

WELCOME 3rd February 2019 – 4 Epiphany '19 C

Luke 6:17-23

Good morning! Welcome to worship today!

Waypoints are markers that help navigate along a path, give direction to a journey and ultimately reach a desired goal. Every off-road traveller, bush-country hiker or sailor knows...you set your GPS to those waypoints or you may never reach your destination or more importantly, make your way home.

Those sorts of markers are also helpful in our life with Jesus. Knowing whose you are, what you're called to be, & how you're created to live fully allows us to see where we are in the bigger vision to which God has called us and to lead other travellers to the exact location where immeasurable blessings can be found. Jesus laid out a series of waypoints...

"God blesses you who are poor...you who are hungry...you who weep..."

What? How? Because those are wonderful circumstances in which to live? No... Jesus says that the healing & blessing & favour of the Father are not about the circumstances or conditions OF this life but about our relationship to him IN this life.

The world tells us that only the rich, the self-satisfied, the happy, & the popular are those who are blessed.

Jesus says You are blessed no matter what external conditions prevail in your life, because it is God, & not the world, with the final word about who you really are & because the healing & blessing & favour of the Father are yours because you are the crown of his creation & object of his love & desire...recipient of his life that never ends...irrespective of circumstances.

We'll explore & experience that today...

Let's pray...

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Gracious Father apart from you we are nothing...and we deserve nothing of what you have provided. But you have provided for us in abundance & we praise you. Thank you for the 6 years of mission you have entrusted to us as your church. Make us worthy of your name and guide us by your Spirit. Fill us today with your power that the world may see in us your kingdom & your presence ruling over all we are and all we do. Let your grace be experienced and your glory extended among us & through us. Strengthen us beyond our imaginings & shape us to be the church you've always dreamed we could be...through Jesus Christ we pray...Amen.

4 EPIPHANY '19 C – WAYPOINTS: THE WAY

FAITH CHAT:

1. Share a time when you got lost or lost your way. What happened?
2. What are some things that help you keep your life “on track?”

I got an email from the company that makes my TomTom navigation device a few weeks back. We bought it years ago when we were travelling various place in Oz we had never been before...& before smartphones. It was on sale & it worked great. But the email said this model GPS was so old they were no longer making updates for it & I should really go out & buy a new one. Great sales pitch “We’ve made your device obsolete. Go buy a new one.” Like the Colgate toothpaste exec who was asked how to get people to buy more Colgate toothpaste said, “Make the hole in the tube bigger.” Use it up faster & buy more.

In essence the warning is...you’ll not be able to find your way like you used to. You’re going to get lost more often. You can’t trust you’re going to get where you’re going. What you’ve relied on all these years...That’s over. That sense of security... reliability...safety...Poof! Gone! In their place...confusion bewilderment perplexity disorientation puzzlement...

I don’t know about you, but I don’t need an out-of-date GPS to get to those places... I reach confused bewildered perplexed puzzled & disoriented sometimes just watching the news...reading the paper...listening to conversations around the drop-off/pick-up zone at school...I am well aware we live in a world that favours the proud & the powerful. I see all too clearly that my children are growing to adulthood in a culture that esteems the affluent & comfortable & self-satisfied. Our society is all too often about winners & losers and willingly ruthlessly relentlessly segregates whoever it determines are “the good the bad & the ugly.”

I see the stats...~50% of Aussie families live month to month financially & still they acquire/accumulate more stuff that in 6 months’ time will no longer be “it” & then will acquire/accumulate more stuff. I reach confused bewildered perplexed disoriented when I hear segments of our world say “I got mine, pull up the ladder...close the door. I’ve made it...I’m laughing. You’re on your own.” I reach those destinations in a world that celebrates & exalts feelings over truth – rejoices in chaos & disorder & then claims those (C&D) are not to be challenged – normalizes corruption & attacks Biblical morality & Biblical wisdom...You likely have your own experience of confusion bewilderment perplexity disorientation puzzlement...any number of causes to shatter your sense of security...reliability...safety...Poof! Gone!...

Age infirmity illness loss betrayal...whatever shakes your view/map of the world...u r there

BIBLES A few weeks back...we heard Jesus’ 1st public sermon:

Lk 4:16-19 “The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, for God has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, & that the time of the LORD’s favor has come.”

Jesus announced that God’s gracious rule is right here in him...that love & peace & joy & justice & restoration...all of what the Father originally intended for his creation to be are *NOW* & found only in him...“*Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.*”

Then what happens? You remember...the folks in the synagogue think he’s nuts & try to pitch him headlong off a cliff but he slips away & lives out that promise. He heals everyone who comes close. He casts out demons. He befriends the losers & dregs of society. Calls to himself a band of misfits & outsiders & appoints them as apostles/agents of the very kingdom he has demonstrated...Has some running theological argy bargy with the religious bigshots. Then when the crowds gather he does it all again...*They had come to hear him & to be healed of their diseases; & those troubled by evil spirits were healed. Everyone tried to touch him, because healing power went out from him, & he healed everyone. Lk 6:18-19 What kind of kingdom? love & peace & joy & justice & restoration...what God originally designed...put back right in him.*

Then there’s what we just heard: “*God blesses you who are poor, for the Kingdom of God is yours. God blesses you who are hungry now, for you will be satisfied. God blesses you who weep now, for in due time you will laugh. What blessings await you when people hate you & exclude you & mock you & curse you as evil because you follow the Son of Man. When that happens, be happy! Yes, leap for joy! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. Remember, their ancestors treated the ancient prophets that same way.*”

Now, on the face of it...this sounds crazy. Since when did poverty, hunger, sorrow & rejection become blessing? That’s not what Jesus just said...What Jesus said was that the healing & blessing & restoration joy peace & favour of the Father are not about the circumstances or conditions OF this life but about our relationship to him IN this life. That great scholar William Barclay wrote...These blessings aren’t a list of pious hopes of what will be. They are not glowing but vague prophecies of some future bliss. They are congratulations on what is.

They are not simply a list of people whom God blesses. (*rain falls on the just & the unjust, man born blind is not the victim of punishment for sin*) They are not a list of pious aims or vague promises for some unspecified future. They are not outlining

a moral code. They are not good advice. They are good news/'gospel'. *Makarios* – crazy hard word to translate happy, blessed, fortunate, congratulations to... That's what this is... This is 'good news': Wonderful news even. Why? How?

Because something quite momentous is happening. Jesus is outlining to his disciples that the world's values the world's GPS the world's structure of its reality (achieve, acquire, accomplish, wealth, power, success, 6-pack abs & purple hair...) have been overthrown because he has come & intervened in history. God's values/operating system/reign has invaded/broken there & then into our world. How does that play out?

So God blesses the one, happy is the person, held secure is the one who understands they are spiritually bankrupt...they've got nothing to give to God as barter or a bargaining chip for God's favour. Blessed & applauded by God is the person who gets it that with all their religiousness, their moral uprightness/uptight-ness, their fastidious niceness...God still owes them 0.

God blesses those who understand that there's nothing in them that they can give to God that'll somehow make God go, "Oh, good boy/girl! Here's your biscuit." God blesses the ones honest enough to say, 'God...I'm dying here. I can't figure this thing out.' God embraces those who see the emptiness of their lives as an obstacle to God & everyone else – who know we got nothing...When you have nothing to offer God – no prior claim/thought that God owes you...BTØ is yours. Let's keep walking this through... God blesses those who hunger/long for God's will & God's way to be accomplished & have no confidence in their own self-justification ...who have no thought that they can fix the world & the people around them. God blesses those who are hungry for forgiveness, who are hungry for intimacy with God, who are hungry for reconciliation, who are hungry for wholeness, who are hungry for the world to stop crushing the weak & forgetting the littlest.

God blesses those who are hungry for those things, because if you're hungry, you're going to go to the One who is a feast...If you're hungry for those things you are going to go to the One who described himself as the bread of life...who offered himself as the source of satisfaction for every hunger & every thirst. If you're hungry for those things then you're going to pursue Him remembering that Jesus came for sinners not for those who think they are righteous (Mt 9:13) or who are blind but think they can see (Jn 9:41) And when you pursue the One who is a feast you will be satisfied – filled – vindicated as God brings abundant life in Jesus to you.

Don't stop now... God blesses those who weep/mourn/grieve – over the reality of sin brokenness evil death in yourself & the world.- God will in fact lift every weight that burdens you every sin that trips you up every brokenness that hinders your fullness of life in relationship with God & others. I know folks who have been just crushed & you have no idea if you are ever going to laugh again. Hear me...Yes. You. Will. In "due time." Which is to say God is going to surprise you with his joy & you're gonna bust a gut not just in the age to come (when sorrow & tears & pain are no more) but here & now...In. Due. Time. The healing & blessing the suffering receive comes because they are in a situation of complete dependence upon God. In relying on God they find God to be trustworthy in his love & care...Don't forget Isaac means laughter

Finally... What blessings await when you live so out of step with the world's values & you engage in life in such a way that so reflects the life of Jesus growing in you that the world has to attack you or prove itself failing – world has to admit defeat if it doesn't try to destroy you. Because you see what follows these "blessings" is a series of "woes." "*What sorrow awaits you who are rich...self-satisfied & prosperous ...who laugh now...who are praised by the crowds...*" The woe of riches – of well-fed satisfaction – of unlimited pleasures at your disposal – of a highly regarded reputation is that they blind us to our need of God & create such a safe zone around us where we can retreat to forget the origin & purpose of our blessings...All we have is from God's hand & is intended to be used to strengthen & bless those around us.

The world tells us that only the rich, the self-satisfied/happy/popular/powerful are blessed...destination there is confusion bewilderment disorientation lost Jesus says The "true north" solid GPS coordinate to guide you through life...toward your true destination your ultimate home...You are blessed no matter what external conditions prevail in your life, because it is God, not the world, with the final word about who you really are & because the healing & blessing & favour of the Father are yours because you are the crown of his creation & object of his love & desire. You are recipient of his life that never ends...irrespective of circumstances.

You are blessed because Christ dies to the world's value system & declares it dead. You are blessed because Christ dies at the hands of the self-satisfied & well-heeled & powerful & rises to declare their bankrupt dead end....they are dead. You are blessed because the Father WHO IS LOVE loves you & chooses you as his child & in Christ floods you with his grace & life that never ends. You are blessed because in Christ the Father has chosen to give you his kingdom. You are blessed because in Christ *God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he*

chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful. God chose things despised by the world, [\[b\]](#) things counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important. As a result, no one can ever boast in the presence of God. 1 Cor 1:26-29

Let's pray with that in mind... **Father we are blessed not because of anything we have done but because of who you are. We are blessed not because of who we are but because of what Christ has done for us. Draw us deep into your love and pour out your life-giving grace through us so the world might be drawn to trust you in love for your saving goodness. We pray in Jesus' Name...Amen**