. Demonstrating this very point, there is a Monty Python sketch about a Robin Hood-type character named Dennis Moore. He steals from the rich and gives to the poor until the rich have become poor and the poor have become rich. This is the paradox of reversal: when the first become last and the last first, we end up with the same class hierarchy as before: the haves and the have-nots. Nothing has really changed. Why then are the poor, hungry, sorrowing, and insulted in this world the ones whose reward will be great in heaven? Precisely because there is nothing for them here in this world, do they know what it means to look forward to the world that is to come. Their lowliness puts them directly in touch with their ultimate purpose. They are blessed because their hope is in the saving power of the Lord and not in anyone or anything else. And so they live for him.

Why are we here? Those who remember the Baltimore Catechism know the answer to this question very well: Who made me? God made me. Why did God make me? God made me to know, love, and serve Him in this world so as to be happy with him forever in the next. Our true goal is heaven. That total and final union with God is our life's purpose. Every other meaning in life will ultimately fall short. Those who fail to discover why they are here will end up broken and empty much like a toaster in the hands of a caveman. St. Paul tells us in our second reading today - and this is the whole point - that '*if for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are the most pitiable people of all*' (2x). Living with the end in mind, St. Ignatius tells us how this should inform our lives:

"God created human beings to praise, reverence, and serve God, and by doing this, to save their souls. God created all other things on the face of the earth to help fulfill this purpose. From this it follows that we are to use the things of this world only to the extent that they help us to this end, and we ought to rid ourselves of the things of this world to the extent that they get in the way of this end. For this it is necessary to make ourselves indifferent to all created things as much as we are able, so that we do not necessarily want health rather than sickness, riches rather than poverty, honor rather than dishonor, a long rather than a short life, and so in all the rest, so that we ultimately desire and choose only what is most conducive for us to the end for which God created us."

When people do not know why they are here, they end up broken and empty much like a toaster at the hands of a caveman. What is our purpose? Why are we here? What are we living for? Or more appropriately, we should ask ourselves today, whom are we living for? Blessed are you who hope in the Lord for your reward will be great in heaven.

Readings: <http://uscgb.org/bible/readings/021719.cfm>

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 78

Reading 1 **JER 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

R. (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.

R. **Blessed are they who hope in the Lord.**

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.

R. **Blessed are they who hope in the Lord.**

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.

R. **Blessed are they who hope in the Lord.**

Reading 21 **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.

Alleluia[LK 6:23AB](#)

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Rejoice and be glad;
your reward will be great in heaven.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel[LK 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.”