

Sermon on the MOUNT, annual meeting

January 29, 2017

The setting of today's gospel is significant. It's the beginning of the Sermon on the MOUNT. Like Moses to Mt. Sinai, Jesus goes to a high place to be in the presence of God. He goes to bring his people on a new Exodus. The people hadn't come from the palaces in Jerusalem. They came from mud brick homes in Palestine to gather on a hillside, and Jesus says:

Blessed are you who are poor in spirit- who don't have it all;

Blessed are you who hunger and thirst for right relations- who aren't stuffed with your own stuff, and have room in your belly for more than yourselves;

Blessed are you who mourn and have an open place in your heart- for others, and for God.

You are the salt of the earth; you are a light set upon a hill; yours is the kingdom of God.

These are not philosophic words to read in a library, or five ways to live a pure life, or a new diet plan. Christ urges his followers to make room for EACH OTHER and for GOD. "Teach us to pray", they say. And his response is not complicated, say, "Our Father, who is in heaven, holy be YOUR name, YOUR kingdom come, YOUR will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread." OUR Father, Give US. It's not complicated, and it's not something done alone. It's for US, together, shared.

Here's what happens to me when I'm alone, and drift over to the TV, or in a restaurant and watching TV. An advertisement comes on. It's of a luxury car- with a bright dashboard, strong engine, and tight body- that if I can work hard enough I can own- and get on the road, COMMAND the road, and go anywhere I want. Or it's a new medication or investment plan that will do the same. That's often the message.

Blessed are you and I who can see through such advertisements, who can say, "lead me not into the temptation of thinking I can have it all, or heaven is having it all, by myself. Forgive me, as I forgive others. As we say in our opening prayer. Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of YOUR SPIRIT.

We will, right after worship, have an annual meeting, elect officers of this organization, review the budget, and take look at the year past and the one ahead. And we'll take a look at Lent, when Christ goes to the Passover in Jerusalem, the capital city, and takes the bread of Passover, lifts it, and says, Now, Take. Eat. This is my body given for you. He invites us into his Exodus, his passionate life, death, and resurrection. He invites us to take God's presence into our lives, now. With where we are and where we are going.

The world- in Auburn, in our capital cities of Augusta and Washington-need us to lift this bread of Holy Communion. To say, Blessed are you poor, you'll still have health care. Blessed are you who hunger and thirst for right relations and don't exclude others simply because of their ethnicity. Blessed are you who say, Our Father, Holy One and Mother Spirit, help us enjoy our rightful share without needing to be first and #1. Yours is the power the glory the victory and majesty. In our own distracted or lonely lives, may we pray as we do at the beginning of each service, Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may love you and magnify your holy Name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.