

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

February 14, 2010

Jeremiah 17: 5 – 8; Psalm 1; 1 Corinthians 15: 12,16 – 20 ; Luke 6: 17, 20 - 26
Preaching by: S. Beth Quire, OP

This is an interesting Gospel to land on the holiday of Valentine's Day. There are those who say Valentine's Day was a holiday invented by Hallmark, and the flower and candy companies ... But the message is important. Valentine's Day is a day when we think of love, a time that reminds us to tell those we love, how we feel. If we let it, it can be a day to remember, name and express the love we feel and often take for granted. Little children sign cards to each other and sometimes give candy. Couples often use this day to express their love for each other in different ways.

Our Gospel today speaks about some people being blessed and others being cursed. Luke notices several groups of people we usually pity or see as cursed or down on their luck. Luke goes on to name these people as "blessed." What is Luke thinking? ... More importantly, what is Jesus thinking as he is the one saying it.

The poor, the hungry, the weeping, the hated, the excluded, the insulted, the denounced are all blessed and are to rejoice, because their reward will be great in heaven and because they are experiencing the same persecution as the prophets. So what does this have to tell us today? Are the people of Haiti blessed, because their reward in heaven will be great?

I don't believe in a vengeful punishing God. I do believe that we, humans have free will and that because of our weaknesses we step on and hurt each other in big and little ways every day. But I believe we are made for love, we are made for relationship. Not the soft romantic love of Valentine's Day, but the real, difficult love that moves one to be willing to give their life for a friend, a child or a spouse.

So then what does this have to do with the poor and hungry etc being "blessed?" What does it really mean to be "blessed" ... Is there more to it than meets the eye? If we look below the surface, those who are poor and hungry, weeping and excluded are in need. Their condition causes a recognized need for and trust in God, that people who are doing well might miss. When you don't know where you will get the money or food to make your children dinner, you are pulled into a deep relationship of trust with God. When tragedy happens on a personal level we run to God. We console each other with God's words and message. When we weep, it is because we have loved. If we hadn't loved we could not be moved to tears. So there is "blessing" hidden in these Beatitudes.

What area of my life is really this kind of "blessing?" A blessing I often miss because of the challenges that may accompany it. How does this recognition call me to growth?