

"The Story Continues"
"An Upside Down World of Blessings!"
Micah 6: 1-8, Matthew 5: 1-12
January 29, 2017

Before/After Micah reading:

The closing of this reading contains words familiar to many of us....the answer to the question "What does the Lord require of us?"

The lead up to this answer is sort of a back and forth between the people and God with Micah's voice as well...an on-going controversy...or frustration....the people are struggling to know what God wants of them and God is frustrated they don't get it.

In a very real way, Micah's voice is the voice of new wisdom as a non-anxious presence...the storyteller's/narrator's voice. So, God simply answers their question. Listen.

Before Matthew:

A large crowd had gathered as he began to teach them. Holy imagine you are there on the hillside, a part of that crowd desperately needing to hear some good news.

They lived under the auspices of an oppressive regime...you know oppressive. You hear Jesus say there is something else in this world of power games and violence and grief; something that matters, something scared, something good.

Even though he speaks to the whole crowd, each word seems to open another closed place in your soul.

Jesus knows all the situations and choices and feelings we each have. I don't know how, but He does.

He doesn't just hope those who mourn will be comforted, he knows it.

When He finishes speaking, his words still hang in the air, and they carry me/you home in a cloud of comfort, washing us with the rain/reign of something new---hope.

Freed to act in new, brave ways through the holiness of our state of being when we do!

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The Star shines wonder and wisdom as it continues the journey across the skies, now with us...for we are indeed the Wise Ones.

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The storyteller's perspective.

It sees, even when talking about the self, what might otherwise not be seen. More objective that we often find ourselves being in the midst of things.

Pulling back to get a different perspective is a storyteller's tool...but importantly also a spiritual practice as well as a practical life skill.

Detachment from outcomes, not from emotion, is part of Ignatian Spirituality and involves that ability to pull back, out of the drama,

and see the moment in ways that make it possible to be present to your own life differently.

To let go of outcomes and be in the moment...[on this page!](#)

Each day a life. Your whole life each day.

Each day....be a non-anxious presence to your own life!

The storyteller's perspective! Going to print with it!

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If he spoke today, to a crowd on a hill...in a church, around a table, at a meeting, in a classroom...perhaps he would say it like this....

When you come to the end of your rope,

when you realize you can't do everything you want to do or be everything you think you should be/could be,

when you face your choices/your sins/brokenness/oppression and know you need help to do something about it

...it is still possible to live the blessed life, the life of righteousness in harmony with God. It is easier than you think and some of you are already doing it.

Welcome to the topsy-turvy world of the kingdom of God, where many of the traditional markers we associate with a blessed and happy life are turned upside down. The blessings seem to be upside down!

Success, knowledge, security, self-confidence, acceptance give way to humility, hunger, grief, and persecution. It seems these are the real blessing of life. Upside down!

At first read, one might wonder:  
Does God want us to be meek and poor in spirit?  
Does our suffering please God?

We may wonder: How can Jesus actually say, "Happy are those who mourn"? Is this what the Lord requires?

Well...what does it mean to be a successful, blessed human being? Your thoughts?

We live in a consumerist culture which assaults us daily with the message that we are just one new car or ten pounds or one report card or one all-expense paid trip to Tahiti away from true happiness.

We may pay lip service on Sunday to the idea of being meek, poor in spirit, or pure of heart, but come Monday when we are back in the office, on the road, or in the classroom,

we know we will not be rewarded and valued for our humble devotion to justice and fairness, but for what we accomplish, discover, produce.

Many of us have succumbed to the gospel of progress...  
rather than the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We have this sense that if we try harder, work faster, or spend more money (or less money),

we will finally find the happiness we have been promised. And, the more we chase after happiness, the faster it eludes us.

We live in a culture that worships academic/business knowledge and achievement.

And, amazingly, the satisfaction we feel when we achieve a long-awaited goal is quickly diminished and replaced by the desire/pressure to accomplish again and more....  
and we set out for the next goal.

We didn't hear God say at our baptisms....in you I am delighted...no reason to seek to please me by being more than you are.

I think what Jesus is trying to say is happiness/wholeness is not something we will one day find, somewhere out there.... if we just look hard enough, try hard enough, be good enough.

A state of blessedness is not something we will achieve if we just work longer or harder....trying to get it right...or look as if we've got it all "right".

Happiness/wholeness isn't hidden somewhere out in the world, but rather somewhere deep in our heart.

Blessed is something we simply are by virtue of the fact we are human beings alive!

Whether we are rich or poor, rejoicing or mourning, hungry or filled to the brim with things to share....

whether we have our usual Mardi Gras or have 10 people in worship or a thousand, give all we can or hardly give at all....whether our kids do their homework or not, the bills are mounting or not, your boss is demanding or not, you are criticized or not, abused or not, helped or not, a success or not.....

**You are a child of God...and as God's children, whether we realize it or not, we are blessed!**

**But if you realize it....it will set you free!**

Free....not to do what you want...

that's not what freedom means. Free....

As a child of God, no matter what the day looks like, life feels like, the world seems like...

you are blessed with the inner wisdom manifest in that storyteller's presence to see things in a broader perspective and on a longer time line, energized to be....

free to **do** what you are called to **be**...

**You are free to DO justice. How can we do justice?**

**You are free to LOVE kindness. What might it mean to love kindness.**

**And you are free to WALK HUMBLY with your God!**

**Where would you invite God to walk beside you?**

**Where is God inviting you to go with?**

With the Master Story of our faith to guide us,  
let us celebrate our God who offers a new way to live,  
a new perspective...  
the storyteller's perspective...  
to guide us in wonder and wisdom.

So all of us Lack-Nothing Lives!

Let us tell ourselves a new story and let's help each other live this newness side by side!

Star of Wonder, Star of Wisdom shines upon us!