

EPIPHANY 6 YEAR C

ST JOHN THE DIVINE

Jeremiah 17:5-10

Psalms 1

1 Corinthians 15:12-20

Luke 6:17-26

Upside down!

Here's a challenge!

When you were a child, did you ever try to stand upside down? Did you stand on your head or perhaps climb your feet up the wall so you could stay a bit longer?

Do you remember how different the world looked?

Everything – familiar – but different.

“Upside down” gives a whole new perspective.

You see things differently – and maybe something you haven't noticed before really gets your attention.

Think about the still water of a river or a lake, very early in the morning.

Reflected in it are clouds or trees or even the shadow of a gliding swan or a hovering bird.

The reflections give a different, 'upside down' picture of the scene – and, they're beautiful.

They give freshness and new appreciation of a familiar place.

Luke 6:17-26

Jesus challenges his disciples to a new perspective

Jesus understood that the way we look at the world, at our own life and at the life of others is really important.

Our perspective (the way we see and look at things) really matters.

In the 'Sermon on the Plain' the Gospel writer remembered some of Jesus' key teachings.

For some of his listeners Jesus' words must have been very surprising – perhaps even shocking.

Jesus' perspective turns the world upside down. His teaching, remembered this morning in the "Sermon on the Plain" is absolutely counter cultural.

The poor are blessed

The hungry are blessed

Those who weep are blessed

Those who are hated and excluded from the Temple or Synagogue because they follow Jesus (The Son of Man) - are Blessed.

People in distress, matter.

People who are suffering, matter.

People who are persecuted and reviled for their faith – matter!

The eyes of God are on them and God's love and care is poured out for them.

Who are these people?

In Jesus' time they were the poor, the despised Samaritans and others, the lepers, the marginalised and anyone deemed different; anyone who didn't conform to the religious authorities. Counted amongst them were the ones who committed their life to Jesus and lived according to his teaching – Jesus' disciples and friends.

All of these people were deemed to be 'outsiders', excluded and reviled for their poverty or their illness, for their foreignness, their failure to conform to the demands of the religious authorities– or for their radical faith in Jesus.

Jesus had a warning

Jesus had a warning for the Insiders whose harsh judgement and control was so destructive and lacking in compassion. Under the guise of righteous leadership and faith they failed the test of love, dismissed the words of both Jesus and the Prophets, and imposed suffering and rejection on God's people.

'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.' Luke 6:24-26

If only these people could put on love and compassion. If only they could change. If only those who opposed Jesus' teaching could see their world from a different perspective and hear the gift of forgiveness and grace Jesus came to share. If only they could open their hearts and minds and welcome into their midst the outsiders who were so blessed by God.

Who are the Outsiders today?

Jesus' words are deeply challenging – and very contemporary.

Today's outsiders are the ones who are marginalised in our own community;

They are the Indigenous people, goaled for offences for which others are freed. They are the refugees and asylum seekers who live in our midst but have no place to call home. They are the women speaking out about domestic and workplace violence. They are the ones struggling with their gender identity and wanting acceptance and love. They are the ones persecuted or rejected for their faith. They are everyone we consider 'other'.

Yet each one of them (like us) is a person wonderfully created by God in God's own image, precious and dearly loved.

Can we find a fresh perspective as we do our best to follow Jesus?

Can we turn our life upside down and see as Jesus saw?

Can we look with fresh eyes at these suffering people?

Do we have the courage to change our own perspective, see things differently and reach out with deep compassion and practical care?

Do we have the courage to follow Jesus and live the Gospel of forgiveness, acceptance and love in our contemporary world?

And, if we are an 'outsider' ourselves, have we heard words of deep acceptance, invitation and love from Jesus today as he assures us of blessing and opens wide the doors to his Kingdom?

Listen to Jesus' words. They are both loving – and warning

They call us to love more deeply, more inclusively, more practically.

Luke 6:20-26

20 Jesus looked up at his disciples and said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. 21 "Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. "Blessed are you who weep now,

for you will laugh. 22 "Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man

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

25 "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.

