

EPIPHANY 6

YEAR C

JEREMIAH 17:5-10

1 CORINTHIANS 15:12-20

LUKE 6:17-26

FEBRUARY 16, 17, 2019

1 Corinthians 15:19, 20 **If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. In fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died.**

Many were questioning the teaching of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. For many in Corinth this was a dream or a fantasy or wishful thinking among those that were proclaiming this word of truth from God. They were questioning and even teaching that this could not be so. Those that have died cannot come to life again. This was a new teaching for many and difficult to understand or even believe. There was also a Jewish sect that denied the resurrection from the dead. The Sadducees taught that there is no resurrection and that people spend eternity in Sheol or the place of shadows. Paul argues the point for the resurrection of Christ. He said that if Christ has not risen from the dead then we are the biggest fools that ever lived. We are most to be pitied. The truth of the matter is that Jesus has been raised from the dead and he is the first fruits of those that have died. He lives and there are eye witnesses to his resurrection and ascension into heaven. Some of those witnesses are Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of our Lord, Simon Peter, James and John. There are many others that saw him following the resurrection. Our Lord even appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus revealing himself as the one that is alive and lives so that all others might also live.

In the church things are not always as they seem. When we are following the Lord Jesus we know we will be changed so that we understand things in a new way. At funerals we talk about new life. Those that have died are raised to new life in Christ. When we teach about faith we say that we walk not by what we see but by the direction of the Holy Spirit. A virgin gets pregnant and becomes the mother of the Savior of the world. Those that are lacking believe they are blessed. We say, as we read today that the rich become poor, those that have been full will become

hungry and those that hear nice things about people are false prophets. In this room today is not a gathering of fools. You and I are not fools for being here today. We come together because we worship a risen Savior. Our Savior lifts our burdens and sets us on the road to heaven. You and I have come to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the one that rose to new life so that you and I will have new life.

Luke 6:23 Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.

All of this does seem backwards but our Lord has been turning things up-side-down since the beginning of time. Our Lord was there when God was creating the heavens and the earth. He was there speaking everything into existence. Our Lord was there instructing Noah to build an ark in the middle of the desert when there was not a rain cloud in sight. That must have looked at least a little unusual and even unbelievable. I wonder how many people called Noah a fool for building this huge boat in a place where it hardly rains. And he was there when the earth was being flooded and when Noah took the animals into that ark. Those that did not believe the word of God suddenly knew why Noah was acting in faith. The problem was that it was too late for them to change their minds and get on board.

Our Lord has been around since the beginning and he usually commanded things and did things that seemed to be the wrong way. Last week you might remember that Jesus asked Simon to take the boat out again. It was the wrong time of the day and maybe the wrong place in the lake but Jesus commanded it and Simon listened. The result was that there was lots of fish caught that day.

Things have not changed for the Lord our God. God is still asking us to do things that seem backwards and God is still teaching things that do not make sense. I don't know many people that like the idea of being poor yet Jesus says they are blessed. Most of us do not like being hungry but Jesus says they are blessed. We do not like being sad to the point of weeping but our Lord says we are blessed. We do not like people saying nasty things to us or about us but Jesus says you are

blessed. We don't like the idea of humbling ourselves to the point of forgiving our neighbor but our Lord says we are blessed. We enjoy sitting in the stench of our desire to get even but our Lord moves us away from that stench and shows us the sweet aroma of forgiveness.

Luke 6:24 “But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.

At the same time most of us like the idea being rich but Jesus says, “Woe to you!” We like having our tummies full and we would rather laugh than cry but our Lord says, “Woe to you!” We like people to speak kindly to us and about us but Jesus says, “Woe to you!” What is this all about anyway? Does all of this seem backwards?

Jesus teaches us in this way and says that you are a blessed people. You are blessed not because of the things you have. You are blessed because the Lord has looked kindly on you. Jesus can say that the poor are blessed because they know where their wealth comes from. Those that are hungry are blessed because they know where to find food. Those that are crying now are blessed because they know their deliverance is in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not our Lord's will that anyone should want for anything. If he wills that some should be in need why would he give us a Psalm that says, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.” Why would he say that the Good Shepherd lays his life down for the sheep that they would have life? He wants each of us to be fed and to be happy and people to like us because our Lord loves us. Yet, we must be careful that we continue to serve the Lord even as the Lord blesses us.

The tendency is to fall away when the Lord blesses us with riches and other good things. We pull away from the church because we have what we need for this life. We have enough to buy what we need and want. We have groceries in the refrigerator and we have happiness with the friends around us. People seem to enjoy being around us and they think we are good people because we give money to charities. These are the ones that the Lord is sending away. Their goal was to

become rich in worldly things and to have their fill of worldly things and to be happy in worldly things but they forgot about heavenly things. They have their reward. The reward is that they have achieved their worldly goals but that will be it.

We must be careful because there are some that worship their own poverty to the point they also do not seek the guidance and protection of the Lord. There are some that show up at the church doors because they need money for a place to stay or food to eat or gasoline for the car. They come because they have a need but their intent is to scam those that are generous. The Lord does not bless those that scam the people of God. We reach out in love to help the poor, hungry and homeless but our Lord will judge those that scam God's people.

You are a blessed people. You have been cared for by the Lord your God. You who were poor are now rich. Those who were hungry now have something to eat. Those that have been weeping have the assurance of the Lord's presence in your life. At the right time your tears will dry up. You are a blessed people. The Lord loves you and the Lord loves Our Savior's Lutheran Church. This is a blessed congregation and we will serve the Lord in faithfulness. We will walk in faith because the Lord has been faithful to us. Believe the word of the Lord even it is a difficult word or seems to be backwards. Trust that the Lord is blessing you even as you are lacking. Live in the blessings of the Lord. AMEN