

St Marc Grenoble  
Sunday 13th February 2022  
3rd Sunday before Lent  
**Jeremiah 17: 5 - 10**  
**Luke 5: 17 - 28**  
**'Blessed'?**

Good morning to everyone here, and to those 'Zooming' in from elsewhere!

We've had two challenging readings this morning, from Jeremiah and Luke. What did you make of them? I'd really like to hear what jumped out at you Or made you want to dig a bit deeper?? Did anyone feel God may be speaking to them through the readings??

Just to be clear, there are NO wrong answers; it's about what jumped out, or challenged or puzzled YOU.

Thank you! It does help us all to know how our readings may make a difference to you and your lives.

Over the last couple of weeks, since I returned from my break, I've been challenging you to listen to God's call on your life. How God may be calling you, and how you feel He may be speaking to you.

But, last week, someone said to me - 'It's all very well talking about hearing God's call, but how should we be living our daily lives going forward?? That was a very good question.

I think this week's readings help to answer that question. Let's look at the Gospel reading in a minute but, first, we should look at the Jeremiah reading.

Jeremiah was one of the major prophets of the OT era. He lived around 600 years before Jesus' life on earth. His prophetic ministry lasted more than 40 years and he spent most of it warning the nation of Judah what would happen to them, unless they turned back to God.

Because the catastrophe he foretold didn't happen immediately, (not until about 100 years later) people stopped listening to Jeremiah and that was a mirror of how they were treating God too.

Ironically, if you read Jeremiah's prophecies, you'll find close similarities with our current world culture. God is saying 'Beware' and nobody is taking notice.

Tragically, I think we're only just beginning to experience what happens, when our nations turn their backs on God.

This morning's reading focuses firmly on the misfortunes or 'curses' awaiting those who insist on depending solely on human strength and wisdom; and graphically contrasts the blessings received by those who trust in God's ways and His wisdom.

Jeremiah paints a word picture of a tree planted beside a river and, like that tree, people who trust God have all they need in both good times and bad. 'Never a worry through the hottest of summers, never dropping a leaf, serene and calm through droughts, bearing fresh fruits every season.' (Jer. 17 v 8)

God always cares for His people and their needs; our task is to learn to trust Him, and walk in the way He leads us. But to do that, we need to learn more about Him, reading His word - the Bible and speaking with Him in prayer, every day in just the same way we spend time with our loved ones.

But N.B. We must be well aware of vv. 9 - 10 'I God search the heart, examine the mind - I get to the root of things, treat them as they really are - not as they pretend to be.'

You see, we cannot pull the wool over God's eyes - He has laser like vision He sees into our innermost thoughts - there is 'No hiding place'!

So let's move on about 600 years, and explore what Luke's Gospel has to say to us. This reading helps us reflect on our lives and our faith; suggesting how to become better 'saints', holy people - 'set apart for God's service.

This section of Luke's Gospel is called the Beatitudes (Blessings) also 'The Sermon on the Plain' c.f. Matthew 5; Matthew focuses more on spiritual blessings, but Luke focuses on blessings in daily life.

To understand it better, we first need to go back a few verses in Luke 6, to see who Jesus was talking to and what was happening as He gave these 'blessings'. v.12 tells us Jesus had been praying all night. Then v.13 tells us He called his disciples and chose twelve whom He designated 'Apostles'. An apostle is someone chosen and given a commission, or specific task.

Jesus called His apostles to grow the kingdom of God, by proclaiming the Good News. Telling people about the salvation and healing, which only Jesus brings us. He took His 'apostles', as He spoke to a crowd of followers and people who'd come to hear Him, and be healed of their sicknesses.

The crowd were all desperately trying to touch Jesus, because power was coming from Him and healing all their sickness and diseases.

The first part of the reading (vv. 20 - 23) 'The Beatitudes' or 'blessings' gives us a look at the Christian's walk of faith; the second part (vv. 24 - 26) focuses on the corresponding 'woes', for those who won't walk with God.

We should look carefully at these blessings, they give us a good guide to the Christian life or, at least, what we should be striving for.

In today's world, we've largely lost the practice of blessing; but in the God fearing community of Jesus' day, blessings were considered very important.

Sadly our culture seems to have replaced them with greed and selfishness; whereas using blessings demonstrated care, concern and love for others.

We need to realise, just because we're Christians, doesn't mean life will always be easy. In fact, probably the opposite.

God has a continuing love for the poor, for outcasts – for the unclean and the unloved. As Christians we must also follow the example Jesus gave us.

Jesus' teaching was regarded as scandalous, because He showed a true love for everyone on the margins of society – for whatever reason.

These 'blessings' promise everyone who is poor or outcast a genuine release, in God's coming kingdom, from degradation and humiliation.

That's Good News for all of us, because we're all poor, or rejected, in one way or another. Jesus promises it won't be like that in God's Kingdom!

But, within the blessings there's a big challenge for us. We're called to mirror God's love, as Jesus showed it. It's easy to love and care for 'nice' people - anyone can do that! But, we're called to love and care for the unlovable.

We're called to imitate Jesus; so we have to try and care for anyone who is poor, degraded or excluded from society in exactly the same way as He did, sharing God's love with each one of them.

Then, the reading looks at the woes, which counter balance the blessings. You cannot have it all ways! Either you have everything you want now, for this short life, or you're promised it later, for all eternity!

Finally, we come to the bit about loving our enemies and praying for those who reject you. Personally, (and I don't think I'm alone?) I find that incredibly difficult – but it's clear, that's what Jesus calls us to do.

'Do to others what you want them to do to you!'

Jesus doesn't say Christian life will be easy – but He promises His Holy Spirit to walk with us throughout our life, and wonderful blessings for eternity in the Kingdom of God. That's worth looking forward to! ... **Let's Pray**