

Preacher: Pastor Twyla

Scripture: Luke 6:20-31

Then he looked up at his disciples and said:

"Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God."

"Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled."

"Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh."

"Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man."

Rejoice on that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven, for that is how their ancestors treated the prophets.

"But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation."

"Woe to you who are full now, for you will be hungry."

"Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep."

"Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets."

"But I say to you who are listening: Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you; bless those who curse you; pray for those who mistreat you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who asks of you, and if anyone takes away what is yours, do not ask for it back again. Do to others as you would have them do to you.

Whenever Remembrance Sunday rolls around each year, I find there are people who either appreciate the moments to honor and remember people whom they've loved and who have gone on to their heavenly home. Or there are those who find it too painful and too depressing to endure sitting through the service.

There is no denying that those who have passed into the heavenly kingdom are dearly missed and we grieve because of the empty space they have left in our lives. The grief is ongoing, and is a journey that lasts a lifetime, likely not felt with the same intensity day-in and day-out as time passes, but a part of our life journey, just the same.

However, our grief does give us an opportunity to once again, should we allow it to celebrate our loved ones' lives and to reflect upon the impact our loved ones had on our lives, what we can learn from them and how we might see them living on through us. Even as we remember those who have passed-on, a time of remembrance also challenges us to look around us and see those who whom we love and look-up to, here in this lifetime, and how they are impacting our lives. And express our gratitude to them, while they are still with us.

On this Remembrance Sunday, we turn to Luke's Gospel, in particular, we turn to the "Sermon on the Plain." This could be Luke's recording of Matthew's account of the "Sermon on the Mount." It is likely called the "Sermon on the Plain" because Luke tells us that Jesus came down onto a level place to be with the people, including his disciples.

If it is, Luke's recording of the Sermon on the Mount, it is not a photographic copy. Some of the differences include: "Matthew has nine beatitudes and no woes, while Luke has four beatitudes and four matching woes. Matthew speaks in the third person ("they shall be filled"), whereas Luke speaks in the second person ("you will be filled"). Matthew spiritualizes the beatitudes by saying, "Blessed are the poor in spirit" (Matthew 5:3). Luke says simply, "Blessed are you who are poor" (v. 20). Matthew says, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness" (Matthew 5:6). Luke says, "Blessed are you who hunger now" (v. 21)." No matter

the differences between Matthew and Luke's recordings of Jesus' teachings, one thing is for sure they were bombshells that radically challenged and continue to challenge the misguided thinking of the world.

Today, we are not going to focus our attention on each blessing and woe. Each blessing and woe is simply stating a fact. They don't teach that if you do this or don't do that, then this will happen. William Barclay writes in summing up the blessings and woes, "If you set your heart and bend your whole energies to obtain the things which the world values, you will get them – but that is all you will ever get. But if on the other hand you set your heart and bend all your energies to be utterly loyal to God and true to Christ, you will run into all kinds of trouble; you may by the world's standards look unhappy, but much of your payment is still to come; and it will be eternal joy."

The Sermon on the Plain comes after Jesus called his disciples, but before they were unleashed into action. The disciples were in a time of observation, watching their mentor's activities such as healing the sick and dealing with the rejection of his home community. It was a time of learning from the great Teacher, as we see here in this text.

Herein lie the things I ask us to direct our attention to on this remembrance Sunday. Thinking about this time the disciples had with Jesus, we are reminded that the time we have, and had, with loved ones can also be a time of learning valuable life, and spiritual lessons. What do they teach us about faith and obedience to God? Did you happen to notice a part of the sentences at the end of both the blessings and woes, "for that is how their ancestors treated" either the prophets or the false prophets? I never caught those words before when reading this text. I hear Jesus essentially inviting us to reflect on what we learn from those who have gone before us.

This phrase led me, whether it was meant to or not, to think about, what would my loved ones want me to know. What would they say to me now? And then I realized, that like Jesus before he ascended to heaven, they likely told me all they wanted me to know while they were still with me, and maybe, I have yet to uncover some of those treasures. I thought about how the learnings disclosed to me from those who are still here with me in this lifetime, may one day be the things I look back on as lessons left for me in the wake of their passing. It made me think about how I should be paying attention to those lessons now.

I also thought about the lessons I'm left with from those who are now with the Lord, about how they are ongoing (should I take the time to recognize them) lessons that could forever guide me.

With this in mind, I took a few moments to think about relationships I have had with colleagues who have mentored me and helped to shape my ministry. Some of those I thought of are still living and others are in their heavenly home. I came up with a few blessing phrases, beatitudes, if you will, as I thought of what they taught me.

From my Pastor at Lititz, Jimmy Ross, blessed are you when you allow the congregants to do their assigned work; for you will empower them to learn how to help build the kingdom of God. (I remember often the time he said to me, I don't need to know how to fix the furnace, there are others with gifts who know how to do that.)

From a mentor, Pastor Curtis Dubble, blessed are you when you discipline yourself to manage your time wisely, because then you will not get burned-out.

Also from Curtis, blessed are the gentle ones; for to them the hearts of the broken will be opened.

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From Allen Hansell, blessed is the woman who answers God's call, for she will be freed from the lies that hold her back.

From Pastor Clem Rosenberger, blessed are you when you study the scriptures before teaching and preaching; for you will impart Godly wisdom and knowledge to others.

From Theresa Eshbach, blessed are you when you listen well; for you will communicate value and respect on those to whom you listen.

From my colleague while at Conestoga COB, Del Kenney, blessed are you when your soul and actions pour out compassion onto others, even the seemingly undeserving; for you will acquaint them with Godly love and build them up.

And, from my colleague at Westminster COB, Scott Duffey, blessed are you when you dismiss your inhibitions to release and use your talents, in this case through music; for you will bless others with a means of connecting with God.

There are many others I could write and share with you; many I've learned from those who were and are family members and friends. Maybe you could do the same when considering special people impacting your life and the lessons they have taught you. With Christ as our foundation on which to build our lives, these are the kinds of things that we can use as building blocks for our own lives. We learn from their faith journey, their challenges with faith issues, *and even from their flaws, (for no one is perfect, but we can learn from their mistakes)*, we learn what it means to walk with Jesus. They inspire us to live with hope even as we live in an imperfect world. As they have loved on us and shared God's heart with us, so we can do for others.

What our loved ones have given to us, left with us, should not be forgotten or get lost in our grief and pain. These are lessons for us to reflect on to give us encouragement and to equip us for our life journey. Because of what we've been given, without denying our grief, yet even as it is felt, we can redirect our pain toward our remembrances and allow those memories to give us reason to celebrate the times we had with our loved ones and the lessons they continue to teach us.

May you, on this Remembrance Sunday, find peace and comfort as you remember your loved ones who have been welcomed into their heavenly home, knowing also, that because of the wisdom and teachings they have impressed upon you, they continue to live on through you. May you also have the awareness and find confidence in knowing that as you strive to live faithfully according to Christ's teachings on your own life journey, you too, just as those who have gone on before you, teach and inspire others who look for direction in their lives. Let us always point others to Christ. Amen.