



BLESSED ARE THEY WHO HUNGER AND THIRST FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

By Father David C. Robinson, SJ

Excerpts from Today's Readings

Seek the LORD, all you humble of the earth, who have observed his law; seek justice, seek humility...I will leave as a remnant in your midst a people humble and lowly, who shall take refuge in the name of the LORD: the remnant of Israel. They shall do no wrong and speak no lies.

ZEPHANIAH 2:3; 3:12-13

Consider your own calling, brothers and sisters. Not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. Rather, God chose the foolish of the world to shame the wise, and God chose the weak of the world to shame the strong, and God chose the lowly and despised of the world, those who count for nothing, to reduce to nothing those who are something, so that no human being might boast before God.

1 CORINTHIANS 2:26-29

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he had sat down, his disciples came to him. He began to teach them, saying: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God.

MATTHEW 5:1-8

Reflection

Throughout the history of Christian communities around the world, there have been controversies among the faithful about their responsibilities for the care of the poor, the downtrodden, the oppressed, and those denied the right to justice. Although it is an undeniable focus of Judeo-Christian tradition—from the time of Moses, with his passionate heart for justice among the people, through the tradition of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and a multitude of prophets, to the teachings of Jesus concerning compassion for all those abandoned in the world—there are still those who choose to mute the call to mutual care among God's people, and to blunt the generosity of soul that is a hallmark of the Spirit.

If ever there were a set of Sunday readings to silence the murmuring of denial that continues among those who claim Jesus' legacy, today's would top the list. We begin with Zephaniah, who urges the oppressed to: **Seek the LORD, all you humble of the earth, who have observed his law; seek justice, seek humility....I will leave as a remnant in your midst a people humble and lowly, who shall take refuge in the name of the Lord.** In God's promised vision for the future of the people, the 'humble and lowly' are the true inheritors of the covenant. Theirs is the spirit of God's chosen, whose total trust in divine providence is the lifeblood of the fulfillment awaited since the time of Moses.

In his extensive, and occasionally contentious, dealings with the various communities he helped to establish, Paul exhorts the people with paternal firmness to remember their duties of love with and for one another. He chastises them for the ostentation of their social behavior and their failures in caring for the 'least' among them. He is not timid about reminding them that theirs is a higher calling, and their exemplar is Christ, crucified and resurrected, not the highly-regarded figures of the Roman world. The attraction of our own contemporary 'stars' ought to be warning enough of the limited grace their supposed successes can bring to our walk with God and one another. Paul had to be 'knocked of his horse' while on his self-righteous odyssey of religious oppression before he could 'see' the true vocation of faith, and the abundance of humility and compassion it required. That metaphor might serve us in our

context to reframe the value and virtue of our own journey, and the 'riches' we seek to gain along the way.

In his proclamation of the Beatitudes, Jesus makes the definitive statement about the nature and fulness of the life of faith: **Jesus began to teach them, saying: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God.** It is not simply the virtuous, or the knowledgeable, or the spiritually eloquent who enter into the home of the divine. It is those whose hearts look to God with humility and gratitude in all of life's circumstances, who embody the discipleship of holiness. Their lives are surrendered to a grace that opens them to give and to share with all in need who stand before them. Their generosity is not a duty, but a blessing.

In our own discernments and choices, we are invited to the same adventure of the soul. Can we receive both what spurs our joys and ignites our sorrows in gratitude to the God who lifts us up everywhere without exception? It is that gratitude which enlightens our path and inspires our love expressed in care, especially for those whose lives might appear to be an endless spiral of hopelessness. This is the endless fount of blessing that awaits us. What do we choose?



Photo of Mount of Beatitudes in Israel by Sr. Karin Nürnberg, CSJ

For Pondering

- What do you consider to be the 'riches' in your life?
- What do you experience as the greatest invitation to give to God's most needy ones?
- Do you cultivate a practice of generous living on your daily path?

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