

16 February 2025 -- 6th Sunday 'C'

[Jer 17:5-8; 1 Cor 15:12...20; Lk 6:17...26](#)

### Homily

The question of happiness and unhappiness is as old as the hills. From the very beginning of Genesis, there is misfortune misfortune, the fruit of sin, that deprives from happiness man and woman created in God's image and sharing His eternal happiness of happiness. Cursed is the serpent who deceived them; cursed is the ground on which it crawls and which they will have to cultivate to obtain their food; cursed is Cain, who killed his brother and, finally, cursed are all those who attack God's chosen people. (The whole of the Old Testament is peppered with such 'curses').

Among the prophets, it is Jeremiah who best puts his finger on the source of misfortune and, by the same token, the source of happiness. Jeremiah lived at a time of great suffering for the people of Israel, and his own personal life was deeply affected by it. For him, it was clear: the source of all misfortune is not to put one's trust in the Lord, but to put one's trust in a mortal, a being of the flesh, whoever he may be, to the point of turning away from the Lord. Jeremiah juxtaposes a whole series of eloquent images to describe this wretch who has neglected to put all his trust in God: he is like 'a bush on a parched land'. He dwells in 'the arid places of the desert', or in 'a salty and uninhabitable land'.

Logically, for Jeremiah, the blessed or happy man (*benedictus*) is the one who puts His trust in the Lord, from whom he expects everything. He is 'like a tree planted by the waters', whose roots never wither, even in years of drought.

Jesus took up this teaching of Jeremiah and the other prophets at the very beginning of his preaching. This message is so important to Luke that, with his usual literary skill, he carefully sets the context, describing the places, the gestures, the listeners and the words. There is a downward movement and a halt; there is the mountain and the plain. There are the twelve and a large number of disciples, not to mention a whole crowd of people from all over Judea, from Jerusalem (the centre of Israel's worship) and from the coast of Tyre and Sidon, in pagan lands. Looking up at his disciples, he said to them: '*Blessed are you who are poor...*'; and, after a long list of blessings, he addressed the rich - who were not identified: '*Wretched are you who are rich...*'.

We see from these words that the disciples, to whom Jesus

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said 'Blessed are you', looking at them, were poor, hungry, weeping, already hated and rejected because of his name. On the other hand, we see that their persecutors were rich and full, and that they were laughing. 'Wretched are you', Jesus said to them. Because you have put your trust in these ephemeral realities, you already have your - ephemeral - reward; you will have no other.

This beautiful Gospel of the Beatitudes, which we read several times during the liturgical year, is each time an opportunity for us to ask ourselves in what, or rather in whom, we have placed our trust and our expectations.

Christ came down from the mountain to the plain before saying these words. This symbolic descent recalls the one described by Saint Paul in his letter to the Philippians and alluded to in the passage of the letter to the Corinthians from which we have read a section: He, the Son of God, who was equal with the Father, emptied himself and came down to us, becoming like us and becoming obedient to the point of death on the Cross. That is why the Father made him 'rise again'; he resurrected him, gave him the Name and made him sit at his right hand. Each of the Beatitudes, especially the Lucan version, describes such a movement of descent. Every time we dare to venture into this downward movement, the Father raises us to a new life, a source of happiness: 'Blessed' are we then

Unhappy are those who think they can avoid this downward movement by human means. They are unfortunate, because they will never be able to experience the joy of 'rising again', of being 'woe to you' by the Father. They already have their reward and are content with it.

If Christ has not risen, our faith is in vain. If we are not resurrected, because we have failed to 'die' to our false hopes, we are unhappy. True happiness has eluded us. May this never happen to any of us!

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