

Epiphany #6

2-13-2022

J.V. Trautwein, Pastor

Celebrate (Introduction)

“Blessings and curse abound on the sixth Sunday after Epiphany. We would do well to listen closely to whom the ‘blessed are’ and the ‘woe to’ are directed and to find our place in the crowd among those who desire to touch Jesus. The risen Christ stands among us in the mystery of the holy supper and the invitation to live in him, and offers power to heal us all”

We come together in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Opening Hymn: [“Blessed Assurance”](#)

Psalmody: Psalm 1

“Blessed is the man
who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
²but his delight is in the law of the Lord,
and on his law he meditates day and night.
³He is like a tree
planted by streams of water,
that yields its fruit in its season,
and its leaf does not wither.
In all that he does, he prospers.
⁴The wicked are not so,
but are like chaff which the wind drives away.
⁵Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;
⁶for the Lord knows the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.”

Hymn of Praise: [“Rejoice, Ye Pure in Heart”](#)

Prayer of the Day

“Living God, in Christ you make all things new. Transform the poverty of our nature by the riches of your grace, and in the renewal of our lives make known your glory, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.”

1st Reading: [Jeremiah 17:5-10](#)

2nd Reading: [1 Corinthians 15:12-20](#)

The Gospel: [Luke 6:17-26](#)

Hymn: ["Blest Are They"](#)

The Message: ([Video Link](#))

Like so many, during my childhood memorizing certain Biblical passages was routine. Of course in many respects I was too young to fully comprehend the full meaning of what I was memorizing. They were compilation of words which meant little to me outside of being rewarded in some way for achieving the task. The first Psalm was a favorite for those who thought I should memorized it perhaps just because it was the first in what is a beloved book of the Bible. Along with the 23rd Psalm, they were the two psalms deemed essential to memory.

The 23rd Psalm is understandable why it was among those passages to be memorize in our childhood since it is an understandable message of hope for all of life. On the other hand, the first Psalm presents the realities of life and the repercussions as well as rewards, which are present. "In the King James Version which I had memorized, it begins, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate both day and night."

It is important to note that one of the most important writings, the Psalms, in Judeo Christian worship begins with the word blessed which is also interpreted as happy. Blessed especially sets the tone of all that is to follow – to have that sacred blessing of God or that God instilled happiness is where life begins and ends. It also immediately sets forth the reality that man has the propensity to deny this blest relationship with God by going the way of what man finds to be temporarily rewarding. In this brief beginning the psalmist sets forth the reality of good and evil and the results of both. "For the Lord knows the way of the righteous but the way of the ungodly shall perish."

So it sets the foundation for the Psalms and the key to the Hebrews theology. God according to Hebrew theology always finds revenge when He or his laws were broken or His chosen ones defeated. His mercy was shown when there was repentance and the changing of life's ill-gotten ways. This was the time for celebration for the reception of His blessing. This was a theology based upon the stringent following of law enhanced by a reward system. It is the story of the Old Testament in which the Hebrews lived under the mighty hand of God's condemning law and the blessing of finding favor with Him. Therefore it followed that to be blessed with the good life was God's reward. When not in God's favor life would be filled with all of the unfavorable attributes which life could give. That meant sickness or being poor was because you failed to find favor from God because of not following his strict laws. This was most evident in the book of Job.

To live or not live a blessed life according to society's standards was directly at the hand and mercy of God.

Therefore one's station or circumstance was whether you were or were not blessed by God. This gave the powerful, wealthy and elite their basis of keeping and increasing their earthly gains. Into such a theological tradition comes the prophet Jeremiah who begins to bring a new perspective into being blessed. (Just a side note Jeremiah in some ways is the prophet to bridge the Old and New Testaments)

Jeremiah saw that within the life of wealthy and powerful class there were those who took advantage of being called blessed by hiding behind its coattails. They in fact were living the life of man's self-interests and desires. To this Jeremiah proclaimed, "Thus says the Lord: Cursed are those who trust in mere mortals and make mere flesh their strength whose hearts turn away from the Lord." He goes on to say that their seeming reward will perish. "They shall be like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see when relief comes. They shall live in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land." The future for those who called themselves blessed because of their fortune in life would come to a bitter conclusion. Their only blessing was what they placed upon themselves through society's gods of earthly pursuit and was not from God.

Jeremiah then goes on to define those who were truly blessed. "Blessed are those who trust in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green; in the year of drought it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit." He then concludes, "The heart is devious above all else; it is perverse – who can understand it? I the Lord test the mind and search the heart to give to all according to their ways, and according to the fruit of their doings."

Although Jeremiah does not stray away from a God given reward system for earthly successes, he does place those to be blessed in the realm of God's judgment and not man's. But in reality the standards whether a person thinks they are blest or not remained and still remains dependent upon what society determines what is successful and that which brings happiness even though it may be short lived.

This was all to be turned upside-down. Jesus in the very beginning of His ministry would set who were truly blessed in God's eyes for it was up to Him to make that judgment. Although those who felt themselves blest by the good life during their lifetime, they would not be those who would end up being the blessed and happy ones. After all they had their day in the sun, so to speak, which was often at the expense of making others suffer through the pitfalls of life.

Jesus presented who God saw would be truly blessed and find happiness in the long term and not what society thought. After teaching and healing a large crowd which had gathered around him during, which is called the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus then directed his words to His disciples. In doing this He appeared to be telling them what discipleship and to be blessed to be called into following Him really meant. It was then He proclaimed who are the blessed by God in what is known as Luke's version of the beatitudes, "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 excluded you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man."

After this the disciples knew that being blessed in being a disciple of Jesus would not be in terms of the Jewish tradition of what the world believed to be happy and successful. To be blessed was no indication of how life would treat them. But to them if this Jesus turned out to be the long awaited tradition Messiah they would be rewarded greatly on this earth. But regardless of what they thought Jesus was upfront with them. This all would come true with the cross, the resurrection and the persecution they would experience later.

After proclaiming who would be blessed, Jesus then proclaimed those who would not be ultimately blessed and find happiness. 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 what their ancestors did to the false prophets.”

God’s way and man’s way seem to go in two different directions. But what is always seen by us in earthly terms is not what is seen by God. As Jeremiah stated God tests the mind and searches the heart for that is who we really are or what motivates our lives. If what is there within us is directed and motivated out of love truly what is important to us is not what life brings to us in way of earthly treasures but our happiness and the blessing we see in life as we live it in loving others. We are blessed when we live the life and gifts of life that we have, share, and then give thanks for them. It is then the ultimate of God’s blessing will be ours even when the earthly treasures are no more, the treasure of God’s eternal love lives on for us.

Anthem: [“Blessings Be Upon You”](#)

Offering*: ([On-Line giving Link](#))

We give thee but thine own, what e’er the gift may be; all that we have is thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from thee.

The Prayer

Ever loving God our eternal Father, we come to you in all humility in realizing all the gifts you have given us and all that we considered to be the blessings of life. The greatest of these is to know that your loving presence is always with us. We are also grateful for all those we love and who in return share their love with us. During the special day tomorrow, Valentine’s Day, may we especially be thankful for and celebrate the love we share. Never let us take for granted all the gifts of life which have come to us.

We pray for all who need your comforting and healing presence especially Bob and Pat Allen, Eugene Ash, Pam Ash, Heidi Brackbill, Parker Brennan, the Cronin family, Leo Dickel, Dotty Gibson, Kraig Greff, Nancy Griebel, the Johnson Family, Robert Karner, David Kieffer, Pam Lambert, Charles Larsen, Donna Mayhew, the McNamara family, Jane Marczewski, Wendy Neumann, Elise Oliver, Peter Olsen, Brenda Penyak, Dottie Reitz, Robert Reitz, Colin Shea, Jerry Shea, Jack Smith, the Spiegler family, Esther and Buck Trautwein,, Pastor Jack,

We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

The Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make His face shine upon you;
The Lord lift up His presence upon you and give you peace. Amen

And now my brothers and sisters
Live on knowing God's love,
The joy of living this life of love,
And the peace which only comes through the power of His presence within you.
So live on in Love, Joy, Peace, and Power.

Closing Hymn: ["Oh, Happy Day When We Shall Stand"](#)

Announcements

Please note that Masks are required while in the church building.

*Offering to be sent to
Robert Brackbill
10274 Raleigh Tavern Lane
Ellicott City, MD 21042

Epiphany Lutheran Church
9122 Sybert Drive
Columbia Hills
Ellicott City, MD 21043
<https://www.epiphanylutherancolumbia.org>

Please note that you now have the opportunity of online giving with the link found after the offering designation or here: https://tithe.ly/give_new/www/#/tithely/give-one-time/2627291