

SIXTH SUNDAY OT - C

I understand that there is a football game being played this weekend.

(laughter)

The Super Bowl is a contest that will determine which team ends up with a rather large trophy.

Probably since the beginning of human history prizes have been awarded to those who come out on top in a competition.

However, Jesus certainly has a way of turning things on their head.

What most people would normally consider to be "woes" - being poor, hungry, sorrowful, and hated - Jesus calls blessings.

And what most of us would consider to be a "blessing" - being rich, having enough food, joyfulness, and having people speak well of you - Jesus describes as a source of woe.

There are two famous sermons of Jesus contained in the Gospels: the Sermon on the Mount found in the Gospel according to Matthew, and the Sermon on the Plain found in the Gospel according to Luke.

Scripture scholars cannot agree on whether Jesus gave two versions of the same sermon on two different occasions, or if the two evangelists wrote different versions of one sermon given by Jesus.

We do know that by a careful reading of Luke's Gospel we can see an emphasis on Jesus' teachings about the blessedness of the poor and the merciful.

The community for which Luke wrote his Gospel are believed to have themselves been poor outsiders in the society of their time.

It was almost certainly a mixed community of Jewish and Gentile Christians.

Written during a time of great persecution, the message of Luke's Gospel could be summed up by saying Jesus came to comfort the troubled and to trouble the comfortable.

But that's not the heart of Good News.

St. Paul clearly reminds his readers that it is Christ's resurrection which gives hope and meaning to our lives.

He states this in no uncertain terms:

"If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are the most pitiable people of all."

Jesus' Sermon on the Plain places the question squarely before us: Is the source of our hope to be found in the consolations of this world or in the blessings of the Kingdom of God?

As the prophet Jeremiah puts it so poetically in our first reading:

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"Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose hope is the Lord. That person is like a tree planted beside the waters that stretches out its roots to the streams."

He goes on to say: "It fears not the heat when it comes; its leaves stay green; in the year of drought it shows no distress, but still bears fruit."

Faith in Jesus is not a guarantee to of a trouble-free life but the promise of a faithful God who always stands by us.

That is the definition of love.

Monday is Valentine's Day, a day when we renew our affection for our loved ones.

For those who trust in the Lord, whose hope is in Jesus, every day is Valentine's Day.