

**Act of Worship at Home**  
**13<sup>th</sup> February 2022**

**Reading** Luke 6 vv 17-26

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, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon. They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. And all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them.

Then he looked up at his disciples and said:

'Blessed are you who are poor,  
for yours is the kingdom of God.

'Blessed are you who are hungry now,  
for you will be filled.

'Blessed are you who weep now,  
for you will laugh.

'Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice on that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.

'But woe to you who are rich,  
for you have received your consolation.

'Woe to you who are full now,  
for you will be hungry.

'Woe to you who are laughing now,  
for you will mourn and weep.

'Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.

**Reflection**

William Boice once wrote "Dear Lord, I have been re-reading the record of the Rich Young Ruler. But it has set me thinking. No matter how much wealth he had, he couldn't ride in a car, have any surgery, turn on a light, buy penicillin, hear a pipe organ, watch TV, wash dishes in running water, type a letter, mow a lawn, fly in an airplane, sleep on a sprung mattress, or talk on the phone. If he was rich, then what am I?"

There is terrible suffering caused by poverty throughout the world and yet Jesus said, "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God." But how can that be? The poor don't appear to be blessed. The hungry don't appear to be blessed. Those who weep don't appear to be blessed. And those who are hated don't appear to be blessed. In fact it seems that the reverse is true. Perhaps the spiritual advantage of poverty is that with absolutely no possessions, the soul is more free to seek God. Most of us with possessions spend a considerable amount of time and energy concerning ourselves about our possessions, hanging on to them, increasing them, improving them. Some choose poverty to be released from all those worries and can use that time and energy to move closer to God. It was Mother Teresa who said, "You'll never know that Jesus is all you need until Jesus is all you have." And she was a woman who knew that possessions tend to cushion us against real life. But I suspect there are very few like Mother Teresa who could choose all the sufferings and hardships poverty brings.

Luke was on the side of the poor. Luke spells out an option for the poor. And Jesus showed in practice what that option was. He showed that the poor, the hungry, those who weep or are hated, those who suffer in any way, are deeply loved by God.

And he did it by showing that, as God's most perfect revelation of his love, he was not only on their side, but wanted them as his friends and wanted to spend time with them.

If that attitude were true of all then perhaps the poor would really be blessed, and know they are blessed. But until that time comes, we need to continue to fight for the poor, for their rights, and to

improve their standard of living. And maybe when we all share more, we shall share in the blessings of the poor offered by God.

But of course in another sense we can all suffer, we can all be poor in different ways, we can all hunger for something, have an emptiness within us, and we can all weep. And Christ knows what it is that makes us poor, that leaves us empty, that makes us weep, and he promises to bless us, to give us more than we can imagine, to fill us to overflowing with his generosity and love, to turn our tears into laughter. Blessed are the poor, thanks be to God. Amen.

### **Time of Prayer**

Gracious God, you set before us your world, a place of many delights with much beauty.

We pray for the world and its many people that the choices and decisions made by the leaders of the nations will be for the benefit of all, so all may share the beauty and delight of your creation.

We think particularly of those areas of the world where there are corrupt leaders, where there is violence and injustice, where there is starvation and drought.

You set before us your Church, in all its diversity and difference.

We pray for the worldwide Church that she may be faithful to the loving roots of the gospel, that we will be faithful in our response to you, proclaiming boldly and fearlessly your love for the world.

We pray for the church where there is persecution, where there is indifference.

You set before us our communities in large cities and small hamlets.

We pray for the communities in which we live and work. We think particularly of communities torn by ethnic tensions, communities deprived of the basic essentials.

You set before us our neighbours, friends and families, those we like and those we find it hard to like.

We pray for our neighbours, friends and all who are suffering from ill health, from the death of loved one, ... *(in the stillness name specific people and situations)*.

Generous God, your gifts are so generously given, love, hope, grace, we have all that we need and more. Thank you that we can be rooted in you, and that you provide for us the spring of life-giving water through your Spirit.

We thank you for Jesus Christ, who gives us life and provides us with the true example of your way of love and life.

Generous God, we thank you for the gift of the Spirit, the challenger, the comforter.

Generous God, our words are inadequate to express all that is in us, yet you know our hearts and our minds, our thoughts and feelings: accept these words and all that we are in gratitude. Amen.

### **Hymn**

For the healing of the nations,  
Lord, we pray with one accord;  
for a just and equal sharing  
of the things that earth affords.  
To a life of love in action  
help us rise and pledge our word.

All that kills abundant living,  
let it from the earth be banned:  
pride of status, race or schooling,  
dogmas that obscure your plan.  
In our common quest for justice  
may we hallow life's brief span.

Lead us, Father, into freedom;  
from despair your world release,  
that, redeemed from war and hatred,  
all may come and go in peace  
Show us how through care and goodness  
fear will die and hope increase.

You, Creator-God, have written  
your great name on humankind;  
for our growing in your likeness  
bring the life of Christ to mind;  
that by our response and service  
earth its destiny may find.

### **Blessing**

Let us go to serve the Lord with God's blessing upon us this day and forever more. Amen.