

No Oscars for Christians!

Jeremiah 17⁵⁻¹⁰; Psalm 1; 1 Corinthians 15¹²⁻²⁰; Luke 6¹⁷⁻²⁶

Blessed are they who have not walked in the counsel of the wicked, nor lingered in the way of sinners, nor sat in the assembly of the scornful. [Ps 1¹]

Have you noticed the verbs in the first verse of the Psalm for today? Verbs are doing words, and what we do involves both choice and action. If you have **walked**, **lingered** or **sat** those are all deliberate actions. What we do defines who we are; who we associate with shapes our character.

What is clear from the Psalm and from Jeremiah is that God knows - **for the Lord knows the way of the righteous but the way of the wicked shall perish** and **I the Lord test the mind and search the heart, to give to all according to their ways according to the fruit of their doing.**

The key things that define us as Christians are:

✠ **We are rooted in God:**

I am no gardener, but I do know about the importance of water to all living things.

Jeremiah and the Psalm both carry the same metaphor.

Jeremiah has a contrast - **cursed are those who trust in mere mortals and make mere flesh their strength.. they shall be like a shrub in the desert.** But: **blessed are those who trust in the Lord, whose trust is in the Lord. They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream.**

The Psalmist has a contrast too: **as for the wicked they are like chaff which the wind blows away** whilst he has said earlier, that those whose **delight is in the law of the Lord** are **like a tree planted by streams of water... whatever they shall do, it shall prosper.**

The crowd that the Gospel say was drawn to Jesus recognised that **power came out from him** and so they listened and responded to him - that response of faith roots us in God and in so doing we cease doing those things that the Psalmist mentions where we **walk, linger** or **sit** with those who distract or deflect us from that rootedness.

✠ **We are shaped by the Beatitudes:**

The Beatitudes in Luke aren't as well known as those in Matthew 5 - they are distinctive because there are fewer of them and as well as the three

Blessed's there are three mirroring **woes**.

We are perhaps too familiar with the Beatitudes and so loose the impact - these are explosive statements. At heart, they ask the questions (adapted from William Barclay): Will you take the easy way that yields immediate pleasure and profit? Or, Will you take the hard way that yields immediate toil and sometimes suffering? Will you seize on the pleasure and profit of the moment? or, Are you willing to look ahead and sacrifice them for greater gain? Will you concentrate on things that our society regards as rewards? Or, Will you concentrate on Christ? If you take the world's way, you must abandon the values of Christ. If you take Christ's way, you must abandon the values of the world.

One theologian summarised what Jesus promised his disciples - they would be completely fearless, absurdly happy and in constant trouble! The alternative is to pursue things that the world sees as important - you will achieve them and, literally, you will have had it!

✠ **We live in the certainty of the resurrection:**

Whatever life is like for us now, Christians are people who look forward to a life with God when this phase of our existence is over!

I find Paul's bold statement, **If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.** If there is no life beyond this one, a life that is spend with God, then we are wasting our time in struggling with the challenges and limitations of this life. If there is no resurrection then why not **walk, linger** and be **sat** with those who approach life with no responsibility and no conscience?

You can't act this, but you can choose it - and it is clear to God and obvious to others the choices you make. God is our strength and God is our reward.