

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time (C) Feb 17, 2019

In our gospel passage today we see a great crowd gathered, a great multitude from all of Judea; the rich and the poor, the suffering, the curious, the young, the old – they were all looking to Jesus for something.

And He looks at them, his people. And he begins to speak. And what is the first word out of his mouth? Do you remember what that word was? The first word he speaks is “Blessed” or Happy;

Blessed are you, happy are you who are poor, who are hungry, who weep; blessed are you, happy are you who are hated, excluded and denounced....Jesus tells us to rejoice and leap for joy!!!

But really? Is this a normal reaction in the face of these challenges? Absolutely not.

But, what we need to remember is that He is with us in our suffering and our challenges. I see his face in those I visit in the hospitals and nursing homes. I see his presence to those people. I see the joy that his presence can bring.

Jesus is all about joy, He tells us “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. An abundant life is a life that includes a lot of joy.

Our worldly sense of joy comes from our ideas about freedom, the freedom to do what we want when we want, in the pursuit of our own happiness.

But throughout the bible we find a different definition of freedom and joy; the freedom to limit our desires, in order to achieve true good; and achieving the true good will in turn lead us to true joy.

When there is no confusion in our hearts about what is most important, we will find joy because we will know the path to walk.

What is most important to us? If it's anything other than for the will of God, then we will go unfulfilled, we will not find true joy.

Blessed or happy are the poor. This statement is not about promoting poverty or demonizing wealth but rather it could be a formula for detachment from worldly things like wealth. Bishop Robert Barron likens this to being about detachment from the obsession over obtaining wealth and the things that wealth can buy.

When we detach ourselves from this obsession, we can then use the things that wealth can buy for God's good purposes.

Blessed or happy are you who weep, you who are not dependent on always having good feelings and pleasant sensations.

The need for feeling good can quickly become an obsession that takes the form of drug and alcohol abuse, and over consumption of goods, even how many likes someone gets on Facebook can determine their feelings of well being/or not. But, we all know that these things cannot bring us true happiness.

True joy has to do with detachment and spiritual freedom.

Meekness and humility is also about being detached; it's being able to walk through life unaffected by the desire for power and influence. And this detachment yields great power.

I'm sure we understand all these things but if you're anything like me, then we need reminders from time to time; reminders that put things back in perspective and show us that it's not about us, it's about God and his will for all of us.

I wonder, do you have someone in your life who puts things in perspective for you? Someone who's very life is a reminder of what's truly important? Is there someone who models true joy for you?

I have a friend who is that kind of person for me. She has a certain way about her; she has the peace of mind and heart that I strive for. Her joy is easily recognized by others.

But does she have the perfect life? Does she have it all together, does she have all the possessions that many of us feel are so important?

Does she enjoy the recognition of a life well lived? No, just the opposite. She has had many struggles in her life; she has had great heartache; she has had many challenges.

But these struggles and challenges have made her the person she is today. Her faith and total trust in God, regardless of what life throws at her gives her the peace and joy that comes from putting her life in God's hands. People are drawn to her, in search of that same same peace and joy that she possesses.

She is a reminder for me on what is truly important in this life. She is my perspective.

Thomas Aquinas tells us that if you want the perfect exemplification of the beatitudes, picture Jesus on the cross; if you want to be happy, reject what Jesus rejected, and love what Jesus loved.

What did he reject? Wealth? He had none of that, he had nothing as he hung upon the cross. Pleasure? Well, he was at the limit of psychological and physical pain. Power? He had no power, he couldn't even physically move because he was nailed to a cross. Honour? He had none, he was publicly mocked as he hung there on the cross.

What did he love? He loved doing the will of his Father. He loved being the peacemaker, the one who hungers for justice, he loved being the healer.

He was detached from the things in which we typically seek our joy.

And so it's important for us to continue to detach from the things of this world; and look to embracing the things that are truly important.

I challenge you this week to think and pray about detachment, and what that looks like for you; about how you can use what you have to make this world a better place; about what you need to do to become a better disciple of Christ. Studying the beatitudes can help us do this.

The season of Lent is almost here and we can practice a different way of living by denying ourselves something that we enjoy; we can give more to the poor and the needy; we can practice charity and good works to those in need. We can do these things as individuals and we can do them as a family.

I believe that practising detachment is the way to gain a greater perspective on what's truly important in our lives, and also the path to true joy.

I've included the link to Bishop Robert Barron's reflection on the beatitudes. It is certainly worth the time to watch. You can get the link by viewing this homily on our website at gslakeshore.com

<https://youtu.be/yclU9qj-c3U> - part 1

<https://youtu.be/0NY4jbJI7sA> - part 2