



St Matthew's Holland Park Weekly Bulletin 16th February 2025

This week's Revd. Morris'

message: **Poverty, Hunger,
Sadness and Disrespect? What Backward
Blessings!**



In today's gospel reading, Luke picks up what happens immediately after Jesus and some

followers together *ascend the mountain* and, after an all night prayer vigil, Jesus chooses the 12 Disciples. What a high point! *But then they return to the 'Plain' or 'Level place'*. St Matthew records a similar sermon to today's gospel reading that takes place on a Mountain, thus indicating that Jesus is like another Moses bringing down from God His new 'laws'; turning upside down our human ways in order to 'do our bit' to bring the Kingdom of God into being here on earth.[See Matthew 5-7]. *However, Luke has us come down from our mountain top Spiritual Experience and then stand with Him on the 'plain'*.

'Plains' or 'Level Places' in the Old Testament often were literally God-less places to be shunned ...not merely places of day to day drudgery and toil, but, rather places of corpses, disgrace, idolatry, suffering, misery, hunger, annihilation and mourning (e.g. see Jeremiah 9:22; 14:18; 30:4; Daniel 3:1; Joel 1:10, 20; 2: 22; 3:19; Habakkuk 3:17; Zechariah 12:11). At the same time, the Old Testament Prophets foresaw God renewing these 'Level Places' in His own good time when dispensing the *Blessing of Israel*. The Glory of God (salvation) would at last be revealed even in these despised 'Level Places' (see Isaiah 40:4 ; Ezekiel 3:22, 23). So, while standing in our broken level world, Luke has Jesus fulfilling these Old Testament prophecies as He instructs us in His ways of how we are to live in the present and promises His ultimate coming in Glory to make all things right.

Note the *tension* when Jesus speaks of the Kingdom of God. We can experience a foretaste of the Kingdom *here and now* - if we voluntarily submit to God, His rule and make Him of most worth in our lives. We are bidden to 'partner' with Jesus, bringing more of the Kingdom into our here and now as we rely upon His Grace and strength to listen and obey His callings to us as we go along the path of our lives that He lays before us. Yet, the Kingdom is also in a very real sense *yet to come in its fullness*. This will only occur upon Jesus's Second coming as He appears in our midst and makes all things as they should be.

Luke introduces in his version of the Jesus' Beatitudes, and His sermon that follows, in the context of the day to day challenges and dry and difficult parts of our lives - *our 'level places'* if you will. Jesus is here literally instructing His new Disciples and followers as *to how to live their lives* during our times that fall between His First and Second Comings. Jesus stresses how difficult this style of life will be and how different and counter cultural His life is by comparison to that of our usual ways. *Great, so we can expect to be hated, excluded, insulted and defamed! What sort of a blessing is that?*

Yet, the path of the Beatitudes is the only way for us to experience the paradox of Jesus' plan for our own personal transformation. He teaches that it is only by denying ourselves, our own egos and striving to become more like Him that by His Grace we paradoxically become more of our own True Selves, the persons we were meant to be and become.



Well, what does this all mean for us today?

I wonder where you may be with God and with yourself today? On the mountaintop? On a 'Level Place' at the moment? Or somewhere else?

Wherever you do find yourself today, in this gospel reading God promises to come to you if only you are open to him and seeking Him - despite your

circumstances - whether suffering from poverty, unsatisfied hunger, sadness, diminished social standing and disrespectful treatment by others.

But what words of warning are here for us also! What woes await us if we use our wealth to satisfy our own desires and not for His purposes; if we slake our thirst and hunger and seek our Joy from things that are not of God. If we follow this path, *we cut ourselves off from fellowship with God and our Truer Selves* and become more and more a 'False self'. The Self or 'mask' that we construct, pretend to be and can often present to the world - driven by our fears and sense of inadequacies to seek ego satisfaction in pride, self promotion, self satisfaction and righteousness.

In the Beatitudes, Jesus calls us to take another path - towards His Kingdom and our Truer self. He promises that, ***no matter how hard this path may be. it is the only Way to Blessings and Joys that last and are truly satisfying.*** Gospel reading: Luke

6:17-26. Some resources to dig deeper: <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/sixth-sunday-after-epiphany-3/commentary-on-luke-617-26>

Upcoming Parish Activities: Midweek service Wednesday 10:30 am **and Meditation Group 5pm; [NB Change of time] OpShop** Thursday 9am - Noon;
Today's Notices Highlights: Video Training available; **AGM #2 and PC after today's service; Diary Dates:** Liturgy Committee meeting - 23/2/25 after service; Ash Wednesday 5/3/25 ; World Day Of Prayer 7/3/25; Church working bee - 15/3/25 8 am; **Lenten Bible Studies:** Wednesday night at Heathers @ 7 pm starting Ash Wednesday ; Friday Morning at 10 am starting 14th March; Thursday evening by Zoom starting 6th March **Behind the scenes thx:** Our Gardiner John :) **Readings for Next Sunday: Randal:** Genesis 45:3-15; Psalm 37:1-11, 40+41; **Judith:** 1 Corinthians 15:35-50; Luke 6:27-38.

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Parish Private Facebook site : <https://www.facebook.com/groups/292308270851142> ; **Public**

Site: <https://www.facebook.com/StMatthewsHollandPark> ; **Tipper's Treasure's Facebook site:**

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61559040358754>

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY:

We acknowledge and pay respect to the Turrbal and Jagera Peoples, the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we gather today. We acknowledge their continued spiritual connection to country and surrounding land, sky and water. We pay our respect to their Elders, past present and emerging and pray that we may continue to learn from and nurture one another in the spirit of Reconciliation.