

## ***No Fences to Sit On!***

*Jeremiah 17<sup>5-10</sup>; Psalm 1; 1 Corinthians 15<sup>12-20</sup>; Luke 6<sup>17-26</sup>*

*If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.  
[1 Corinthians 15<sup>17</sup>]*

All the readings today tells us that there are no fences for us to sit on with regard to matters of faith.

On one hand you have people who believe and are blessed and on the other you have those who choose to separate themselves from God and faith and who suffer the consequences.

On one hand you accept the physical resurrection of Jesus and the hope that gives in the face of death and on the other hand you reject it and faith is an absolute waste of time and energy.

The Gospel from Luke picks up after Jesus had chosen his Disciples, most of whom would become Apostles, and indecision, or a refusal to make a decision, is not possible. Just as Jesus' birth give a division in time (BC/AD or BCE/CE) so our response to Jesus gives a stark distinction between Christians and non-Christians. Is your focus on securing things that will make society think you are successful or on things that will make God believe you are faithful?

- ✘ Jeremiah is blunt – **cursed are those who trust in mere mortals** is contrasted with **blessed are those who trust in the Lord**. The first is like a **shrub in the desert** and the second **like a tree planted by water**. He ends with the statement: **I the Lord test the mind and search the heart, to give to all according to their ways, according to the fruit of their doings**.
- ✘ The Psalmist picks up the same theme: **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**. Again, they are **like a tree planted by streams of water**. Then, **as for the wicked, it is not so with them; they are like chaff and the wicked will not be able to stand**

**in the judgement.**

- ✘ Luke parallels the better known Beatitudes in Matthew with the same challenging message that turns the values of the world upside down. **Blessed** (*μακαραοι*, literally, how fortunate or to be congratulated) **are the poor – yours is the kingdom of God; blessed are the hungry now – you will be filled; blessed are you who weep now – you will laugh; blessed are you when people hate you, exclude you and defame you – leap for joy, great is your reward in heaven.**

Luke adds a section of **woes** that Matthew does not. Here he makes the point that if you are satisfied with what you have now then God doesn't need to reward you when you have already rewarded yourself: **woe to you who are rich – you have received your consolation; woe to you who are full now – you will be hungry; woe to you who are laughing now – you will mourn and weep; woe to you when people speak well of you – that's what they did to the false prophets.**

God isn't against people because of their circumstances, but for those who think that is enough – that they can get by without God.

- ✘ Then Paul ups the stakes! He faces us to the reality of death without the resurrection. He says, **if Christ has not been raised from the dead, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins and goes on to conclude, if only for this life we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.**

Only a very brave person or an idiot believes that they are competent enough to take charge of what happens to them after they die. *I believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting* – we will say it in the creed in a moment: I say it because I believe it and because I am convinced that only by trusting God will I have that life he promises.