

**A Sermon for The Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany  
February 16, 2025**



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[Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany – The Episcopal Church](#)

Luke 6:17-26

### Finding a level place

Jesus comes down to a level place and delivers a sermon about equity. Rather like Isaiah saying that someday the hills will be made low, the valleys will rise up, and the rough places plain, Jesus stands right there, on a level place and delivers a no-nonsense sermon about blessings and curses.

In St Matthew's gospel, Jesus dwells mostly on blessings in what we have come to call The Sermon on the Mount. This equivalent, in the gospel of Luke, is tougher. And it is not on top of a mountain – it is at a level place.

Jesus speaks of blessings, that even when things don't look encouraging, we should persevere and have faith, and that it will all even out in the end. Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of heaven. 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 – hang in there, and your reward will be great in heaven.

Some of us may feel that our times are not the best, in many ways. Will we be blessed, to experience later the equality we believe in? Can we trust that things will get better?

Jesus has words for those who cause the misery, cursing them with WOE. Woe to you who are rich, woe to you who are full now, woe to you who are laughing now, because things will get worse for you. There will be a great reckoning, a great evening out, and we will all stand on a level place. Well, I certainly hope so!

I'm a big fan of movies, and when I see portrayals of really bad times in the past, especially war times, I admire those who persisted in their faith, doing what they felt was right. I saw a portrayal of the great fashion designer Christian Dior, whose sister was part of the French resistance to Nazi occupation of France. She was captured and underwent horrible torture. We know of many others, especially Jews, who were tormented, killed, by that brutal regime. Has there been a great evening out? I wonder how there can ever be forgiveness, or even survival, in such circumstances.

There are cycles in life, ups and downs, a rhythm of poor and rich, hungry and full, of woe and blessings. Jesus tells us not to despair, for things will get better, God loves us, and perseverance will be rewarded in God's time. Although sometimes it is hard, we must believe this.

We have been given the great story of death and resurrection of Jesus himself, who predicted his earthly fate, accepted it as necessary, and offered up to us the example of Resurrection for all. This is salvation – that God's kingdom will come on earth. All our

holy scriptures talk about this. In the Old Testament, our Jewish ancestors learned through their struggles that God is good and God will save them. The great stories of liberation, of leaving captivity in Egypt, of accepting God's law in the wilderness, of continuing to strive when their future looked bleak – we call that Salvation History, and we talk about those stories all the time. When we celebrate Jesus' resurrection from the dead at Easter, we do so in the context of the Jews being liberated from Egypt, as a model for Jesus being liberated from death. These are big stories, big themes, in which we can take hope, knowing that God loves us and cares for us. Christianity, the Jesus movement, is all about faith, hope, trust, love. It offers sustenance through the dark times and takes us into light. We rehearse this cycle of life every year, every Sunday, every day, knowing that it is true for our lives and the life of the world.

We cannot be flippant about this. We can't just mutter platitudes that "it will all work out in the end." No, we must be aware of the cost of remaining faithful. There has been, and will be, persecution that will challenge us. We will develop perseverance, and we will discover that even the dark times offer lessons, offer blessings in disguise. If I am uncomfortable now, I must persist in doing good, trusting in the love of God, and yes, having faith that the struggles of the present time will all work out in the end.