

THE SIXTH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR – C

The gospel reading gives us Luke's version of the eight beatitudes. Luke records four blessings and four curses. They speak of material conditions in this life to be reversed in the next. In the first reading the prophet Jeremiah compares the man who puts his trust in man with the man who puts his trust in God. In the second reading we continue with Paul's teaching on the resurrection, if Christ was not raised from the dead then life after death is an illusion.

The **First Reading** is from the prophet Jeremiah, one of the major prophets in Israel. He was called by God as a young man in the reign of Josiah, a good king of Judah when there were hopes for reform and a return to Godly ways. Josiah was killed in battle in 609 and with the rise of the Chaldean empire, king Nebuchadnezzar imposed his rule on Judah who sought support from Egypt. They revolted twice, in 597 and 587, which resulted in the capture and destruction of the Temple and the city, many of its inhabitants being carried off into slavery to Babylon. Jeremiah lived and worked in these final traumatic days, preaching, issuing threats of God's anger and foretelling the final disaster. He suffered greatly not only from those who considered him a defeatist because he was opposed to war as a solution to Judah's problems but also from his own inner conflicts. A man of peace he had to fight against the whole population from kings and priests to false prophets and the whole nation. He was a Job-like figure inwardly tortured by the work God had given him to do, but all this helped to purify his soul and he saw Israel's relationship with God in a new light. God looks at the heart and rewards each according to their works. So the new covenant (31.31-34) expresses a new start, a new relationship with God, the Law will no longer be written on tablets of stone but within the hearts of the people of Israel. Jeremiah died a failure, a fugitive in Egypt, but his teachings grew in importance in helping to shape the future of Israel.

The reading, 17.5-8, is from a group of sayings similar to those found in the books of wisdom. There is a curse on the man who puts his trust in men and things of this world his heart turns from the Lord. He is unable to recognise goodness and lives his life as if he were in an uninhabited wasteland. Whereas the man who places his trust in God is blessed, his life can be compared to a tree growing beside a stream which is never affected by drought and bears fruit in plenty.

The **Second Reading** is from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. Paul evangelised the church at Corinth between A.D. 50 and 52. His policy was to establish the Christian faith in a centre of population, and here he chose the great and populous port of Corinth, so that the faith could spread to the whole of the province of Achaia. The Christian community grew strong composed mainly of poor people, but Corinth was a centre of Greek life, philosophy and religions. It was also a notorious centre of immorality which was to cause problems for the newly converted. In 1 Corinthians Paul addresses urgent problems that faced the church there and the decisions that had to be made to address these problems such as moral conduct, marriage and virginity, liturgical and Eucharistic meetings, charisms, matters concerning the Church and the world, appeals to civil courts, eating foods sacrificed to idols. Paul's religious genius enabled him to turn use all these problems into a vehicle for the profound doctrine of Christian liberty, the sanctification of the body, the supremacy of love, union with Christ. Paul teaches the Corinthians that there is only one master, Christ, and only one message, the cross which is the one true wisdom.