

# LUKE'S SERMON ON THE PLAIN

## Reflection for the Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle C

All of us are familiar with Matthew's *Sermon on the Mount*, the Beatitudes (Matt 5:1-12), but we may be less familiar with Luke's *Sermon on the Plain*. The following commentary on Luke's sermon may help you to understand what Jesus is saying in these verses.

Jesus takes the accepted beliefs of his day and stands them on their heads. He names four groups of people who would have been regarded as very blest and states that they are anything but blest. And he takes four groups who would have been regarded as cursed and pronounced them blest. Jesus is speaking to a situation in which the economically poor were reduced to begging. They were marginalized. The rich and better off members of the community failed in their covenant with God by not coming to the rescue of the poor. When this happened God sided with the poor and spoke on their behalf. Let's now look briefly at each of the four sets of blessings and woes.

*Blessed are the poor... and woe to the rich*

The poor are not blest because they are materially destitute. Rather, they are blest because they are able to place their trust in God in the midst of poverty. They are blest because God is on their side. The rich are not cursed simply because they are materially well off, but because of their failure to come to the rescue of the poor by generously sharing their blessings with them. They are having their reward *now*, but they will lose out big time in the reign of God.

*Blessed are the hungry, . . . woe to the full*

Jesus is not saying it's a blessing to be starving and a curse to have a good meal. He is saying we are blessed if we can keep trusting in God in empty/hungry times. Also, it is a blessing if we are hungry for God. It is a curse if our "plenty times" lead us to ignore God. It is a curse to be spiritually self-satisfied.

*Blessed are you if weeping, . . . woe if laughing*

It is a blessing if we mourn for our sins and for the injustices in our world and for the losses we experience in life. It is not a curse to be happy. But it is a curse if our laughter is a cover-up for our sadness and if it is at the expense of others. Some become rich at the expense of others.

*Blessed are you if people hate you . . . woe if people speak well of you*

We are blessed if people reject us because of our love for Jesus. On the other hand, it is a curse to be spoken well of in a world that rejects Jesus.

Poverty, hunger, tears and rejection are *not* to be sought after. But if they come to us as a result of our following Jesus, then they are blessings. God can turn poverty, hunger, tears and rejection into blessings. We see this when people in bad times turn to God and convert to his ways. On the other hand, a good financial portfolio could lead to our spiritual demise. Finally, the beatitudes only make sense to one who has fully embraced the ways of Jesus. To the rest, they are nonsense.