

## 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of ordinary Time

(At the 5PM liturgy I asked people to sit down for the Gospel as the people were seated on the mountain to hear Jesus teach. I asked as well that they imagine themselves hearing the Beatitudes for the first time. I proceeded to enact the Gospel from the point of view of a person in the crowd who was hearing Jesus speak. I did this by changing inflection and pausing to let the revolutionary claims of the Beatitudes surprise and shock the listeners)

Repent, The Kingdom of God is at hand! Last week we heard Jesus' inaugural speech. With this one line, Jesus begins his ministry in Matthew's Gospel. If last week we heard Jesus' inauguration speech, this week we begin to hear Jesus' platform. Today begins the Sermon on the Mount, which Matthew uses to show Jesus as the new Moses, the Law Giver. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus' lays out God's design for the world. It begins with the Beatitudes, which we have just heard and I hope that you heard them for what they are. **A revolutionary manifesto of liberation from the human criteria for "blessedness"** Wealth, pleasure, power, honor are often what we humans use to measure success and happiness. I suppose we could call them the ME-attitudes. How much can we make or achieve? How much pleasure can I have at the expense of others? But Jesus' claim is that God's kingdom is known by the reversal of these Me-Attitudes that are the world's criteria for "making it"

These might be some Me-attitudes

Happy are you rich, for you will become richer at the expense of others.

Happy are you proud, for you can boast of your successes.

Happy are you who hold the power of office, for your will, will be done.

Happy are you who profit from war and arms making, for you will gain from others' losses.

Happy are you who have wealth, power, pleasure and honor, for you will have it all at the expense of those who have little.

The great irony is that many who call themselves Christians align themselves with these Me-attitudes and a Gospel of Prosperity rather

than the Gospel of Jesus Christ as he sets it out on the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus says "Love your enemies" The Gospel of Power, Prosperity and Self-preservation says "hate those who are different" Build walls, Keep them out. Do not offer refuge to those who are suffering. Be discriminate about whom you let in. Capitalize on your power and position. Wield your wealth for your own pleasure.

If Jesus were running for office on the Beatitudes/ Sermon on the mount platform would he be elected to office? Would those of us who call ourselves Christian vote for him?

There are a few questions that the scripture raises for us today?

Do we have it in us to be genuinely humble, recognizing our human limitations, and seeking God's way and not our own?

Do we have it in us to take the psalm to heart and do what God desires for humankind, feeding the hungry, protecting the stranger, caring for the displaced, giving refuge to the stranger?

Do we have it in us to recognize our foolishness, our weakness and our utter dependence on God?

Do we have it in us to not only profess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior but live as he did embodying the beatitudes of solidarity with the poor, the meek, the peacemakers, those persecuted for their beliefs?

Do we have it in us? Yes, we do. We believe that the Spirit of God dwells in us. We are in Christ Jesus and He is in us.

Jesus is of course, not asking to be elected to anything. We are the ones who have been elected, chosen by him to be his disciples. Will we take to heart the challenge of the Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount? Will we find ways to put into practice a way of being, a Be- attitude that chooses life over death, love over hatred, service over servitude?