

Commentary on Sunday Scripture – Year C

6th Sunday of Ordinary Time

First reading

(Jeremiah 17.5-8)

A Curse and a Blessing

Actually, it is neither a curse nor a blessing. It is not invoking or wishing on a person the blessing or the curse. Instead, the prophet is here saying that people who behave in these two ways are respectively blessed and accursed. There is no need to wish it on them, for their own behaviour merits it and brings it on themselves.

Such statements of blessing and its opposite are frequent in the Bible; an example very similar to this is in Psalm 1. In Jeremiah's prophecy here, unlike most of the instances in the Bible of 'beatitudes', in both Old and New Testaments, there is no list of ways of moral conduct; it is simply a matter of trust or faith.

It is not a person's achievements that count, for we cannot earn blessedness; we can only trust in God. However, if God is the real centre of our trust and reliance, we will try to behave as we were created: in the image of God, imitating the divine generosity, forgiveness, attentiveness to human need, fostering life rather than restricting it. This will mean that our heart is truly turned to the Lord, and the Lord will care for the rest.

Question:

How true is it that we bring blessing and curse on ourselves?

Second reading:

(1 Corinthians 15.12, 16-20)

A People of the Resurrection

As he nears the end of his great letter to the Corinthians, which we have been reading for five Sundays, Paul teaches about the Resurrection, the bedrock of Christian faith. Last Sunday he was rehearsing the most primitive proclamation: that Christ had truly risen from the dead and had encountered a host of witnesses. Now Paul comes on to the Resurrection of Christians, of which Christ's Resurrection is the first fruits and the model.

The importance of Christ's Resurrection is not only that it places him in glory at his Father's right hand, but also that it is the forerunner of our own Resurrection. We can know little about the transformation that will take place in us at the Resurrection. We will be physical, but physical in a quite different way. The glorified body is a body, but not like any body that we know. The traditional Christian picture of clouds and harps is not to be taken too seriously. The only important thing is that we will be wrapped or wrapt in the joy of the presence of God, enveloped in utter contentment. Nothing else will matter but the enjoyment of the most lovable of all beings.

Question:

Why will it not be possible to get bored in heaven?

Commentary on Sunday Scripture – Year C

Gospel:

(Luke 6.17, 20-26)

The Beatitudes

Matthew's Sermon on the Mount and Luke's Sermon on the Plain are both collections of sayings of Jesus about the basic conditions of Christian living. Each begins with a set of 'Beatitudes', announcing who is specially blessed by the Lord. One frisky modern translation renders them, 'Congratulations to you who are ...'

Matthew's set of eight Beatitudes focuses more on spiritual qualities (poor in spirit, hunger and thirst for justice), whereas Luke's four are more directly on the circumstances of life. The stress is, therefore, on the reversal of values brought by Jesus. Jesus turns the world upside down. His gospel or 'good news' comes to the poor, the neglected, the oppressed. True blessedness does not consist in wealth, fame or festivities. It is those who struggle now who will receive a lasting reward.

Are the four negatives that follow too hard on the rich, the contented, the frivolous, the famous? Through this gospel runs a thread of warning about the dangers of contentment, and we seldom pay attention to warnings unless they are overstated. The worry of those who have plenty, about how they should use their advantages responsibly for others, must be as least as great as those who worry to survive.

Question:

Is money a positive bar to eternal happiness, or a challenge?
