

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

February 2, 2020

Old Testament Reading; Micah 6: 1-8

Responsive Reading; Psalm 15

Epistle Reading; 1 Corinthians 1: 18-31

Gospel Reading; Matthew 5: 1-12

Sermon Title: WHO MAY DWELL IN YOUR HOLY HILL

By Rev. Jim Gardner

Summary: Nothing has changed. The truth is still the truth. God's truth is truth and our truth will be truth when we scrap man's "wisdom" and accept God's truth.

I have a friend at The Manor House that had to give up his driver's license. So, Monday through Friday I take him to Mass first thing. He gets a ride back to the Manor and I have breakfast with him. Friday when he came back, he reported on Mass and the beatitude that said, blessed are the poor. He then responded, "can't God say, blessed are the rich?" This guy is often opening conversations with, "I'm waiting for my ship to come in." or "Why can't I have the gold of Solomon?"

I believe he does this to start a dialog and with me to see if he can get me going. It usually works. The crazy thing about

Charlie is that he has a beautiful baritone voice and sings in four churches. He believes that this is his gift from God to be shared with all who will listen. For the last twenty years he goes to Wal Mart every Monday morning and buys 12 to 18 long stem flowers and gives them to the nursing home chaplain to be given to those patients that need a special pick me up. Charlie is as upside down as the beatitudes seem to be. For Charlie it is, "Do as I do and not as I say."

In the Bible Commentary I often use in preparing my sermons the author quotes A.W. Tozer as saying, "A fairly accurate description of the human race might be furnished one unacquainted with it by taking the Beatitudes, turning them wrong side out, and saying, 'Here is your human race'".

As much as I like the New King James Version, sometimes for clarity I like to use another translation for a cross-reference.

At this time, I would like to introduce you to our scripture lesson as given in the translation called The Message.

Matthew 5: 1-12

When Jesus saw his ministry drawing huge crowds, he climbed a hillside. Those who were apprenticed to him, the committed, climbed with him. Arriving at a quiet place, he sat down and taught his climbing companions. This is what he said:

“You’re blessed when you’re at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule.

“You’re blessed when you feel you’ve lost what is most dear to you. Only then can you be embraced by the One most dear to you.

“You’re blessed when you’re content with just who you are—no more, no less. That’s the moment you find yourselves proud owners of everything that can’t be bought.

“You’re blessed when you’ve worked up a good appetite for God. He’s food and drink in the best meal you’ll ever eat.

“You’re blessed when you care. At the moment of being ‘care-full,’ you find yourselves cared for.

“You’re blessed when you get your inside world-your mind and heart-put right. Then you can see God in the outside world.

“You’re blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That’s when you discover who you really are, and your place in God’s family.

“You’re blessed when your commitment to God provokes persecution. The persecution drives you even deeper into God’s kingdom.

“Not only that--count yourselves blessed every time people put you down or throw you out or speak lies about you to discredit

me. What it means is that the truth is too close for comfort and they are uncomfortable. You can be glad when that happens-give a cheer, even! -for though they don't like it, I do! And all heaven applauds. And Know that you are in good company. My prophets and witnesses have always gotten into this kind of trouble.

I believe that this passage is where Paul is coming from in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians.

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written:” I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.”

Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

What are riches? Wanda and I used to say that we were the richest people in the world. The only thing that we did not have was money.

Those of you who have had the privilege of a long rich marriage, do you remember what it was like when you first grew into love with your spouse?

Do you remember the passion? It was not just physical but it was wanting to be part of someone else's world for ever and

have them as part of your world forever. Do you remember how rich it made you feel when your life became intertwined with your spouse and with your children?

Do you remember how you could not imagine how you could have been happy before that union began?

That is the riches that Jesus is describing in the beatitudes. When you become passionately in love with God as God is passionately in love with you, you become the richest person in the world.

Every parent would die for their children. When you become so in love with God that you would die for him, as He died for you, you become connected to God at the heart.

Our gold of Solomon is God, and our ship coming in is Jesus coming into our hearts.

The line, "Good guys finish last", is a total lie. Good people who are married to Jesus will always come in first and mean people who do not know Jesus will always finish last.

So, I say to you as Paul said to his followers, "He who glories, let him glory in the Lord. Hallelujah and Amen!"