

Sixth Sunday after Epiphany

OLD TESTAMENT

Jeremiah 17:5-8

”⁵ This is what the LORD says: “Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the LORD. ⁶ He will be like a bush in the wastelands; he will not see prosperity when it comes. He will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives. ⁷ “But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. ⁸ He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.”

17:5–8 See Ps 1 and notes. (CSB)

Jeremiah shows the real problem. It lies in the heart of the people. He contrasts the two ways – the way of unbelief and the way of faith. The real difference comes out in the long term. (PBC)

17:5 *Cursed*. See note on 11:3. (CSB)

awrar – Execrate or bitter curse. To bind or restrict as with a law or spell. This term pronounces punishments, threats and restrictions. (TLSB)

Cursed is the person who puts his hope for the future in something human, who looks for ultimate security in other human beings. (PBC)

Man. The person referred to in this passage parallels the young strong person, or one like him, in full possession and use of all his powers.

flesh. The opposite of “spirit” (see Isa 31:3; see also Job 10:4). (CSB)

To trust in human resources is foolish idolatry. (TLSB)

John refers to this feeling of confidence as “boasting” of what he had and does” (1 John 2:16). This refers to the unshakable confidence that there is nothing we are unable to do, no problem that in the end we cannot solve, no force we cannot master and turn to our use. This confidence is the pride that grows from all our accomplishments, the gleaming monuments of our technology. But what is the foundation of all this hope? Man and flesh. Man was made from dust and shall return to dust. The end of one who trusts in flesh will be empty and fruitless. Jeremiah described this condition in terms very familiar to his hearers. (PBC)

WHOSE HEART TURNS AWAY – The heart is the key. (CSB)

Matthew 15:19 For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.”

Luke 6:45 The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart, For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.”

17:6 *bush*. See 48:6 and NIV text note. Apart from these two places in Jeremiah, the Hebrew for this word appears elsewhere in the OT only in Ps 102:17, where it is translated “destitute.” (CSB)

To the east of Jerusalem lay the Judean wastelands in which even a scraggly juniper bush had to struggle to live. A little further lay a wilderness in which nothing green lived, the land of salt along the Dead Sea. (PBC)

Literally, "like a naked one in the wilderness," one destitute of all means of subsistence. (Kretzmann)

prosperity. Lit. “good.” The Hebrew for this word is translated “bounty” in Dt 28:12, where it refers to rain. (CSB)

The lack of water prevents the maturing of crops. (Kretzmann)

salt land. An evidence of God’s curse also in Dt 29:23. (CSB)

Further out there was nothing green at all because of the salt from the Dead Sea. (CSB)

The soil here is impregnated with alkali. (Kretzmann)

WHERE NO ONE LIVES – Over against such a person the Lord pictures him who conducts himself in agreement with His will. (Kretzmann)

17:7 BLESSED – *bawrak* – To kneel and bless God in adoration.

trusts ... confidence. The same Hebrew root underlies both words. (CSB)

With the confidence of true faith. (Kretzmann)

What a contrast with the blessedness of the person who trusts the Lord! This person places his hope, his faith, his confidence for all things in the Lord.

17:8 Using the figures of Psalm 1, Jeremiah pictures this person as a tree planted by the source of water that does not fail. Therefore it is always green and fruit-bearing. It does not have to fear even in the hardest and hottest times. (PBC)

LIKE A TREE PLANTED BY THE WATER – The following are notes from Psalm 1:3 ...They have roots in something that will always sustain them. The storms of life will not affect them because their hope and trust is in the Lord. Because they are planted and just accidentally sown, they are special and are nurtured.

stream. See Isa 44:4, where the same Hebrew root is used again to illustrate the source of the righteous man's strength. (CSB)

Such is the figure of the believer. He lives by the stream of living water, flowing from Scripture, giving him fellowship with God Himself. Because of this living-giving water, this fountain of life, he can stand up under the toughest times. Jeremiah, no doubt, wants the reader to understand that he too had found such strength in the Lord. It was his faith alone, sustained and nourished from the Word, that enabled him to be true to his calling and to stand up under the fierce opposition he encountered. (PBC)

drought. See note on 14:1. (CSB)

The stream at which it is located will never dry up. In order to bring this truth home with particular emphasis, the Lord describes the human heart as it is. (Kretzmann)

bear fruit. The Lord's answer to Jeremiah's complaint in 12:1–2 (see notes there). (CSB)

The good that these people do is a natural outgrowth of their faith which in turn is solidly rooted in the Word.

EPISTLE

1 Corinthians 15:1-20

Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. ² By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. ³ For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance ^a: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Peter, ^b and then to the Twelve. ⁶ After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, ⁸ and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. ⁹ For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle,

because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. ¹¹ Whether, then, it was I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed.

15:1-4 Paul will now show that the word of the cross (1 Cor 1:18–19) is the basis of the resurrection hope (chapter 15). He opens this new topic with a gentle rebuke (15:1–2). There is one more area in which the Corinthians have a lamentable lack of knowledge (cf. 10:1; 12:1; 14:38). This he now intends to remedy. According to reports he has received, some of them had failed to grasp the implications of the Gospel for the Christian's hope. So he recites in creedal form the “ABCs” of the Gospel—the things he had delivered to them as the vital “mother’s milk” of the faith (15:3–4)—as if they had never heard it before (cf. 3:1–2; Heb 5:12–13). Nevertheless, it was the same Gospel which Paul had preached to them some years earlier and which they had embraced at that time. Furthermore, it was to that same Gospel that they owed their present status as Christians (cf. Rom 11:20), and by that same Gospel that their present and future salvation was being secured (1 Cor 15:2; cf. 1:18). (CC pp. 551-52)

Paul adds that he wishes to make known “in what terms” (15:2) he had preached the Gospel to them. But before doing so, he voices his pastoral concern, saying in effect: “Are you retaining the Gospel? Surely you didn’t receive it in vain?” (15:2). (CC pp 552)

On the road to Damascus the risen Christ had revealed himself to Paul in blazing light from heaven and in a voice calling him to account for his sin (Acts 9:3–5). That personal encounter with Jesus convinced him that the one he had persecuted was the Son of God (Acts 9:20). Of course, the Christian message was by no means entirely new to Paul. After all, he had heard Stephen’s address and witnessed his martyrdom (Acts 7:1–8:1); no doubt Paul had learned other details about the faith from Christians he had interrogated. Later, after his conversion, he would have had the opportunity to flesh out his understanding of the basics when he spent two weeks with Cephas in Jerusalem (Gal 1:18). Paul remained adamant, however, that he had not received the Gospel from any human source (Gal 1:11–24) but through God “revealing his Son in me” (Gal 1:16; cf. Gal 1:12). The reception of Christ Jesus as Lord was central (Col 2:6; cf. 1 Cor 12:3). (CC p. 552)

This Gospel of the living Christ, then, Paul had faithfully transmitted to the Corinthians. What were the main terms of Paul’s Gospel (τίνι λόγῳ εὐηγγελισάμην ὑμῖν, 15:2)? Paul summarizes its content in four clauses, each introduced by ὅτι (“that”): “*that* Christ died ... *that* he was buried ... *that* he has been raised ... and *that* he appeared” to many (15:3–8). (CC p. 552)

Among the Gospel’s foremost features was, first of all, Christ’s atoning death according to the Scriptures. That “Christ died for taking away our sins” (15:3) lay at the heart of the Gospel. These five words—six in the Greek original—indeed form one of Scripture’s most succinct Gospel statements (cf. Rom 5:8, “Christ died for us”). Thus, in his great resurrection chapter, Paul begins with the sacrificial death of Christ, which he does not

see as an event far removed from the resurrection, but as the first act in the drama of our salvation. Here Paul echoes his earlier statements on the Gospel word of the cross as the power of God (1 Cor 1:17–18). Without the powerful death of Christ, we would still be “in our sins” (Jn 8:24). (CC pp. 552-53)

Christ’s atoning death took place “according to the Scriptures” (1 Cor 15:4). No doubt Isaiah 53, which is cited or echoed frequently in the NT (e.g., Mt 8:17; Acts 8:32–33; 1 Pet 2:22–25), would have been one of the chief texts in Paul’s mind. But numerous other portions of the OT are cited in connection with aspects of the crucifixion narrative (e.g., Psalms 22; 69; Zech 12:10; 13:7). (CC p. 553)

According to all four gospels, the account of Christ’s burial (1 Cor 15:4) underlines the reality of his physical death on the cross. Both the Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed testify that he “was buried.” He had truly become a νεκρός (“a dead person, a corpse”) who had to be disposed of in the usual manner. (CC p. 553)

The sequence of aorist tenses (“Christ *died*,” “he *was buried*,” 15:3–4) suddenly gives way to a significant and climactic perfect: “he *has been raised*” (15:4). From among the corpses Christ has been raised “by the glory of the Father” (Rom 6:4 completes the divine passive by naming God as the agent of the action) and continues to live as the risen one “forever and ever” (Rev 1:18). His resurrection took place “on the third day according to the Scriptures” (1 Cor 15:4). Earlier he had told his disciples that he “must” be killed and rise again on the third day (e.g., Mt 16:21), implying that this must happen to fulfill the Father’s will as laid down in the OT Scriptures. The apostles and evangelists found the Messiah’s resurrection foretold specifically in passages such as Ps 16:8–11; 110:1; Is 53:10–12; and far more broadly in other passages. (CC p. 553)

That it would happen on the third day seems to have its roots in Hos 6:2 and Jonah 1:17 (MT. LXX 2:1). What makes the Jonah passage particularly pertinent is that Jesus himself declared that Jonah’s three days and three nights in the fish’s belly was a prophecy of the Son of Man’s three days and three nights in the heart of the earth (Mt 12:39–40). While there is no NT text which directly cites Hos 6:2 as a prophecy of Christ’s resurrection on the third day, its wording suggests that the early church may also have found here one of the key OT *testimonia*. The prophet expresses the hope of all Israel: “*After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him.*” (CC p. 554)

In raising his Messiah on the third day, God also raises and bestows life on all those who are in Christ. Baptism into Christ’s body (1 Cor 12:13) is Baptism into his death and resurrection (Rom 6:1–11; Col 2:11–13). (CC p. 554)

15:1 I WANT TO REMIND YOU – gno^{ri}zo – To make known, reveal. I want you to know. Proud of their knowledge (gnosis, 8:1, 7, 10, 11), the Corinthians still need to learn or relearn the basics of the Gospel. (CC p. 549)

Lit, “make known.” He is “recalling it into memory” (Chrys, *NPNF* 1 12:226) because they had learned it before. (TLSB)

received. Paul first preached the Gospel in Corinth c AD 50 (Ac 18:1–18a). (TLSB)

YOU HAVE TAKEN YOUR STAND – en o kai estakate – To stand or be in grace. (CC p. 549)

Just as they are saved by the Gospel, they stand firm and live by the Gospel. (TLSB)

15:2 YOU ARE SAVED – sozesthe – The passive present tense, denoting continuous action, indicates that the Corinthians are in the process of being saved. Christ’ ministry, death, and resurrection accomplished everything necessary for their salvation. However, their faith is under assault, and Paul must correct and educate them. If they fail to hold to the Gospel, then they would have “believed in vain.” So they are in the process of being saved in the sense that they are being preserved in the faith as God brings them closer to the day of resurrection, when their eschatological Christian hope will be fully realized. (CC pp. 549-50)

Though saved now through faith, the fullness of salvation is still to come in eternity. (TLSB)

if you hold firmly. See note on Heb 3:14. (CSB)

katechete – You will stand and find salvation only if you cling to the Gospel. (CC p. 550)

the word I preached. The Gospel. (TLSB)

believed in vain.† Not persevering in the Christian faith (cf. Judas Iscariot, who eventually showed that he did not remain a believer). (CSB)

The Corinthians stand by the Gospel, though it is also possible to fall away from it. (TLSB)

15:3–5 Two lines of evidence for the death and resurrection of Christ are given here: (1) the testimony of the OT (e.g., Ps 16:8–11; Isa 53:5–6, 11) and (2) the testimony of eyewitnesses (Ac 1:21–22). Six resurrection appearances are listed here. The Gospels give more. (CSB)

15:3-7 The fourth and final ὅτι (“that”) clause in 1 Cor 15:3–5 supplies the supporting evidence that Christ had really risen (ὄντως ἠγέρθη, Lk 24:34) on the third day. These four clauses state the foundational facts of the Gospel: “that Christ died for taking away our sins ... that he was buried ... that he has been raised ... and that he appeared” (1 Cor 15:3–5) to many witnesses. Luke relates that Jesus “presented himself alive after his suffering by many convincing proofs, appearing to them [the apostles] over a period of forty days” (Acts 1:3). Thus the church’s faith in Christ’s resurrection rests on eyewitness testimony. (CC p. 554)

OT law stipulated that legal evidence should be corroborated by the testimony of two or three witnesses (Deut 17:6; 19:15). The resurrection of Christ is so vital a fact for the Christian faith that God supplied an abundance of witnesses. Fittingly, the first eyewitness on Paul's list is the first of the twelve apostles, Simon Peter or, as Paul calls him by the Aramaic equivalent, Cephas (אֶפֶס, "stone, rock"; cf. Mt 10:2; Lk 24:34). Christ's appearance to him must have been reassuring to Cephas after his shameful denial, and it prepared him for his leadership role in the days after Christ's ascension (e.g., Lk 22:32; Acts 1:15; 2:14). (CC p. 554)

Jesus' appearances to "the Twelve" (1 Cor 15:5) took place on the evening of the first Easter Sunday (Lk 24:33–36; Jn 20:19) and again a week later when Thomas was present (Jn 20:24–29). Although only ten members of the original Twelve were present on the first occasion (Judas Iscariot was dead and Thomas was absent), and only eleven the following Sunday, Paul is using the term "the Twelve" in a technical sense for those who constituted the original apostles whom Jesus called during his earthly ministry (Mt 10:2–4 and parallels). (CC pp. 554-55)

Continuing in chronological sequence, Paul comes to Jesus' appearance to "more than five hundred brothers" (1 Cor 15:6). Since the evidence of two or three witnesses was sufficient to prove the veracity of an event, the presence of more than five hundred constitutes overwhelming testimony. There is no way of knowing when this event took place. One suggestion which fits the sequence is that it happened in conjunction with Jesus' Great Commission to the eleven apostles prior to his ascension (Mt 28:16–20). Although Matthew does not mention that others were present, it seems that the apostles usually were accompanied by a larger group of Jesus' disciples (cf. Lk 24:33; Acts 1:14–15; 13:31). (CC p. 555)

If anyone was still skeptical about these appearances of the risen Christ, he could easily check out the story himself by consulting some of these five hundred eyewitnesses. For most of them were still alive, though some had "fallen asleep" in Christ (1 Cor 15:6). This euphemism for Christian death is found again in 15:18, 20, and 51. It should be preserved in English translations because of its allusion to the resurrection. (CC p. 555)

The Lord's next appearance was to James. This James was his half-brother, the second oldest son in the family (Mt 13:55). James and his younger brothers had initially refused to believe in Jesus (Jn 7:5), but this post-resurrection appearance proved to be a turning point, it seems, not only for James but also for his brothers. Thus in the days between the ascension and Pentecost they joined the other believers at prayer in the upper room (Acts 1:14). Subsequently, James became the leader of the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:13; 21:18). Paul counted him among the "apostles" (Gal 1:19) and "pillars" (Gal 2:9) of the church universal. (CC p. 555)

Then Jesus appeared to "all the apostles" (1 Cor 15:7). If this includes "James" (15:7, the Lord's brother) and possibly others in the five hundred, then it was a wider group than "the Twelve." It would be James and the rest of Jesus' brothers and men like

Barnabas, Andronicus, Junias, and others able to add their testimony as eyewitnesses of the risen Christ and commissioned to do so (cf. Acts 14:4, 14; Rom 16:7). Paul himself was later included in this wider apostolic group. How he came to be included in their number he will explain in the next pericope (1 Cor 15:8–11). (CC p. 555)

15:3 *what I received I passed on to you as of first importance.* Here Paul links himself with early Christian tradition. He was not its originator, nor did he receive it directly from the Lord. His source was other Christians. The verbs he uses are technical terms for receiving and transmitting tradition (see note on 11:23). What follows is the heart of the gospel: that Christ died for our sins (not for his own sins; cf. Heb 7:27), that he was buried (confirmation that he had really died) and that he was raised from the dead. (CSB)

Though Paul had much to teach the Corinthians, nothing was more important than the Gospel. This is always true. The Gospel predominates in Christian teaching. (TLSB)

that Christ died ... with the Scriptures. These words form the heart of the Apostles' Creed, which summarized the Gospel for the early Christians. "He suffered, died, and was buried so that He might make satisfaction for me and pay what I owe" (LC II 31). (TLSB)

15:4 WAS RAISED – egagertai – Paul switches to the perfect tense in order to express the ongoing significance of what happened on the third day. Not only was Jesus raised on that day, but he remains a risen Savior still today. (CC p. 550)

on the third day. Cf. Mt 12:40. The Jews counted parts of days as whole days. Thus the three days would include part of Friday afternoon, all of Saturday, and Sunday morning. A similar way of reckoning time is seen in Jn 20:26 (lit. "after eight days," NIV "a week later"); two Sundays are implied, one at each end of the expression. (CSB)

15:5 *Peter ... the Twelve.* The appearance to Peter is the one mentioned in Lk 24:34, which occurred on Easter Sunday. The appearance to the Twelve seems to have taken place on Sunday evening (see Lk 24:36–43; Jn 20:19–23). "The Twelve" seems to have been used to refer to the group of original apostles, even though Judas was no longer with them (notice, however, that the 11 disciples, the 11 apostles or "the Eleven" are referred to in Mt 28:16; Mk 16:14; Lk 24:9, 33; Ac 1:26). (CSB)

Lit, only 11 disciples at the time of the resurrection. However, "twelve" meant "the company of the apostles" for early Christians. (TLSB)

OT law stipulated that legal evidence should be corroborated by the testimony of two or three witnesses (Deut. 17:6; 19:15). The resurrection of Christ is so vital a fact for the Christian faith that God supplied an abundance of witnesses. (CC p. 554)

15:6 *more than five hundred ... at the same time.* The appearance to this large group may be mentioned to help bolster the faith of those Corinthians who evidently had some doubts about the resurrection of Christ (cf. v. 12). This appearance may be the one in

Galilee recorded in Mt 28:10, 16–20, where the Eleven and possibly more met the risen Lord. (CSB)

Scripture records numerous appearances of Jesus over the 40 days after the resurrection. Paul recounts six examples here. Apostles were not always alone when Jesus visited them (cf Lk 24:33; Ac 1:14–15; 13:31). Paul does not specifically appeal to the women who first saw Jesus after the resurrection. This may be because in Roman culture the testimony of women was not regarded as fully reliable. (TLSB)

some have fallen asleep. A common expression at that time for physical death (cf. Ac 7:60). (CSB)

Physical death. (TLSB)

James ... apostles. James, Jesus' half brother, is singled out because he came to lead the Jerusalem churches. (TLSB)

15:7 James. Since this James is listed in addition to the apostles, he is not James son of Zebedee or James son of Alphaeus (Mt 10:2–3). This is James, the half-brother of Jesus (Mt 13:55), who did not believe in Christ before the resurrection (Jn 7:5) but afterward joined the apostolic band (Ac 1:14) and later became prominent in the Jerusalem church (Ac 15:13). It is not clear in Scripture when and where this appearance to James occurred. (CSB)

to all the apostles. For example, Ac 1:6–11. (CSB)

15:8-11 Paul concludes the list of eyewitnesses who can attest to the fact of Jesus' resurrection, which is the foundation of the Gospel. In deep humility, he finally mentions himself. The Lord had appeared to him "last of all" (1 Cor 15:8). Thus on one important count he was not qualified to be an apostle in the strictest sense: he had not accompanied the other disciples during the three years or so that the Lord Jesus "went in and out" among them (Acts 1:21–22). Like a "premature birth" (ἔκτρωμα), he had not had the benefit of a full gestation period; he had been thrown into his apostleship in a sudden and unexpected fashion. Yet even he—a premature birth (1 Cor 15:8), a former persecutor (15:9)—had been given the privilege of becoming an eyewitness of the resurrected Christ. (CC pp. 556-57)

In 15:9–10 Paul now elaborates on what he has just said about himself as "last of all," a premature birth (15:8). He considered himself the least of the apostles; indeed, in his epistle to the Ephesians, he called himself "the very least of all the saints" (Eph 3:8). To be a Christian at all was a high privilege for one who saw himself as "nothing" in God's sight (2 Cor 12:11; see also 1 Cor 3:7); to be a "called apostle" (κλητὸς ἀπόστολος, Rom 1:1; 1 Cor 1:1) was a sign of unfathomable grace. Like Jacob in his later years, he knew he was not worthy of the least of the mercies God had shown his servant (Gen 32:10). (CC pp. 557)

Paul's consciousness of personal unworthiness was sharpened by the painful memory of the way he had persecuted the church of God. He acknowledged that he shared responsibility for the murder of the Lord's disciples (Acts 26:10; cf. Acts 9:1). In attacking God's saints, he had attacked the Son of God himself (Acts 9:4). For that affront to the divine Majesty, he knew he deserved death and eternal condemnation. But instead of condemnation, this chief of sinners had been privileged to receive God's astounding grace, mercy, and longsuffering love (μακροθυμία, 1 Tim 1:12–16; cf. 1 Cor 13:4), so that he had become the person he was: not only a saint, but even an apostle. Totally insufficient for these things in himself, the sufficiency of God had conferred this ministry on him and equipped him for it (2 Cor 2:16; 3:5–6; 4:1). (CC p. 557)

God's unmerited grace toward him had born rich fruit. Indeed, he had labored "more than them all" (1 Cor 15:10). Commentators debate whether this means "more than all the other apostles put together" or "more than any one of them"; probably it is the latter. Called by the One who came to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mk 10:45), Paul devoted long hours to wearisome toil and endured great hardships in his Master's service. (CC pp. 557-58)

While it was no empty boast but the simple truth that he had labored harder than anyone else, Paul refrains from continuing in this vein (cf. 2 Cor 12:6), lest anyone think he wanted the credit for himself. No, he says that "the grace of God that was with [him]" (1 Cor 15:10) was the master workman laboring alongside him. All the glory belonged to God alone and to Christ, who had worked in him and through him to bring the Gentiles to the obedience of faith (Rom 15:18; Gal 2:8). Apart from God's grace in Christ, Paul knew he could accomplish nothing. In 1 Cor 3:6–7 he stated, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God was giving the growth. So neither the planter is anything nor the waterer, but only God, who does the growing" (cf. Jn 15:5). As one commentary aptly observes: "The Apostle's satisfaction with his own labours 'from a human point of view is as the joy of a child who gives his father a birthday present out of his father's own money.'" (CC p. 558)

Thus Paul's joy and confidence in the risen Christ had inspired him to fruitful labor in the Lord's service. The chapter ends with his appeal to the Corinthians to follow the pattern he had shown them, abounding in the Lord's work in the confidence that their labor, no less than Paul's, would not be in vain (1 Cor 15:58; cf. 3:12–15). (CC p. 558)

Paul now rounds off this first section of the chapter in 15:11. The other apostles and eyewitnesses had labored before him; he, as an untimely birth, had joined that great cloud of witnesses and entered into that same labor. So whether it was Paul himself or Cephas or the Twelve or any of the others Paul had listed (15:5–7), they all preached the same Gospel of Christ's death and resurrection (15:3–4). And it was to that common Gospel that the Corinthians owed their faith and hope of resurrection to eternal life. (CC p. 558)

15:8 *last of all.*† See Ac 9:1–8. This appearance to Paul came several years after the resurrection (perhaps c. A.D. 32 or 33). (CSB)

In his epistle to the Ephesians, Paul called himself “the very least of all the saints.” (Eph 3:8) (CC p. 557)

one abnormally born. Paul was not part of the original group of apostles. He had not lived with Christ as the others had. His entry into the apostolic office was not “normal.” Furthermore, at his conversion he was abruptly snatched from his former way of life (Ac 9:3–6). (CSB)

Medical term for a premature birth, including stillbirth, miscarriage, and abortion. Possibly this insult was used by Paul’s opponents to tear down his authority. Earlier, Paul asserted his authority; now he purposely humbles himself to emphasize God’s grace (cf v 10). (TLSB)

ektromati – Untimely birth, miscarriage, to abort or any kind of premature birth. (CC p. 556)

15:9 *church of God.* In persecuting the church, he was actually persecuting Christ (see Ac 9:4–5). (CSB)

15:10 WITHOUT EFFECT – kena – Without result, without profit or without reaching its goal. (CC p. 556)

GRACE OF GOD THAT WAS WITH ME – The master workman laboring alongside him. All the glory belonged to God alone and to Christ, who had worked in him and through him to bring the Gentiles to the obedience of faith (Rom. 15:18; Gal. 2:8). (CC p. 558)

I HAVE WORKED HARDER – ekopiasa – To work to the point of weariness. (CC p. 556)

15:11 *so we preach.* Paul now ranks himself with the other apostles, demonstrating unity with them despite conflicts about his apostleship. (TLSB)

15:1–11 Because of zeal for more knowledge, the Corinthians have neglected what has first importance: the simple truths and application of the Gospel. How great is the temptation for us to overlook the Gospel today! A multitude of contemporary issues can crowd out the Gospel of life and forgiveness in Jesus until it grows unclear in our minds. Praise God for the wonderful creeds that our forebears have handed down across the centuries, which take up Paul’s very words, summarize the Holy Gospel, and etch it into our memories. • Holy Jesus, You died to take away my sins and rose to fulfill all the Father’s promises in Scripture. Send now Your Holy Spirit so that by Your grace I may stand in this faith always. Amen. (TLSB)

The Resurrection of the Dead

12 But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? **13** If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. **14** And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. **15** More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. **16** For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. **17** And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. **18** Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. **19** If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. **20** But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

Paul demonstrates thorough skill in classic logic and rhetoric (the art of persuasion) by using careful arguments. His if-then sentences test impossible notions and show the foolish implications of the Corinthians' doubts about the resurrection. (TLSB)

15:12 *Christ has been raised.* Christ was raised historically on the third day. Paul uses this same verb form (that expresses the certainty of Christ's bodily resurrection) a total of seven times in this passage (vv. 4, 12–14, 16–17, 20). (CSB)

no resurrection. Greek learning and culture opposed the idea that the body could rise from the dead. Some Greeks believed that the body and physical things were inherently bad but that the spirit was inherently good. Members of the Corinthian congregation continued to hold these opinions, even though they seem to have accepted that Christ rose from the dead. (TLSB)

15:16 Paul repeats his main premise (v 13). (TLSB)

15:17 *still in your sins.* Christ's sacrifice on the cross redeemed us from sin and from death. But if Christ had remained in the grave, His victory over sin would be incomplete. The complete act of redemption—called the Gospel—is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins (cf vv 3–4). (TLSB)

15:18 *perished.* Destruction beyond hope of redemption. (TLSB)

15:19-28 Paul's first letter to the Corinthians addresses specific problems and questions that the early church encountered there. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Paul deals with these challenges in a straightforward Law/Gospel approach. Present-day pastors confront many of the same problems and challenges, i.e., sexual immorality, marriage and divorce, strife, division in the church, abuse of the Lord's Supper, spiritual gifts, and the resurrection of the dead. This epistle is timely and particularly relevant for us today. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

In the 15th chapter, Paul deals with the question of the resurrection of the body. He also assures his readers that because Christ was raised in his body, we too shall have a bodily resurrection at his return. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

15:19 ARE TO BE PITIED – If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied,” and we are also the greatest fools, for we alone renounce all goods and comforts, all joy and happiness of this life and of all creatures, we expose ourselves to every peril of life and limb in vain and for nothing and to the terrible and unspeakable terror of hell, so that we have to live in contempt and in misery before the world and in eternal fear before God. (Luther)

εἰ ἐν τῇ ζωῇ ταύτῃ ... ἡλπικότες ἐσμὲν μόνον—Some interpreters take the adverb μόνον, “only,” with the verb immediately preceding it: “If in this life we have only hoped”—that is, we have no certainty, only a hope that is an empty shell, a hope which ultimately disappoints us. But the NT does not speak of hope in that negative way. More likely the adverb “only” modifies the whole sentence, and above all the phrase “in this life.” That is the consensus of the English versions; cf. RSV: “If *for this life only* we have hoped in Christ ...” (emphasis added). (CC p. 560)

Indeed, Paul continues, if the skeptics are right, Christians have lost both the present and the future. They do not enjoy present forgiveness in Christ, nor do they have any hope that extends beyond the veil into heaven (15:19; cf. Heb 6:18-20). Their hope is only good for this life. Contrary to what Paul maintained in 1 Cor. 13:13, hope would not endure and be fulfilled in eternity. With such limited hope, Christians would be “of all people most miserable. They would have staked their lives on a great delusion. Even more did this apply to Paul and his coworkers. When they could have been “living it up,” eating and drinking, they had subjected themselves to extraordinary dangers and labors because of their resurrection hope (15:30-32; cf. 2Cor 6:4-10; 11:23-29). Was their hope merely a mirage? (CC p. 564)

Practical Implications

For Paul, Christ’s resurrection is inseparably connected to the future resurrection of Christians; they are two sides of the same coin. Through Baptism Christians have become members of Christ’s own body (1 Cor 12:13). Consequently, the bodily resurrection of Jesus guarantees the resurrection of the believers’ bodies. And that resurrection will be the fulfillment of the gift of salvation accomplished through Christ’s death and inaugurated by Christ’s own bodily rising. Paul’s entire argument hinges on the unbreakable connection between Christ’s resurrection and the resurrection of believers on the Last Day. (CC p. 564)

Here is profound and direct insight for our proclamation of Christ’s Easter victory. Easter means that the victory has been won by Christ. At the same time, for God’s people the full participation in that victory is yet to be experienced. Easter is, then, an eschatological event with end-time implications that the church must never forget if she is not to lose her hope. (CC pp. 564-565)

Contemporary Christians, including preachers, sometimes seem to forget that the final Christian hope is not just for the soul to enter Christ’s presence after the death of the body. It is surely true that the Christian’s soul goes “to be with Christ” immediately upon death (Phil 1:23; see also Lk 23:43; 2 Cor 5:8; Rev 6:9). At times, however, it seems as though this has become the only goal in the minds and hearts of believers, and that the return of Christ Jesus and the resurrection of the body do not play as vital a place in everyday living, believing, and hoping. (CC p. 565)

But the great hope toward which the church and indeed all creation looks is the renewal of that creation and the resurrection of the body. On that day, God will receive the full harvest of which Christ's own bodily resurrection is the firstfruits (1 Cor 15:20). For Christ will on the Last Day "raise me and all the dead and will grant eternal life to me and to all who believe in Christ. This is most certainly true." Without this hope, the Gospel proclaimed by Paul would collapse. Faith would be futile, sin and its consequences would remain, fellow Christians who have died would have perished, and humanity should look upon us Christians as people who are wasting their time. (CC p. 565)

Paul has led the Corinthians from their view—that there is no final resurrection of the body—to the place of despair to which such a view inevitably leads. Next, with the glorious rhetorical pivot of "but as it is ..." (15:20) Paul will move them from despair back to hope. (CC p. 565)

15:20 Leaving behind the depressing hypotheses which filled the previous paragraph (1 Cor. 15:12–19: "if there were no resurrection of the dead ..."), Paul gives a ringing affirmation: "But as it is [νυνὶ δέ], Christ has been raised from the dead" (15:20). The Corinthians should never doubt this basic tenet of their creed, nor should they doubt its implications for their own resurrection. For the risen Christ is not the only one who would rise; he is the "firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (15:20; cf. Rev 1:5). Just as the Israelites brought the sheaf of firstfruits to the Lord on the "Sunday" after Passover as a sign that the whole harvest belonged to him (Lev 23:9–15), so Christ's resurrection was the pledge that all who had fallen asleep in him would be physically raised as he was. (CC p. 568)

BUT - nuni – But now, just now, but as it is, meaning that it is a fact and this is the end of all speculation. (TLSB)

But Christ has indeed been raised. Paul's categorical conclusion based on his evidence set forth in vv. 3–8. (CSB)

"Christ has indeed been raised." The verb *hegēgertai* is the perfect passive of *hegeirō*, "to raise." This verb form expresses the certainty of Christ's bodily resurrection as an accomplished fact. This is the 7th occurrence of the verb in this chapter. "Make no mistake," Paul is saying, "Christ has been raised!" It is done! We know it and believe it! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

But He came forth alive from the grave in which He lay and destroyed and consumed both devil and death, who had devoured Him. He tore the devil's belly and hell's jaws asunder and ascended into heaven, where He is now seated in eternal life and glory." This is to be comfort and defiance. For on His name we are baptized, and we hear and profess His Word. After Him we are called Christians, and for His sake we suffer every misfortune and grief from the hand of the devil. For this is not aimed at us but at Him and His kingdom, whose enemy the devil is. He tries to destroy it, and he treats us so roughly and wearies us with pursuit, harassment, and death so that we might forsake Christ. (Luther)

The apostle comes now to the triumphant assertion of the fact, the proof of which he has already stated. (CB)

firstfruits. The first sheaf of the harvest given to the Lord (Lev 23:10–11, 17, 20) as a token that all the harvest belonged to the Lord and would be dedicated to him through dedicated lives. So Christ, who has been raised, is the guarantee of the resurrection of all of God’s redeemed people (cf. 1Th 4:13–18). (CSB)

The earliest portion of a harvest, which Israel sacrificed to God in thanks for the full harvest to come. (TLSB)

The first of any crop, herd or family was given to the Lord. This represented all the rest of the crop, herd or family. In this case it means that Christ’ resurrection includes the resurrection of everyone else.

This is the perfect passive. This verb form expresses the certainty of Christ’s bodily resurrection as an accomplished fact. This is the 7th occurrence of the verb in this chapter. “Make no mistake,” Paul is saying, “Christ has been raised!” It is done! We know it and believe it!

ἀπαρχή—This is one of the Greek words the LXX uses (e.g., Ex 23:19; Ezek 44:30) to translate עֲרֵבֵי הָאֵרֶב, the “firstfruits” God commanded the Israelites to offer to him (e.g., Ex 23:19; 34:22, 26; Lev 23:17, 20). The “firstfruits” were the first produce from the harvest, with the full harvest yet to come. The LXX also uses the word to translate בְּכֹרֶת, the “firstborn” son and “firstborn” animals that were to be offered to God (e.g., Ex 22:28; Deut 12:6, 17). The NT regularly uses this term of a first installment which betokens a greater fullness to come (Rom 8:23; 11:16; 16:5; 1 Cor 15:20, 23; 16:15; 2 Thess 2:13; James 1:18; Rev 14:4). Cf. LXX Lev 23:10. (CC p. 566)

And what is more than that, by calling Christ “the Firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” Paul wishes to signify that the resurrection is to be viewed and understood as having already begun in Christ, indeed, as being more than half finished, and that this remnant of death is to be regarded as no more than a deep sleep, and that the future resurrection of our body will not differ from suddenly awaking from such a sleep. For the main and best part of this has already come to pass, namely, that Christ, our Head, has arisen. But now that the Head is seated on high and lives, there is no longer any reason for concern. (Luther)

15:21-22 Luther: “St. Paul is still speaking only about those who are Christians. These he wants to instruct and console with this article. For although also the non-Christians must all arise, this will not be to their comfort and joy, since they will arise for judgment and not for life.... I will say nothing of that great vulgar throng which seeks its pleasure and consolation only here, which [despises] God’s Word and cares not a mite for God and His kingdom. It is not surprising that such people are annoyed to hear of the blessed resurrection; for us, however, it is pure joy, because we hear that our greatest Treasure, over which we rejoice, is already in heaven above, and that only the most insignificant part remains behind; and that He will awaken this, too, and draw it after Him as easily as a person awakens from sleep” (AE 28:114–15). (TLSB)

GOSPEL
Luke 6:17-26

Blessings and Woes

¹⁷ He went down with them and stood on a level place. A large crowd of his disciples was there and a great number of people from all over Judea, from Jerusalem, and from the coast of Tyre and Sidon, ¹⁸ who had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. Those troubled by evil ^a spirits were cured, ¹⁹ and the people all tried to touch him, because power was coming from him and healing them all. ²⁰ Looking at his disciples, he said: **“Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. ²¹ Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. ²² Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. ²³ “Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their fathers treated the prophets. ²⁴ “But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort. ²⁵ Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep. ²⁶ Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets.**

6:17-49 Luke begins the larger section (6:17–49) with Jesus standing on a level place. This could be a level place in the hill country, even on the side of the mountain on which Jesus prayed, the same mountain referred to in Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7). Jesus’ healing and teaching take place in this locale after he has come down from the mountain where he prayed and selected the Twelve. (CC)

These crowds came from everywhere, from all of Judea, from the holy city of Jerusalem, and from the coastal towns of Tyre and Sidon. Tyre and Sidon lie outside of “Judea” and represent the pagan/Gentile nations (cf. 10:13–15). The crowds are drawn to Jesus especially because he is the healer they seek. As Luke puts it, “power [δύναμις] was going out from him” (9:19; cf. 8:46). The hearer has seen power come from Jesus to heal (5:17; cf. 8:46). This overwhelming support of the crowds and Jesus’ disciples contrasts with the negative response of the Pharisees and scribes when Jesus healed the paralytic. Here the hearer sees coming together those who will make up the church: Jesus, the teacher and healer; the twelve apostles; the other disciples (the seventy[-two]); and the people coming for healing from unclean spirits and diseases. The prophecy of Jesus in his first sermon in Nazareth is coming true (4:18–19). He is present in the world as the Messiah, who brings release (ἄφεσις) from creation’s bondage to sin. The final words summarize this: “and he was healing all” (9:19). (CC)

6:17 WITH THEM – μετ’ αὐτῶν—This refers to the twelve apostles Jesus just named, who come down from the mountain with him. (CC)

stood on a level place. Perhaps a plateau, which would satisfy both this context and that in Mt 5:1. (CSB)

The teaching that follows is sometimes called the Sermon on the Plain. Not surprisingly, much of the material recorded here also appears in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5–7). Jesus repeated His teachings at various times and locations, as speakers commonly do. (TLSB)

CROWD – ὄχλος πολὺς μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ—The crowd of disciples out of which he chose the Twelve seems to be waiting for him when he comes down from the mountain. (CC)

There were three audiences: the crowd of people, the disciples, and the Twelve from among those disciples. (CC p. 283)

PEOPLE – ὁ λαός, which sometimes is a term for the faithful remnant of God’s people, see textual notes and comments at 1:10 and 18:43. (CC p. 265)

6:18 CAME TO HEAR AND BE HEALED – οἱ ἦλθον ἀκούσαι αὐτοῦ καὶ ἰαθῆναι—The antecedent—those who came to hear and be healed by Jesus—includes the great crowd of disciples and the great multitude of people (6:17). ὁ ἀκούω as a technical term for catechumens, see comments at 5:1, the Sermon on the Plain (6:27, 47, 49), the parable of the sower (8:8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 18), and Jesus’ discussion of the new kinship (8:21). ἀκούσαι and ἰαθῆναι are both infinitives of purpose. (CC)

6:19 TRIED TO TOUCH HIM – ἐζήτουν ἅπτεσθαι αὐτοῦ—The imperfect implies continuous, almost desperate seeking to touch Jesus (infinitive of purpose), and the reason is stated by the causal phrase introduced by ὅτι: “because power was going out from him.” (CC p. 265)

They realized that power was coming from Him and healing them all. As great crowds came to have Jesus heal them, they also came to hear Him preach. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 1)

6:17–19 Jesus preaches and ministers to the crowds. Jesus continues to touch our lives today through the ongoing ministry of His life-giving Word. • “Lord, Your words are waters living When my thirsting spirit pleads. Lord, Your words are bread life-giving; On Your words my spirit feeds. Lord, Your words will be my light Through death’s cold and dreary night; Yes, they are my sword prevailing And my cup of joy unfailing!” Amen. (LSB 589:3) (TLSB)

6:20–49 Luke’s Sermon on the Plain, apparently parallel to Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5–7). Although this sermon is much shorter than the one in Matthew, they both begin with the Beatitudes and end with the lesson of the builders. Some of Matthew’s Sermon is found in other portions of Luke (e.g., 11:2–4; 12:22–31, 33–34), suggesting that the material may have been given on various occasions in Jesus’ preaching. (CSB)

6:20-26 The structure of these beatitudes and woes is parallel, with the woes reversing the status of the beatitudes. The first beatitude speaks about the poor and the first woe about the rich; the second beatitude speaks about the hungry and the second woe about those who are filled; the third beatitude speaks about those who are crying and the third woe about those who are laughing; the fourth beatitude speaks about those who hate and the fourth woe about those who speak well. There are other parallels as well: the first three beatitudes and woes contain ὅτι (“for”), and the fourth beatitude and woe contain ὅταν (“when”) clauses; the second and third beatitudes and woes speak of “now” (νῦν); the fourth and last beatitude and woe contain the expression “for according to the same things their fathers did”—to the prophets (beatitude) or false prophets (woe). (CC p. 285)

6:20–23 See Mt 5:3–12. The Beatitudes go deeper than material poverty (v. 20) and physical hunger (v. 21). Matthew’s account indicates that Jesus spoke of poverty “in spirit” (Mt 5:3) and hunger “for righteousness” (Mt 5:6). (CSB)

As in the Sermon on the Mount, the first words Jesus speaks are blessings (cf Mt 5:1–12). (TLSB)

When one enters the Christian community by Baptism, these beatitudes describe the character of those who belong to this community. Luke’s hearers then and now should see beyond themselves to the One who was poor for them, who hungered in the wilderness for them, who wept for them as he entered Jerusalem, who received hate, insults, and exclusion for them, who was cast out and crucified outside of Jerusalem as evil – the Son of Man. The Christological character of the beatitudes would not be lost on Luke’s hearers, who see themselves only in terms of how they see Jesus, who understood their baptismal incorporation into his body and into all that he brings. The catechumen, who enters the Christological life through Baptism, is taught about the stage of this life by being told in the gospel how Jesus lived his life in a hostile world that put him to death. Those who join his community will live in this same life in this same world. This Christological reading applies not only to the beatitudes, but also to the rest of the Sermon on the Plain, beginning with the woes that show life without Christ (6:24-26), the imperatives of catechesis that point the way to this Christological life (6:27-38), and the goal of catechesis that describes the enlightenment, the fruit and the foundation of this life (6:39-49) (CC p. 287)

A beatitude is a declaration of blessedness. The state of blessedness that believers enjoy results from the fact that God is in communion with them through his Son, Jesus Christ. (CC p. 267)

A beatitude describes Gospel gifts that pertain to each and every believer. A beatitude may function like a Gospel invitation, in which the blessings of the Gospel are held out as enticements to bring or to keep the hearer in God’s kingdom. (CC p. 268)

Some of the beatitudes function in a manner similar to that of an absolution. Particularly the beatitudes of 6:20–23 are intended to comfort afflicted believers with the assurance

that God knows their plight, looks upon them with favor, and will deliver them, filling their need with blessings to the point of overflowing. Like an absolution, a beatitude is a speech act. (CC p. 268)

Most of the beatitudes draw on the Gospel theme of the Great Reversal (the idea that the first shall be last, the last shall be first, also expressed in many other kinds of reversal). The Great Reversal runs throughout Luke and is particularly prominent in the Magnificat. (CC p. 268)

The Great Reversal is strongly eschatological, and so the beatitudes contain the tension between the suffering of believers *now* versus the blessed comfort they will enjoy *then* in the eschaton. *Already* they possess those blessings through faith in the promise, but those blessings have *not yet* been fully realized. (CC p. 269)

The most important feature of the beatitudes is that they are *Christological*. *All God's blessings are found in Christ, and Christ is the source of every blessing*. Therefore it would be a misuse of the beatitudes to suggest that they are principles or guidelines that inform people of the way they should live so that God will reward their efforts with blessings. That would turn the beatitudes from Gospel into Law. Instead, the purpose of the beatitudes is to instill and strengthen faith in Christ alone. (CC p. 269)

Several important aspects of blessing as described by St. Paul in the context of Eph 1:3 also apply to the Lukan beatitudes. First, the blessings are not rewards for a Christian's supposed accomplishments, but rather are a consequence of election in Christ. (CC p. 270)

Second, *all* God's blessings are in Christ, and every believer receives *all* these blessings—"every spiritual blessing" (Eph 1:3)—by virtue of being *in Christ*. Neither Jesus nor Paul sets up degrees of blessedness, as if some Christians possessed more or greater blessings than other believers. (CC p 270)

Third, these blessings are "*spiritual*" blessings. Therefore the beatitudes are abused if it is suggested that they are principles to live by in order to achieve success in the things of this world, whether that be one's occupation, finances, or relationships. (CC pp. 270-71)

The "spiritual blessing" (Eph 1:3) of the Spirit as the "down payment of our inheritance" (Eph 1:14) highlights the eschatological dimension of blessedness (cf. also "inherit blessing" in 1 Pet 3:9). God's blessings are stored up and waiting "in the heavenly places" (Eph 1:3), and the full enjoyment of them must wait until the believer joins Christ there. (CC p. 271)

The OT blessings certainly do include and are the result of God's grace, favor, and imputed righteousness. Sometimes the blessing is also expressly related to the work of the Holy Spirit (Judg 13:24–25; Is 44:3). (CC p. 272)

The following was an article in USA Today in late July 2004 entitled (How many can pass the I'm blessed inspection test?) "For years now, I have taken my neighbors' cars to be inspected. It's a little gift I give them, one of those random 'acts of kindness' if you speak bumper sticker. Most people hate the chore. And it doesn't help any that the inspection station is the District of Columbia isn't in the best part of town. But for some perverse reason, I enjoy the outing. Maybe it has to do with the fact that it's never my car. All pressure is off. Pass, fail – it doesn't really matter to me, although I'm happier when I can bring good news back to the neighborhood. You passed! I always make the trip early in the morning. The station is on the other side of town, so I have to drive across the National Mall to get there. It's one of the few times during the year I get to see the sun rising behind the Capitol, the mist rising off the Tidal Basin, the commuters barreling down the Southeast Expressway with road rage in their eyes. I could do without the last, but two of three isn't bad. So there I was the other morning, waiting in line – Lane 4, to be exact – reading the paper, when I was finally told to pull up to the garage entrance. A man about my age waved me closer, then opened my door. It was 6:55 a.m. 'How are you doing, this morning?' he asked. 'Fine,' I said, bit startled at his perkiness. 'And you?' 'Blessed,' he said. 'Blessed.' I walked into the inspection station and down the long glass hallway where residents can view their cars going through the paces. He said 'blessed,' I thought to myself, blessed. There he was dealing with more-than-likely unhappy people, standing outside on a steamy July morning, and he felt blessed. I can't get the man out of my mind. Why does it seem the people who appear to have the worst jobs often seem to be the happiest? (I'm not talking about the clerk at my local CVS, who is most unhappy to be there.) I'm talking about the woman here at the newspaper whose job it is to clean the bathrooms. She's the happiest woman in the building. Always smiling. Always say hello. She just had an operation and is now back. Happy as ever. The men who painted my house this summer were happy. I couldn't understand a word they were saying but they were in the hot sun, singing away. Lunch under the tree out front was even a festive affair, constant laughter floating up to my window. And why is it the people with the most seem the most unhappy? (I'm just asking the questions here, folks. I don't have the answers.) Earlier this summer, a senator's wife got into an altercation with another shopper at a local garden center. If I remember correctly, it was over mulch and loading of said mulch into the trunk of the car. Someone was being blocked, I think the senator's was doing the blocking. In the end, charges were filed, lawyers were called, people went to court, 'no comments' were issued. The judge should have just ordered them all to get their cars inspected. Lane 4.

6:20 DISCIPLES – οὗς μαθητάς—This word for "disciple" comes from μαθάνω, "to learn.' ' Although μαθητής does not occur in the LXX it seems to be equivalent to the Hebrew **תַּלְמִיד**, which only occurs once in the OT (1 Chr 25:8) but is common in the Talmud (whose name is closely related to it). The Hebrew term designates a student who sits at the feet of a rabbi. Early Christians called disciples "catechumens" or "hearers of the Word" (see comments on 5:1). Both disciples and catechumens learn about the kingdom through the teaching of Jesus. μαθητής occurs frequently. In Acts, "disciple" is the equivalent for "Christian." (CC p. 278)

Disciples are learners, students, or in early Christian parlance, *catechumens*. Here they are taught by Jesus in the same way the early church would later teach catechumens. (CC p. 283)

BLESSED – μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοί—Luke includes no verbs in the beatitudes and the woes. Most Hebrew blessings and curses likewise are nominal sentences without verbs. Verbs are supplied only in brackets in order to capture the force of the original. On μακάριος, see comments at Lk 1:42 on εὐλογημένος. This translation follows the KJV’s “blessed” instead of “happy,” found in some translations, since “happy” implies a human emotion, while “blessed” implies that God’s grace and favor rest upon the person. The promise of bliss for those who are blessed is eschatological, not temporal. The blessing of joy does not come from being poor, but from the promise of God’s kingdom that comes to those who understand the eschatological meaning of their poverty. (CC pp. 278- 279)

POOR – These are those who refer to those who have only empty hands to bring before their master. They are “beggarly poor” in this context those who know that “all of their righteous acts are like filthy rags” (Is. 64:6). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 1)

An emphasis in Lk. Because Jesus blesses the “poor in spirit” in Mt 5:3, the poverty spoken of here may include spiritual humility. (TLSB)

YOURS – ὅτι ὑμετέρα—Each of the first three beatitudes and woes is followed by a subordinate causal clause (translated “for”) that is in the second person. This distinguishes Luke’s beatitudes from Matthew’s, which are in the third person. The causal ὅτι is not found in the fourth and final beatitude and woe, marking them as separate from the others and functioning as summaries of the previous three beatitudes or woes. (CC p. 279)

KINGDOM OF GOD – ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ—The present tense indicates that the possession of the kingdom of God is a present reality by God’s grace. (CC p. 279)

6:21 NOW – νῦν—This word occurs in the second and third beatitudes, which separates these two beatitudes from the first and last. It contrasts with the future tense in the causal clause, i.e., χορτασθήσεσθε and γελάσετε. This suggests a parallelism between the first and last beatitudes and one between the middle two. It does not indicate that one is more significant than the other, for all four are equally important. It simply suggests that there are different accents. (CC p. 279)

HUNGERING – We have an insatiable appetite to know more about Jesus and His Word. Like a person who has been starved devours bread, the believer devours the Word. We hunger for the bread of life, and Jesus feeds us as a Shepherd in Word and body and blood. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 1)

Like poverty, this hunger may have a spiritual aspect. (TLSB)

WILL BE SATISFIED – χορτασθήσεσθε—This is a theological passive: you will be satisfied *by God*. (CC p. 279)

For those who are hungering, God fully satisfies us by richly and daily forgiving our sins in Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 1)

YOU WILL LAUGH – They will do this even as we “weep” in this place of tears and sin, God’s ready mercy and grace flow down to us in His means of grace until that day when the Lord “will wipe every tear from their eyes” (Rev. 21:14). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 1)

6:22 WHEN THEY HATE, EXCLUDE AND INSULT – ὅταν—This word occurs twice and replaces ὅτι as the introduction to the subordinate clauses that describe the state of blessedness. They are temporal instead of causal. This returns us to the first beatitude, which suggests a present condition or one that will soon be a reality. The first ὅταν clause is completed by the final clause “on account of [ἔνεκα] the Son of Man.” The second ὅταν clause expands the first one and explains what it means: you will know you are hated when they exclude you (ἀφορίσωσιν), insult you (ὀνειδίσωσιν), and throw out your name as evil (ἐκβάλωσιν τὸ ὄνομα). L. T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 107, notes that “the three verbs therefore move from attitude (hate) to action (setting apart), to speech (scorn).” (CC p. 279)

Here Jesus speaks of the persecution and suffering that come to those who by faith belong to Him. Hate leads to setting apart, scorn, and ridicule. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 1)

BECAUSE OF THE SON OF MAN – When we confess Jesus, we are also willing to suffer for His sake (1 Peter 4:14). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 1)

6:23 REJOICE – χάρητε and σκιρτήσατε may suggest joyful dancing, such as accompanies a wedding. σκιρτάω occurred earlier at 1:41, 44, while χαίρω denotes the joy of a feast in 15:32. (CC p. 279)

This is an image of people leaping who cannot contain themselves because of the good fortune that has come to them. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 1)

6:20–23 Jesus blesses the crowds and describes their estates in this life and the life to come. Even amid sorrows, God’s blessings prevail. • Set my heart, dear Savior, on Your blessings and promises, that I remain steadfast in all circumstances. Amen. (TLSB)

6:24–26 The four woes are exact opposites of the four blessings just uttered (vv 20–23). Particularly noteworthy is the contrast between the persecution awaiting Jesus’ followers (v 22) and the popularity of those who please men (v 26). (TLSB)

6:24 BUT – πλήν—This strong adversative begins the woes to show the contrast with the previous beatitudes. (CC p. 279)

WOE – οὐαί—Woes are found in the OT, particularly prophetic texts, and indicate that the person stands under the judgment of God (e.g., Is 5:8–23; Amos 6:1; Hab 2:6). Jesus warns of “woe” in other places in Luke (10:13—Chorazin and Bethsaida; 11:42–52—Pharisees; 17:1—those who tempt others to sin; 21:23—pregnant women during the last days; 22:22—the betrayer). (CC p. 279)

TO YOU – ὑμῖν—The antecedent, those to whom the woes are addressed, is not specified. It is general enough to be addressed to all those who fail to understand that God’s kingdom comes in Jesus, which in the course of Luke’s gospel will include all Jesus’ disciples until after the resurrection. But the hearer knows that the religious establishment fits these categories best. (CC p. 279)

6:24–26 This section is a point-by-point negative counterpart of vv. 20–22. (CSB)

6:25 WOE...LAUGH...WEEP – οὐαί, οἱ γελῶντες νῦν, ὅτι πενθήσετε καὶ κλαύσετε— James 4:9 is remarkably similar and illustrates how the traditions in the gospels also shaped the epistles: “Be wretched and mourn [πενθήσατε] and weep [κλαύσατε]. Let your laughter [ὁ γέλως ὑμῶν] be turned to mourning [εἰς πένθος] and your joy to dejection.” (CC p. 280)

LAUGH NOW – The self-righteous have no time for true sorrow over sin and repentance. For them eternal matters can wait. They laugh and enjoy now the pleasures and lusts of sin in this life, spurning personal responsibility and accountability for their actions. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 1)

6:26 WHEN ALL MEN SPEAK WELL – If we are known by the friends we make, we will also be known enemies we make. Jesus warns that those who want to be merely “men-pleasers” or “friends of men” rather than suffer “because of the Son of Man” will be cursed. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 1)

6:24–26 Jesus condemns those who live for today, neglecting the ways of God and the care of His people. When pride and self-interest allure you, turn to the Lord in repentance. Daily He provides for all your needs and forgives you by grace. • Hear my daily confession of sins, O Savior, and set my heart on things above. Amen. (TLSB)