

Greetings! We are now in the second Sunday after Pentecost and we have covered all the major festivals of the church. This morning our young people are leading and participating in the service as we have earmarked it as Youth Sunday. It is only appropriate that on such a day like this we have our theme as, 'The difference between what the world values and what God values.' Youth is particularly a time when the world would like to sell its values to us saying that it is better than God's values. However, Jesus teaches us and every follower of God that it is important for us to walk according to God's values or his kingdom's values.

In the gospel reading for this morning Luke records for us that people came for all over to see Jesus. Many of his own disciples were with him at that time. People came from Jerusalem and Judea and from the coast of Tyre and Sidon – other countries. The crowds had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. Those troubled by evil spirits were cured. The reason: Power was coming from him and healing them all – people tried to touch him

Three groups of people are present here: Apostles, disciples and the people. All of them can hear what Jesus has to say. Jesus teaches all who are willing to hear, so the walk with God is made clear to anyone. The teaching counters the people's focus on the healing. God heals and gives graciously, but a walk with God involves serving God as the teaching will show. One comes to Jesus not only to receive from him but to respond to him.

The sermon on the Mount and this section are similar though Luke's version is shorter. The stress in Luke's version is on how to treat others. It contains a call to a gracious, loving and forgiving approach. There is a strong ethical focus in the teaching. The people are divided into two categories: The blessed group is compared to the persecuted OT prophets and the cursed group is compared to false prophets. The call of the sermon is that one should not be pre-occupied with the spiritual condition of others, but be diligent about one's own righteousness. Declaring someone happy, contented or blessed, or fortunate was common in the ancient world. In the first beatitude we see that Jesus promises those who are poor that the kingdom of God was theirs now in the present. The poor could be both the economically poor and the spiritually poor. Those who realize that they cannot go through this life without Jesus are the ones who realize that they are poor. The economically poor find it easy to believe in Jesus because they have nothing else to fall back on.

The second and third beatitude are the consequences of being poor: hunger and sadness. The hungry are people who are both outwardly and inwardly deficient in the essential things of life as God meant it to be. They cannot help themselves and therefore turn to God on the basis of his promise. They are the ones who hunger now and in the future their roles will be reversed. The promise for the physically hungry and the spiritually poor is the promise of satisfaction from God. Those who weep and mourn now are also blessed. The mourning is primarily for suffering of painful injustice, in a world where God's people are pressurized, persecuted and exiled just as the prophets were. This pain is reversed into eschatological joy – on the last day when the trumpets will blow – then there will be no more weeping and no more sorrow. Rev 21:4.

In the final beatitude Jesus says that those who would be persecuted are blessed. For a disciple to be on the side of Jesus - was to take a public and potentially offensive stand, that would produce, reaction even hatred. A disciple was to realize that God knew of this public reaction. Secondly, they could be excluded from the synagogue. But here it is a reference to general social ostracism. Thirdly, they would reject your name as evil – The disciple is treated as evil and unclean, and thus as a person with whom one does not associate. To attack a person's name is to strike at the very person. This would be the attack on a true disciple.

However, Jesus also warns the people with four 'Woes'. Those who were rich now had already received their comfort; those who are well fed now will be hungry later; those who laugh now will mourn and weep; and those who are well spoken of are like the false prophets. Acceptance becomes more important than truthfulness for these people. Jesus calls us this morning to embrace kingdom values. We are called to recognize our poverty both physical and spiritual. We are called to hunger and thirst after God and his righteousness. We are to be aware that we will be persecuted if we are true followers of Jesus. May God help us truly to lead our lives according to the values of his kingdom and not according to the values of this world.