

Scripture: *Luke 6:17,20-26*

17 And he came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; 20 And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said: "Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. 21 "Blessed are you that hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. "Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh. 22 "Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, on account of the Son of man! 23 Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets. 24 "But woe to you that are rich, for you have received your consolation. 25 "Woe to you that are full now, for you shall hunger. "Woe to you that laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. 26 "Woe to you, when all men speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.

Meditation: Can a happy, joy-filled life really be attainable here and now? Jesus addressed this issue with a vast crowd of people, both Jews who came down from Jerusalem and non-Jewish God-fearers who traveled as far away as Tyre and Sidon (some fifty miles on foot) to hear him preach at the Sea of Galilee. Jesus showed his listeners how sorrow could be turned to happiness for those who truly wanted to live as free citizens of God's kingdom. Jesus' "beatitudes" both amazed and challenged his listeners to discover the true source of happiness and joy. The word beatitude literally means *happiness* or *blessedness*. Jesus' way of happiness, however, demands a transformation from within -- a conversion of heart and mind which can only come about through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

How can one possibly find happiness in poverty, hunger, mourning, and persecution? If we want to be filled with the joy and happiness of heaven, then we must empty ourselves of all that would shut God out of our hearts. What does Poverty of spirit mean? It is my awareness that I cannot save myself, that I am basically defenseless, that neither money nor power will spare me from suffering and death, and that no matter what I achieve and acquire in this life, it will be far less than I wanted. Poverty of Spirit is my awareness that I need God's help and mercy more than I need anything else. Hunger of the spirit seeks nourishment and strength in God's word and Spirit. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, people who want what is right as urgently as a person in the desert wants a glass of water or a child in a refugee camp cries desperately for a crust of bread. Sorrow and mourning over wasted life and sin leads to joyful freedom from the burden of guilt and oppression. God reveals to the humble of heart the true source of abundant life and happiness. Jesus promises his disciples that the joys of heaven will more than compensate for the troubles and hardships they can expect in this world. Thomas Aquinas said: *No person can live without joy. That is why someone deprived of spiritual joy goes after carnal pleasures.*

Do you know the joy and happiness of hungering and thirsting for God alone and his kingdom of peace and righteousness?

Do you Trust our Lord enough to leave everything to Him ?

When you've felt poor, hunger and thirst how did you discover that Jesus truly cares about you? Did you experience His blessings that Jesus is on your side?

Happiness is not trusting in human beings, even in ourselves, but trusting in the Lord (Jer 17:5, 7). Trusting in the Lord is not just a state of mind but is expressed in very practical decisions. We are commanded in God's word: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, on your own intelligence rely not; in all your ways be mindful of Him" (Prv 3:5-6). Trusting in the Lord means trusting in the Lord alone and trusting in Him at all times (Ps 62:6-9). If we don't trust Him always, we don't trust Him as He wants to be trusted.

Prayer

"Lord Jesus, increase my hunger for you and show me the way that leads to everlasting happiness and peace. May I desire you above all else and find perfect joy in doing your will."

PS 37:16 Blessed is the little that the righteous person has than the abundance of many wicked.

PS 119:160 The sum of your word is truth; and every one of your righteous ordinances endures forever.

PRV8:8 All the words of my mouth are righteous; there is nothing twisted or crooked in them.

PRV 11:28 Those who trust in their riches will wither, but the righteous will flourish like green leaves.