



Church of the Epiphany

FROM THE MOUNTAIN TOP

Epiphany 6 • Cloudcroft, New Mexico • February 16, 2025



Collect for Epiphany 6

Almighty God, look mercifully upon your people, that by your great goodness they may be governed and preserved evermore; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. Amen.

Readings for the Epiphany 6

Jeremiah 17:5-10
Psalm 1
1 Corinthians 15:12-20
Luke 6:17-26

The opening verses of Jeremiah 17 give us the distinction between a man who trusts in the LORD and one who does not. The consequences of this division are apparent. It is like a tree planted by the stream whose roots get plenty of water in good times and in drought to survive and have its leaves and fruit. The opposite is to be in the parched desert and a salt flat and shriveling up from lack of moisture and growth. That is the making for a short sermon and with a clear message and no confusion to it. The hidden text is to the word trust. Do you trust in the LORD. Or do you just believe in the LORD. Trusting the Lord is a step that requires some real value to it. In the Temptation of Jesus, we can see that. The devil tempts Jesus and He believes in God because he knows that God exists. The devil believes in God by his words to Jesus but in the long run does the devil Trust in God? No, he absolutely does not.

Let us pray.

Heavenly Father, we are challenged to plant ourselves on the banks of the well-watered stream. It is your living water that sustains us in our faith walk with you.

May our lives be in that blessed land of your pleasure. We give you thanks for the sun on our backs and the breeze in our face that continues to let us know of your goodness.

May our trust in you never lack from our neglect.

We pray in the name of our Lord Jesus.
Amen.

There is a big difference between believing in God and trusting in God. And that difference between them can be a concern in our lives.

Believing is a mind thing. Trusting is a heart affair. Spending time with God in worship and in our prayer life without doing what God wants from us is straying from your faith pathway. Loving and caring for others the way that Jesus taught us is in a way of trusting in God. It is easy to believe in God without making any difference in our life. Believing in God is a very good thing but trusting in God is better.

When we have a test in our lives of some concern, we know to believe in God, but it is even more important to trust in our heart that we are nourished and watered like the tree by the stream. God is with us.

How then do we deepen our trust in God? First is doing just what we are doing now. We have to spend time in worshiping God, spending time in prayer and in reading God's Word as a means of enjoying God's grace. Blessed, indeed, are those who trust in the LORD.

We find in Psalm 1 a similar comparison. "For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish." (Psalm 1:7)

It is difficult to date Jeremiah 17 and the psalms, but it could be some 500 years between their writing. The theme of the well-watered tree bearing its fruit in due season is an Old Testament standby. Each uses this metaphor of the destiny of the righteous and the wicked. The righteous walk with God and not with the wicked nor with the way of the sinner nor with those who sat in the seat of the wicked. This last one is a warning to avoid the company of those who have rejected God.

We are blessed by what we do and by what we don't do. We are the tree whose life depends on the closeness to God's water. We are planted near the stream and thereby in reach of the life giving water of his will. "it will bring forth his fruit in due season." The readings from Jeremiah and Psalm 1 are the comparison of two men. The one who is blessed and trusts is the righteous one while the other who is cursed is the one whose way is that of the wicked.

Today's gospel reading is a continuation of the Old Testament words from Jeremiah and Psalm 1. There we saw the warning comparisons of the way

of two men. The way of the blessed one is the way of God. The way of the unrighteous is the way of the wicked. Each of these comparisons was to the image of the tree well-watered and living on the banks of an eternal stream of water. Luke now gives us Jesus' Sermon on the Plain which is the one of two sermons on the same theme. The way to eternal blessings is to follow the way of the Lord and avoid the curses of misplaced guidance.

Today's gospel begins with what is a healing story. "A great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people...had come to hear Jesus and to be healed of their diseases and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured." Luke's introduction to this teaching seems to be positive. Healing stories may be the context of the way we are introduced to blessings and woes.

These blessings and woes are a hard teaching to understand. These people came to Jesus as a healer and here he is teaching them about being poor and and hungry. He is also teaching his new disciples, and I wonder what they think of this message? Certainly, they were aware of the financial divide that separated this crowd from the really wealthy of the time. Should we pray then for the wealthy? I pity those in the Palisades of LA who lost their very nice and possible lavish homes to a quick and violent fire. Their wealth had nothing to do with their loss. This unhappy circumstance deserves our prayers and and with our homes in our forest location is a thought of our own possible loss.

Jesus in the gospel is not preaching that our happiness is undeserved. This is not some prosperity gospel theme. Our happiness depends on the circumstances in our lives. Our gospel today gives us this answer. In our lives we have undoubtedly seen a cycle of a time of blessing and a time of woe. We cannot always be happy and blessed. Life is not full of happiness and laughter for disappointments do show up. This gospel message to us is an easy and tempting set of blessings and woes in

Prayer List - 2/16/25

La Trinidad, Jalisco, Mexico
Lay leader, Miguel Meriono Lobos

Bishop Steven and Tricia

We Pray for the soul of Donna Haynes and
her family as they grieve

Those who need your healing care and strength:

Donya Conine
Wayne Conine Jr.
Walter Ford
Luis and Kelle Senge
Harry & Vivian Toepfer
Ellie
Rev. Shelby Moon
Esther, Joel Fyock
Lydia Tran
Cheeta Mc Murray
Rev. Elias Rosales Mendes

Those in the Armed Forces:

Dominick Rankin, US Army, Ft. Bliss, TX
Gabriella Murley, Ft. Bliss, TX
Mason Gregg, Camp Courtney, Okinawa
Creed Napier, US Air Force,
J.W. Grove, US Navy
Nicholas Tran, Joint Base Lewis-
McChord
Shawn Zima, Hong Kong
Wyatt Green, US Navy

We pray for our Epiphany family:

Martha Vance
Patrick Zima
Thomas Zima
Raul, Sarah, Evelyn Issa
Al and Kathy Osborn
Becca & Doug Price

opposition to each other. One is more appealing than the other and this reading from Luke gives us Jesus' message and the question as to where we fall in our lives. Luke makes the point of telling us that Jesus stood on a "level place," when he spoke about blessings and woes. Here Jesus is leveling the ups and downs of our lives. He is inviting us to look beyond the circumstances and to find meaning in every day.

We need to remember that this teaching from our Lord Jesus was done in a setting of a healing time. In that context of healing ministry is that context that is a comfort to us to hear and understand the blessings and woes of life.

What if blessings are not a reward and woes are not a punishment? What if blessings and woes are not categories of two different kinds of people? What if there are aspects in each of our lives to which Jesus says, "Blessed are you?" What if in each of our lives to which Jesus says, "Woe to you?" And think if in both are said with a desire for our wholeness and intended for our healing?

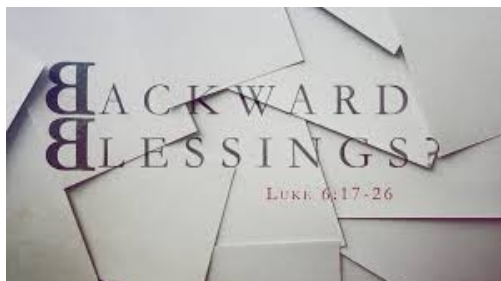
Look at the poverty, hunger, and weeping in your life today. Look at the richness, fullness and laughing in your life today. The question is not which one am I? the question is, "In what way are all of those a part of my life and what do they mean for me today?"

Jesus may be opening our eyes today and hearts to a new look at our life of meaning and wholeness. The gospel says, "Power came out from Him and he healed them all."

Bless the mighty Words of God.

Amen.

Pastor Fred



Lessons for Epiphany 6

February 16, 2025

Anglican Lectionary
year C

Old Testament Reading

Jeremiah 17:5-10

5

Thus says the Lord:

"Cursed is the man who trusts in man
and makes flesh his strength,
whose heart turns away from the Lord.

6

He is like a shrub in the desert,
and shall not see any good come.
He shall dwell in the parched places of the
wilderness,
in an uninhabited salt land.

7

"Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord,
whose trust is the Lord.

8

He is like a tree planted by water,
that sends out its roots by the stream,
and does not fear when heat comes,
for its leaves remain green,
and is not anxious in the year of drought,
for it does not cease to bear fruit."

9

The heart is deceitful above all things,
and desperately sick;
who can understand it?

10

"I the Lord search the heart
and test the mind,
to give every man according to his ways,
according to the fruit of his deeds."

Psalms 1

1 Blessed is the man who has not walked in the
counsel of the ungodly, *
nor stood in the way of sinners, and has not
sat in the seat of the scornful;

2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD, *
and on his law will he meditate day and night.

3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the
waterside, *
that will bring forth his fruit in due season.

4 His leaf also shall not wither; *
and look, whatever he does, it shall prosper.

5 As for the ungodly, it is not so with them; *
but they are like the chaff, which the wind
scatters away from the face of the earth.

6 Therefore the ungodly shall not be able to stand
in the judgment, *
neither the sinners in the congregation of the
righteous.

7 For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, *
but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

New Testament Reading

1 Corinthians 15:12-20

12 Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the
dead, how can some of you say that there is no
resurrection of the dead? **13** But if there is no
resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has
been raised. **14** And if Christ has not been raised,
then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in
vain. **15** We are even found to be misrepresenting
God, because we testified about God that he raised
Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the
dead are not raised. **16** For if the dead are not
raised, not even Christ has been raised. **17** And if
Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and
you are still in your sins. **18** Then those also who
have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. **19** If in
Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all
people most to be pitied. **20** But in fact Christ has
been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those
who have fallen asleep.

The Holy Gospel

Luke 6:17-26

17 And he came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, 18 who came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. And those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. 19 And all the crowd sought to touch him, for power came out from him and healed them all.

20 And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said:

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

21 "Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied.

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

