

MORNING PRAYER
SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY
02.13.22

Our first lesson, the passage from Ezekiel, makes it clear that today's message is not primarily for nonbelievers, but for the House of Israel, that is, for those who believe - for the Church, but for the Church seen as a rebellious house, as those who have been chosen, but yet manage not to hear the heart of the message. In other words, as we approach the solemnity of Lent, we are being called to see how far we ourselves have strayed from our divine calling.

Our second lesson, then, is to be seen that way. It is what is known as "The Beatitudes" from Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, much quoted and beloved words, valued for their beauty, and for the comfort they seem to offer, but, in truth, these words are more challenging than comforting.

They look deep within our minds and spirits.
They challenge us in a yet more fundamental way than even the Ten Commandments.
Let's take a detailed look:

***Blessed are the poor in spirit:
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.***

What do we value?
Is it the things we have, however much or little? Is it the things we might be able to obtain?
Will there be a U-Haul behind our hearse?
Or do we know in our hearts that we own nothing, except the promise of God?
If this last is true, the kingdom of heaven is ours.

***Blessed are they that mourn:
for they shall be comforted.***

The comfortable have their reward, but those who know their sinfulness and mourn, shall know the comfort of redemption.

***Blessed are the meek:
for they shall inherit the earth.***

"Look out for Number One," they say, but, as St. Paul said, we are called to prefer one another. Greatness comes not from striving to get, but from serving and giving.

***Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after
righteousness:
for they shall be filled***

What is it we really want?

Is our heart and soul dedicated to pleasing God? or are we more interested in pleasing ourselves?

We will be filled with what we seek.

***Blessed are the merciful:
for they shall obtain mercy.***

"Forgive us ... as we forgive" is what He taught us to pray. He did not say, "forgive me, but not him."

***Blessed are the pure in heart:
for they shall see God.***

Can we see God through what is in our hearts?

***Blessed are the peacemakers:
for they shall be called the children of God.***

There's at least as much gossip and strife, and maybe more,
in the Church as there is outside.

Do we really act like Children of God?

***Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness'
sake:
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.***

***Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you,
and persecute you, and shall say
all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.***

***Rejoice, and be exceeding glad:
for great is your reward in heaven:
for so persecuted they the prophets
which were before you.***

Do we grumble when our faith costs us something? Do we hide our
faith lest someone criticize us for it? Or do we rejoice in the
chance to stand up for God?

God has placed us here to make a difference, to proclaim openly
with out words, but especially with our lives, that He is real, and
that He is Redeemer and Deliverer.

Thus He concludes:

***Ye are the salt of the earth:
but if the salt have lost his savour,
wherewith shall it be salted?
it is thenceforth good for nothing,
but to be cast out,
and to be trodden under foot of men.***

***Ye are the light of the world.
A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.***

***Neither do men light a candle,
and put it under a bushel,
but on a candlestick;
and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.***

***Let your light so shine before men,
that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father
which is in heaven.***

May we so shine, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Written by: The Rev'd Ed Pacht
Presented by: Ted Randall, Lay Reader**