

# **THE SERMON ON THE PLATEAU.**

## **Keppel Bharath**

**Today is the 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany. The sermon that was recommended by Rev Ian was to speak on Luke 6: Verses 17- 26.**

**It is a pleasure to see you here this morning at St John's.**

**I would like to wish you a warm and loving Good morning to all of you . Come and see me after worship.**

**Welcome to St John's Presbyterian Church.**

### **Call to Worship**

**L: The lord be with you**

**C: And also with you**

**L: The lord lift his face upon you and shines his light on to you**

**C: We live in darkness o Lord, please show us the way and the truth**

**L: Please come down from the mountain and be with us your disciples and tell us of your ways show us your strength and immense Power.**

**C: We want to follow in your ways O Lord**

**L: We want to show you our love and our love for each other. Unite us in the bond of Christian affection.**

**C: We came to hear your voice, we came to be healed of our diseases, and we came to be cleansed of our dirty ways. We came to learn how to worship you. Lead us dear Father.**

**ALL: Ascribe to the Lord Glory and Strength, Ascribe to the Lord the Glory of his name, and let us worship the lord in full array.**

**OPENING HYMN: ALL THE WAY MY SAVIOUR LEADS ME #699.**

**All the Way My Savior Leads Me" is a Christian hymn written in 1875 by Fanny J. Crosby (1820-1915). The Hymn was put to music by the Baptist minister Dr. Robert Lowry who was also a composer and a professor of literature. In her autobiography, Fanny wrote that this was her first hymn to be set to music**

by Lowry. The hymn was first published in *Brightest and best: a choice collection of new songs, duets, choruses, invocation and benediction hymns for the Sunday school and meetings of prayer and praise* in 1875 by the New York publisher Biglow & Main. A frequently told story about this hymn relates that it came to Fanny as a result of a prayer. Struggling financially, she desperately needed some money. As her usual custom, Fanny began to pray. A few minutes later, a gentleman offered her five dollars, the exact amount she needed. Later recalling the incident, she said, "I have no way of accounting for this except to believe that God put it into the heart of this good man to bring the money." The poem she wrote afterward became "All The Way My Savior Leads Me". Let us sing together #699.

## PRAYER OF APPROACH AND ADORATION

Father in Heaven, we are gathered today to seek your help to learn how to pray and how to begin to ask for forgiveness from you. We have to hear what you have to say and then we will ask to be healed as a broken people. Many of us are yearning for your help but are afraid to ask. We secretly adore your wisdom but are afraid to acknowledge you in public.

There are many of us who want healing but are afraid to ask. We hear about the lack of faith, or the amount of faith that most of us do not have, forgive us for this. Please descend on our souls and cast a spell on us so that we can follow you without hesitation. Immerse us in your love completely and make us shine in your light. We ask these things in adoration of you or father who taught us to pray Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name

CHILDRENS HYMN : TELL ME THE STORIES OF JESUS #348

Parker, William Henry, was born at New Basford, Nottingham on March 4th, 1845. Early in life he began to write verses, poetry and Hymns. After joining a General Baptist church and become interested in Sunday schools he envisioned a Hymn that tells of all the wondrous deeds that Jesus was doing. He was led to compose such type of hymns for use at anniversaries etc. His pastor, the Rev. W. R. Stevenson, encouraged him to write these poems which later became Hymns and published them into *The School Hymnal*, 1880, which was later passed into *The Children's Book of Praise* in 1881. This poem in particular was put to music by Frederic Chalinor. The Hymn defines the stories that were told by Jesus and those who enjoyed listening to them, Children, Disciples and us. In 1882 Mr. Parker published a small volume entitled, *The Princess Alice and Other Poems*. Let us sing together

Hymn # 348 : Tell me the stories of Jesus.

TIME WITH THE YOUNG AND YOUNG AT HEART PLUS BELLA

Guatemala's is a country in South America. Its largely indigenous population say their rights have been violated since the Spanish arrived in the 16th century, dispossessing their communities and driving them into the less fertile highlands.

A peace agreement in 1996 should have led to land redistribution, but a handful of powerful families still dominates the economy, and Guatemala remains one of the world's poorest countries, with a small population the largest 2% controlling more than 65% of the land.

Our own Bella is going there to do some volunteer work and we would like to send her off safely and wish her safe travels and a safe return. Of course we want to hear all about her trip when she returns.

SONG OF ILLUMINATION: #400 SPIRIT OF THE LIVING GOD (DUET)

Spirit of the Living God is one of the most long-lasting and widely used choruses in Christian worship. Every aspect of the song embodies a simple sincerity.

Daniel Iverson was born in 1890. A native of Brunswick, Ga. He received his education at the University of Georgia in Athens, the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Ga., and the University of South Carolina.

As a Presbyterian minister, Iverson served churches in Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina. In 1927 he organized the Shenandoah Presbyterian Church in Miami, Fla., remaining with this congregation until his retirement in 1951.

The first stanza of the hymn uses simple language ("Mold me and make me"). The final stanza also contains a petition to the Spirit ("Fill with thy Spirit"). The Rev. Carlton Young, editor of the *UM Hymnal*, notes that the authorship of "Spirit of the Living God" was lost for a time because the song could so easily be taught without music or even printed words. It first appeared in *Revival Songs* (1929) in a slightly revised version that was published without the author's permission, according to Dr. Young.

"Daniel's youngest son, Bill Iverson, recently called together many old-timers to celebrate the 80th anniversary of the church . . . now occupied by a Hispanic congregation dedicated to carrying on the same message and mission."

Undoubtedly, the Spanish-language translation of Iverson's hymn lives on in this congregation.

The melody encompasses only five notes, with every pitch in its place. The harmonies can be

played by a very modestly skilled pianist, and three of the four lines repeat the same nine words. Yet for many, the straightforward petitions of this song draw the singer into an attitude of prayer. Michele and I will now sing #400: Spirit of the living God.

SCRIPTURES READ BY: **Jack McMartin**

## PSALM 1: READ RESPONSIVELY

- <sup>1</sup> Blessed is the one  
who does not walk in step with the wicked  
or stand in the way that sinners take  
or sit in the company of mockers,  
<sup>2</sup> but whose delight is in the law of the Lord,  
and who meditates on his law day and night.  
<sup>3</sup> That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,  
which yields its fruit in season  
and whose leaf does not wither—  
whatever they do prospers.
- <sup>4</sup> Not so the wicked!  
They are like chaff  
that the wind blows away.  
<sup>5</sup> Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,  
nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.
- <sup>6</sup> For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous,  
but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.

## Luke 6:17-26 New International Version (NIV)

### Blessings and Woes

<sup>17</sup> He went down with them and stood on a level place. A large crowd of his disciples was there and a great number of people from all over Judea, from Jerusalem, and from the coastal region around Tyre and Sidon,  
<sup>18</sup> who had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. Those troubled by impure spirits were cured,  
<sup>19</sup> and the people all tried to touch him, because power was coming from him and healing them all.

<sup>20</sup> Looking at his disciples, he said:

“Blessed are you who are poor,  
for yours is the kingdom of God.

<sup>21</sup> Blessed are you who hunger now,  
for you will be satisfied.

Blessed are you who weep now,  
for you will laugh?

<sup>22</sup> Blessed are you when people hate you,  
when they exclude you and insult you  
and reject your name as evil,  
because of the Son of Man.

<sup>23</sup> “Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their ancestors treated the prophets.

<sup>24</sup> “But woe to you who are rich,  
for you have already received your comfort.

<sup>25</sup> Woe to you who are well fed now,  
for you will go hungry.

Woe to you who laugh now,  
for you will mourn and weep.

<sup>26</sup> Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you,  
for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets.

## HTM

## I waited for the Lord my God

#23

Gary would tell you that I am not hesitant at all to complain about hymns that I find somewhat lacking in scriptural depth. However with Gary’s persistence and coaching we uncover the transcendent beauty from this hymn that started its life as a “traditional Spanish melody” with the words from Psalm 40:1-3, 5 (and even though the hymn did not sound remotely Spanish).

It was a Scottish hymn, from the Scottish Psalter and that the original version is far longer than the version that we have today. If you were to look at the occurrences of this Hymn in our praise books you will see that it was very popular in the 1860’s and then fell off in the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Then in 1960 the popularity really took off. The hymn is surpassingly beautiful, worthy of special music or as an acapella quartet. Look on you tube. Let us sing #23 I waited for the Lord my God

## BEATTITUDES DELIVERED FROM THE PLATEAU

Let the words of my mouth and the thoughts on my brain give Glory to our Most powerful Savior Jesus Christ. AMEN.

Most people have heard of the Sermon on the Mount. However no one has ever heard of the beatitudes delivered from the plateau.

You see, the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7, and this sermon in Luke 6, whether they are the same sermon or not, could be called the Discipleship Manual.

My wife bought a new Hyundai IONIQ and it comes with an owner's manual.

And just as with any manual, Jesus begins with a description of the product.

When you open up your car manual, it begins with a description of the car itself. It's make, it's model, it's year, the various options that may or may not have come with your car.

Most people when they get a new car will look at it standing up and then kneeling down . Then they will look at it upside down and right side up.

If you want to understand anything look at it from all directions. I pray that our new Minister is going to continue to show things that are happening in this world in a different light so that we can all relate to. So let's read the manual.

So why did I call this the Beatitudes from the Plateau?

Well in Luke C6 V 17 it says that He went down from the mount with them and stood on a level place. That to me is a plateau. You come down from the peak to a flat area is a plateau.

It goes on to state that He is there, not only with his newly chosen 12 apostles, but also a crowd of disciples, and a great multitude of other people from the surrounding regions.

So what is so special about Luke C6 V 17 – 26 ?

Well there are four blessings and four woes. Each blessing has its exact opposite in the four woes. Each blessing has a counterpart woe. This is the Christian stewardship manual.

The first blessing is upon the poor (Luke 6:20). The first woe in Luke 6:24 is upon the rich.

The second blessing, in Luke 6:21, is for the hungry. The second woe, in Luke 6:25, is for the full.

The third blessing and third woe are related to weeping and laughter (Luke 6:21b and Luke 6:25b).

The fourth blessing and fourth woe are about how we are viewed by other people of this earth (Luke 6:22-23 and Luke 6:26).

Most of the people gathered on that plateau came for two reasons: to hear and be healed. They came to hear what Jesus had to say, and be healed by Him of their sicknesses and delivered from unclean spirits.

Both of these things happened – first the healing .

Luke 6:19 says that the whole multitude sought to touch Him, for power went out from Him and healed them all.

Jesus healing ability was drawn from the power of the Holy Spirit at work through Him to heal. His close, intimate connection with the Father as revealed through spending all night in prayer, was another factor that allowed Jesus to heal the multitudes.

Notice that is not just some of them that were healed, but all. Power went out from Jesus to heal them all. There is no discussion here about their lack of faith, or the amount of faith they do or do not have. Jesus simply and completely healed all who desired it.

The reason for this great display of miraculous healing is due to the challenging truths that Jesus is about to teach.

In the Old Testament and the New Testament, a prophet would often be called upon to give a prophecy about the future, or perform some sign or miracle in order to prove that they were truly from God.

Only true prophets of God could consistently perform such miracles. When the miracles were seen, the people could know that this prophet could be trusted.

Today, though miracles and healing do happen frequently by the power of God acting through Medical doctors. They are trained to associate symptoms within our bodies and prescribe medications that assist our healing.

The healing process can also be hastened through our humble prayers, God has given us the Bible by which we can judge the truthfulness or error of someone's teachings.

Even though Jesus carried out many miracles never once did Jesus perform a miracle of judgment?

Never once did He cause someone who could see to go blind or call down fire from heaven to incinerate His opponents.

All of Christ's miracles are tender and compassionate. He chose those acts of healing which would reveal His infinite tenderness and mercy.

These miracles were intended to reveal that He was a prophet of God. He was the Messiah, a tender and loving Messiah wanting to draw all unto Himself.

But Christ's goal in preaching was never intended to give people what they want to hear, but to give them instead what they needed to hear.

He gave them the hard truth. The truth that following Him would be a tough road.

Jesus spoke of poverty, hunger, and persecution as blessings, and of wealth, being well-fed and favor as bringing a curse.

He taught people to love their enemies, and not to retaliate.

He taught that one should give to those in need, knowing that they would never be repaid.

These are not very popular teachings. Yet He knew that it is better to speak the truth and not be popular with men, than to speak lies and have everybody like Him.

This is what we see him doing in Luke 6:20-26. These verses contain four blessings and four woes. And it is in these blessings and woes that we run headlong into Christ's upside down world which actually is right side up.

Then He lifted up His eyes toward His disciples, and said:

“Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be filled.

Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.

Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you, and revile you, and cast out your name as evil.

For the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven.

“But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.

Woe to you who are full, for you shall hunger.

Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.

Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for so did their fathers do to the false prophets.

When we first read these words it seems that our LORD is incredible.

It would seem as though Jesus has said that all who are poor, hungry, mourning and persecuted are blessed, while all who are rich, well-fed, happy, and honored are cursed.

Is it a blessing to be poor, hungry, sorrowful, and rejected?

Are all the hurting people of the world suddenly so fortunate, while all of the comfortable, happy people of the world are really cursed?"

The answer is no. But because Christ's statements are so backwards from what we have been taught all our lives that people of all sorts, Christians and non-Christians alike have struggled to understand what Jesus is teaching in this section of blessings and woes.

Sigmund Freud, accused Jesus of promoting masochism.

Mahatma Ghandi, on the other hand, believed that the teachings of Christ in this Sermon held up the highest ideal for how to live life.

Most Christians struggle with what Christ is saying especially in our materialistic, modern 1<sup>st</sup> world. We tend to spiritualize these sayings so that we don't have to apply them to our own personal lives.

Some others say that Christ is only giving us a description of how things will be in his kingdom, so we don't have to live like this now.

Still others argue that Christ is just laying down a standard which is so high that we will all recognize the utter impossibility of keeping it, and so become aware of our own sinfulness.

The bottom line is that the sayings of Christ are challenging.

They confront us right at home, and challenge everything we hold most dear.

What if Jesus was living here in Canada today, and decided to write a letter to the PM Justin Trudeau or if Jesus was living in Cornwall and told Ms. Clement what she should focus on.

Justin you should focus on the economy and getting more jobs for the people of Canada.

Or the key issue is health care & waiting times at the Hotel Dieu & clinics around Cornwall.

1 in 5 Cornwallites live on some form of assisted income or have not visited the dentist in the last 5 years.

Now after reading Luke C6 V 17 – 26 we can change the text to say.

*Justin do not worry so much about the economy and jobs. A lower Gross Domestic Product is actually good for the country. Don't you understand that the poor are the fortunate ones? The more poor we have in Canada the more blessed we are. Theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*And don't devote so much time to health care. You see, those who mourn are blessed too, for they'll be comforted.*

*Relax, Justin oppression gives Christians an opportunity to be persecuted, and therefore blessed. Thank you for the expanded opportunities.*

What a shock that would be! Can you imagine the public outrage – even from Christians – that would be expressed against Mr. Trudeau?

This is probably the reaction that Jesus received 2000 years ago when he first said these words. The people of that time were poor, they were hungry, and they were sick, underfed and overworked.

They were mistreated and abused by the Roman rulers and Roman army.

They were cheated and lied to and heavily taxed.

They wanted freedom from the oppression.

And the Messiah was supposed to give it to them.

But in his deliverance of the Beatitudes from the plateau he says, “Blessed are you poor.

Blessed are you when you're hungry. Blessed are you who mourn. Blessed are you when people hate you.”

May be He should have said “Congratulations!” to you who are poor. Congratulations to you who are hungry or mourn. You must be happy that people hate you.”

How many of you can say, “I'm so lucky to be poor!”

When something terrible happens in your life, and all you can do is weep and mourn for days, have any of you ever thought, “Wow! Why can’t all my life be this way?”

No! None of us think such thoughts. And yet, that is what Jesus is saying.

Does it occur to you that what Jesus is presenting here doesn’t seem like reality? Well remember, it doesn’t seem like reality because we’re living in a world where sin and other things are upside down and twisted around and backwards in this world.

Jesus is not describing how things are, He is describing how things will be in this world for the true disciple of Jesus Christ.

In Luke 6:20, Christ turns to speak specifically and especially to all of His disciples and tell them what being a disciple truly looks like.

He was giving them the Discipleship Manual, and he begins with a description of what their life will look like if they follow Him.

This is not a description of how to get to heaven, or what life will be like in the coming Kingdom. This is a description of how the committed disciple of Jesus Christ should try to live his or her life.

It was a sermon not just about outward actions and behavior, but about the inner attitude of the heart. The sermon is entirely about attitude. For the Disciple of Jesus Christ, attitude is everything.

This sermon today is based on Luke 6:20-26, which we are looking at today, and it is about your attitude toward life’s circumstances.

If the New Minister gives me a chance, my next Sermon would be on Luke 6:27-38 which will capture your attitude toward other people.

Then I would follow up with Luke 6:39-45 as it concerns your attitude toward yourself.

And finally Luke 6:46-49 discusses your attitude toward God.

These four Sermons would be the four essential steps to true happiness.

You will be happy, or blessed as a disciple of Christ if you keep your faith in God, if you love others, if you are honest with yourself, and if you obey God.

Now this does not come easily. In fact it comes at a great cost.

Each of these eight statements in Luke C6 V 17 – 26 is a land mine.

They can explode and completely obliterate any shallow talk of discipleship.

At the same time, they construct for us the architecture of what being a true disciple of Christ may entail.

What he presents seems backwards and upside down, but this is the how all true disciples of Christ will appear in this world.

Notice further that each of the eight statements is balanced by a physical condition and it's resulting spiritual consequence.

In Christ's time there were many poor and many sick, many outcast and many afflicted. For some of them, this was just the way things were.

But for others, these things happened to them because they decided to follow Jesus Christ.

James and John, for example, who are two the Lord's apostles, had to turn their back on a rich inheritance in order to follow Jesus. Their father Zebedee was rich and prominent, but when James and John decided to follow Jesus, they most likely lost all that would otherwise have been theirs. Because they chose to follow Jesus, they became poor.

The principle is any negative circumstance in your life is a doorway to greater blessing.

Whether the negative circumstance has happened because you are a devoted follower of Jesus Christ, or just because bad things happen in life, that negative circumstance can lead to great spiritual blessing.

It's all about the condition or attitude of your heart. Do you trust God in your circumstances, or do you not? Whatever circumstances you find yourself in – trust God.

The apostle Paul did this, which is why he can write in Philippians 4 that although he is sometimes without food, sometimes he is beaten and slandered and imprisoned, he has learned the secret of being content in all situations.

The secret is an eternal and spiritual perspective. He writes in Philippians 4:13 that he can do all things through Christ who strengthens him.

This is the secret to living the contented life, even when from a physical viewpoint, there is not much to be contented about.

Every negative thing that happens in our lives is an opportunity for spiritual blessing.

We may see God provide in a miraculous way. We may experience God's presence and protection in ways never before imagined.

Even if the blessing does not come in this earth, we know that there are great rewards stored up in heaven for those who stand firm under persecution and worldly trials.

If, as a disciple of Jesus Christ, you stand up under poverty, and hunger, and weeping and public scorn, you are a great success.

It is an upside down world we live in. Jesus is trying to flip it around. So what can we do?

We, as His disciples are to show the world what right side up living looks like. It's all about an attitude of the heart. Be content with what you have, and seek first the Kingdom of God.

The beatitudes are not a chart for Christian duty. They form the discipleship manual for us to create a charter for Christian liberty. This is not news but reality. AMEN

### **Presentation of our Offerings and Gifts**

#### **Offertory Anthem**

**Heaven and Earth and Sea and Air**

**Lani Smith**

#### **Offertory prayer.**

**Thank you for these gifts that we have received from your bounty. Help us to use them wisely to continue doing your work here at St John's or elsewhere in your universe.**

**We ask these things in your name AMEN.**

### **Pastoral Prayer**

**Heavenly Father , Today Feb 17 2019 finds our world in total disarray.**

**We need to have Jesus in our midst to touch Him, to get his power so that he can heal us all.**

**Jesus healing ability was drawn from the power of the Holy Spirit at work through Him to heal. Help us to re-create this close, intimate connection with the Father as revealed by Jesus spending all night in prayer with the Almighty Father in heaven.**

Whether we have faith or lack faith heal us.

Heal the people in Nigeria who are still fighting over who is in control Show them that you are in control.

Intervene in Yemen as the local poor people are suffering under the hands of military personnel who are using Yemen as a tool for their ideas not yours.

Assist the people in the Catalan region of Spain to realize that a separate country is worse off than a united God loving country. Show them how to love each other.

Help the homeless in Toronto and Montreal who spent the last Tuesday night out in the elements without a warm blanket. We thank you for our staff who have kept St Johns clean

Prayer for the authorities who have been working 24/ 7 in the last few days to remove the 40 CM of snow that we have been dealt.

Prayer for the families of those who are sick and are wanting to become better

Prayer for the Family of Michele Alexis as they mourn the death of Horace . Help them to understand that Horace is occupying one of the many rooms that Our Father has prepared

Let us take a few minutes to prayer silently for those who are suffering and need you help .

We ask these things in your name . AMEN

## **Closing Hymn                      We are gods people #472**

Bryan Jeffrey Leech was born in Middlesex, England in 1931. He came to the United States in 1955 and studied at Barrington College and North Park Seminary. He was ordained in 1961 and served in the Covenant Church. He composed more than 500 songs.

The theology of the church is often expressed in its congregational singing as part of the church's DNA. The church presents God's message of love, reconciliation, and mission to the local and global community, partly through its congregational song.

The text for “We Are God's People” is inspired by biblical texts that best identify the church's DNA as "God's people," "God's loved ones," "the body," and "the temple."

The opening stanza is built on the imagery in 1 Peter 2:9. The community of faith is built on the foundation of Christ ("our cornerstone is Christ alone"), and that God's call and election are declared to all races .

Our journey of faith cannot be realized without a relationship with God and through God's active presence in the world.

**Let us sing #472 We are God’s people**

**Commissioning (Unison)**

In the power of the Holy Spirit,  
we now go forth into the world to fulfill our calling  
as the people of God, the body of Christ.

**Benediction**

When we meet on the street help us to greet and hug each other warmly.  
Ascribe to the Lord Glory and Strength, Ascribe to the Lord the Glory of his name, and let us  
remember that the Lord is in charge of us all.

**Sung Benediction—We are Here Joined in Christ**

We are here joined in Christ,  
called to serve and adore Him.  
Give us peace, perfect peace,  
patience and hope everlasting.  
Send us to serve in our Master’s name,  
and to glorify Him.  
Joined with Christ, and through Christ,  
praise our Father forever.

