

February 13, 2022
Sixth Sunday after Epiphany

Meditation: "Woah! You mean...."



What do you see?

Do you see a young woman, or a man with a large, bulbous nose playing the saxophone?

It's amazing the tricks our vision and our minds can play on us. Sometimes we think we are seeing one thing, when actually we are looking at something else. For example, some think the government is to blame for all the challenges of the past two years, when really the government is doing its job, protecting its people, and it's the pandemic that is to blame. The problem is that you can't take your frustrations out on a virus, so some are using the government as a scapegoat.

The gospel lesson today is Luke's version of the beatitudes. We might be more familiar with Matthew's version from the sermon on the mount. But Luke doesn't have Jesus preaching on the mountaintop or mountainside. Luke has Jesus preaching on flat ground, on the plain. As I read the lesson last Sunday, I saw it a different way. "Blessed are you who..... but woe to you who..." What if, instead of pronouncing blessing or curse on people, what if God is simply making an observation? What if God is not actively blessing or cursing, but passively observing? What difference does that make? All week long I've been asking myself, 'so what?' I'm not sure I've come up with the answer, or answers.

If God is observing and not acting, then does that mean that whether we are blessed or cursed is up to us, and not up to the action of a capricious God? I'm not sure that it's up to us if we are poor or rich. We could be born into a marginalized community or into wealth. But I do think there is something there about how we live our lives, and not just what God does **to** us.

Does our state of being blessed or cursed have something to do with our condition? Blessed are the poor, but woe to the rich. This is not how we think of things when we look at rich and poor. The wealthy have every advantage – luxurious housing, plenty of food, access to the best education and health care, and I could go on – while the poor do not have those things. So why would God say the poor are blessed and the rich are to be....what's a good word here...pitied?

What is it about being poor that is different than being rich? I mean, life is not always fair or easy for anyone all the time. Disease can strike anyone. Landslides or volcanic eruption or earthquake or tornado can kill anyone, rich or poor. The rain falls on the just and the unjust alike, says the Bible. So what's the difference?

Could it be that it's because of access to resources, financial or otherwise, that the rich pick themselves up, dust themselves off, and rebuild their lives, while the poor are unable to? Could it be that the poor, lacking other resources, need God more? Maybe it's just that the rich are less aware of their need for God. Maybe they have so much they don't perceive a need for God in their lives, whereas the poor do perceive a need for God's help.

If God is simply making an observation, then what can be done about being poor or rich? Are we, the global rich, supposed to turn over all that we have to the global poor? That would simply reverse the situation. Then it would be blessed are we, and woe to them. Is it possible for us to change our society in such a way that are all blessed, and none are woeful?

Epiphany! Is that the role of God's church – to change our world so that all are blessed and none are woeful? Is that what God is looking for – a world where pain and joy, want and ease are shared?

I wonder! What do you think?