

On All Saints Sunday, which we are celebrating today, we are always treated to one of the versions of the beatitudes. In Luke's version today, we hear about people who are blessed, and then we hear a series of woes. Now, the blessings are not typically things we strive for in the 21st century: poverty, hunger, grief—in fact we usually try to avoid them. Similarly, Jesus says “woe” to the people who are rich, or who have plenty to eat. Woe to those who laugh.

What is going on here?

Jesus is merely saying that some things in life that we experience are bad and some are good. Jesus is merely telling the people who follow him the simple truth.

Jesus is not saying that the poor are somehow deficient. If a person is poor, it merely means they do not have money. They are not lazy or bad people—they just don't have much money right now. But – make no mistake—they are as equally beloved of God as their rich neighbors. Sometimes a person is blessed with fortune, sometimes—everything seems stacked against a person and there is debt everywhere—often to the same person at different times in their lives.

If you are hungry now, I'll bet you have also been filled.

Are you weeping? Doesn't laughter always—eventually--- come back?

This is simple truth. Perhaps you might be more familiar with hearing it said this way: “Whatever goes around, comes around.”

Stuff happens. To the rich and to the poor. To the happy and sad. To the old and the young, the fat and the thin, the students and the masters..

Life is like a big wheel. It is never static. It always turns.

All of us can probably remember a time or two when things were not going so well. Perhaps we didn't have enough money—we lost a job or had sudden expenses. Been there?

And there have been other times when we had a sudden windfall, or discovered that we didn't really need so much money to be happy, or someone bailed us out unexpectedly and saved us.

The wheel goes around and around. Sometimes we eat the bear, sometimes the bear eats us.

The problem only comes when we are determined to stop the wheel to make SURE that we have all the wonderful things stay with us all the time—sometimes even at the expense of the rest of the people on the wheel.

We decide that we need to feel happy all the time. Some people have made it seem that experiencing grief means that we must be doing something terribly wrong. And that thought is solidified when someone sees our grief and then tell us that if we had enough faith, we wouldn't be sad. Or if we prayed hard enough—or the right way—God would take away our grief.

And that is simply a lie.

Grief is not the enemy—it is simply a part of life. And those that don't acknowledge that grief is a part of life probably need to do some grief work of their own.

Listen to the truth Jesus is telling us: Sometimes we are poor, sometimes rich – whether we're talking about monetarily or spiritually. It's part of life. Neither makes us more—or less—beloved of God.

Sometimes we laugh and sometimes we mourn. This human body we are living in—it's equipped with laughter and tears for a reason.

Sometimes we are hungry—for food, for experience, for peace, for that feeling of wholeness. And sometimes we are blessed beyond believing.

So what is Jesus doing with all this truth-telling? He's saying that there is more to us than what we feel or experience in any given moment. We are more than the things we consume. We are more than what other people think about us.

And everyone else out there? Everyone we see—everyone we have lost—everyone that needs—everyone that gives? We are ALL of us riding on that wheel, sometimes up and sometimes down.

So what can we do on this wheel of life we can't control?

Do to others as you would have them do to you.

Do we come across someone who is hungry? We can give them something to eat! Do we witness someone shivering in the winter—we can give them one of our coats—because-- if we have more than one—*we are rich!* Are they laughing? Rejoice with them! Are they grieving? Be willing to just be with them, listen to them. We don't need to fix anything—grieving is natural—all we need to do is be present.

And the judgement—leave it at home. No judgement—not of ourselves or each other. Jesus tells us that if we just concentrated on doing the things for others we wish they would do for us, that would heal our world.

Perhaps we can pretend that everyone we meet has the face of one of our beloved here.

Let us offer up a big *thank you* this morning for each human being God ever created and put on this wheel with us.

And – my good people--- every is blessed- no matter where they find themselves at any given moment on the wheel. And everyone has woes. God has sent those of us who are “up” to help those who are “down.” Those who are hungry can be fed by those who are full, and those who are weeping can receive love from the hearts of those who are joyous.

We can take our experiences and let them help us to understand better the experiences of others.

Because what goes around, comes around. But, what makes the wheel move more smoothly? Jesus says “I say to you that listen, Do to others as you would have them do to you.”

Amen.