

**All Saints Sunday + November 6, 2016  
Atonement Lutheran Church, Beloit  
Luke 6:20-31**

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The way things are going, it's probably been awhile since any of us has heard a truly inspiring campaign speech. But if you have any doubt that the Bible is the living Word of God and gives us exactly what we need when we need it, or that the lectionary—the cycle of assigned readings—serves this same purpose, just take another look at today's Gospel. For there you will find the best campaign speech of all time.

This is Jesus' first sermon, the so-called "Sermon on the Plain." Jesus began his ministry in Luke's Chapter 4 when he announced that he had been sent to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind. He then performed acts of healing in Luke 5 to demonstrate that he was the Son of God. He then called the 12 apostles. All this must have stirred people up far and wide, because listen to how Luke 6 begins:

He came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon. <sup>18</sup>They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. <sup>19</sup>And all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them.

Then he launches into his speech. "Blessed are you who are poor..."

But wait a minute, you may be thinking. Jesus isn't a candidate. He isn't running for anything. He is already the Son of God. He knows the what the outcome will be of the struggle between good and evil, between death and life. But consider that he is campaigning for our hearts based on his redefinition of the way the world works. This sermon, this speech, encapsulates this redefinition as he addresses what will be but also, because we are people of the resurrection, what already is. I'll read the speech with my own inline comments:

<sup>20</sup>Then [Jesus] looked up at his disciples

*addressing them specifically because they will be carrying out his mission,*

and said:

“Blessed are you who are poor,  
for yours is the kingdom of God.

*You with little money, God is blessing you with treasures in heaven, which neither moth nor rust can consume! You at the margins of society, Christ is there with you! You who think you have nothing, you already have eternal life!*

<sup>21</sup>“Blessed are you who are hungry now,  
for you will be filled.

*Every Sunday we feast on the body and blood of our Lord, strengthening our faith. We also have as our daily bread God’s Word, which nourishes and sustains us through all of life’s tribulations.*

“Blessed are you who weep now,  
for you will laugh.

*Each of us carries in our hearts the depths of sorrow that we have experienced through deaths, illnesses, daily adversities. But knowing Christ as our Savior enables us to smile through all our bitter woes.*

<sup>22</sup>“Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. <sup>23</sup> Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven. But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, <sup>28</sup> bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. <sup>29</sup> If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. <sup>30</sup> Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. <sup>31</sup> Do to others as you would have them do to you.”

*People don’t like what they don’t understand. Because the Gospel of Christ is counter-cultural, Christians can expect to be persecuted by those who know only the deadly cycles of power, money and control.*

But Jesus doesn't stop there: To those who remain captive to the world, Jesus goes on to reveal the nature of their bondage:

<sup>24</sup>“But woe to you who are rich,  
for you have received your consolation.

*You thought your wealth was your salvation....*

<sup>25</sup>“Woe to you who are full now,  
for you will be hungry.

*You thought you had all the food you need...*

“Woe to you who are laughing now,  
for you will mourn and weep.

*You thought that wealth and possessions would keep you from suffering...*

<sup>26</sup>“Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.

*You thought that all the accolades you've been getting were genuine...*

Looking especially at the last set of verses in the reading, this sermon is a perfect guide for daily Christian living. If we can embrace this, we will know the joys of heaven here on earth.

The ability to do this comes from the firm foundation established for us by saints who came before, those who caught at least a glimpse of a reality more fully shaped by God than the one they lived in. We all come from a people and from individual persons to whom we owe much of who we are and much of who we long to be. Many of you have deep family roots here at Atonement. One on of my yellow sheets, one person wrote, “Years ago when we moved to Beloit, my mother found this church. It has been a part of my life since. I feel a sense of peace and love here all these years. My family has also loved this church. It has created a bond for all of us in our faith in God.”

Thanks be to God for all the saints, and I thank God for each of you. Alleluia! **Amen.**