

Jesus goes up the mountain to pray with his disciples. Luke tells us Jesus then comes down to the plain, the level places where he meets all kinds of people and begins to teach and heal. It is a curious thing that Luke notes that the people have come not just to hear the prophet and teacher Jesus, they have come out to see Lazarus who has come out of the tomb and been raised to new life. Something is happening with this teacher, and people want to see him hear him, touch him, and see the celebrity Lazarus and the proof of healing. The theme of God working in the world for all the people continues and the crowd grows; many people cross the accessible level place, so they too may be touched by Jesus.



The blessings that we hear today differ from the blessings we hear in the Gospel of Matthew's Sermon on the Mount. These blessings and woes are more in line with Jesus' sermon when he spoke to his hometown synagogue and proclaimed "*good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoner and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free.*" Luke 4:18b

Jesus looks at the crowd and declares: "*Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God Blessed are you who hunger now for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their ancestors treated the prophets. But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort. Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep. Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you, for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets. But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you*" Luke 6:20-27a. Jesus is speaking to the truly poor and the people who listening and are hungry. The action is for the life people in God's realm here in earth. These blessings are difficult to spiritualize because they are about addressing the needs of the people in real life; the blessings are followed by "Woe" which means "watch out" because you may not have your attention on God. Punishment is not intended by Jesus here; it is a call to paying attention and for a new perspective. It is dangerous not to look at one's own situation and be aware of others.

The loss lies in not being able to participate in the Good News that God brings to all the people. If we are distracted by a self-satisfied life that we convince ourselves is always good, we may miss the gifts of joy that God brings. More than that, Jesus reminds us, if we are paying attention only to ourselves and what we think will bring us fullness of life, we will not be able to love our neighbor.



We all want healing—body, mind, and spirit; are we ready for Christ to liberate us from the bonds that bind us?

"If an elephant steps on the tail of a mouse and you say that you want to remain neutral in the situation, the mouse will not appreciate your objectivity." Desmond Tutu

Susan+