

Sermon for 16 February 2025 @ Bethesda UMC/Baltimore

Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany

Scriptures: Jeremiah 17:5-10; Psalter, page 738 (Response 2) Psalm 1 ; 1 Corinthians 15:12-20 ;
Luke 6:17-26

Sermon

We've come a long way describing Jesus the human and his career. We have a few Sundays left before Lent, and the folks who selected the readings in our three-year Lectionary cycle felt free once they launched Jesus as a full-grown spiritual leader felt free to range throughout the Bible to describe more of his character and career.

So today we continue on the Hebrew Bible's themes of hope and experience, with the first reading again quoting one of the most frank and powerful prophets. We read Jeremiah, and in powerful poetry hear what seems our time as well as his.

Then the first Psalm lays it out bluntly: If you cooperate, there's plenty to do that's useful and, while not painless, full of promise.

After that, we hear more of Paul's straight talk to his very diverse Corinthian congregation: part Jewish converts, lots of other backgrounded new believers, full of questions and not easily agreeing. Today he lays out his absolute confidence in, and insistence up the basic fact-about-Jesus-and-all-his followers, the belief in being raised from the dead.

That's where I land for today. What do you make of this? I'm not asking for physical evidence, or citing of scripture. Paul says his members don't agree, even though he's totally sold on this. I'm asking us to discuss this now. If we hold back, if it's all quiet, so be it. If it helps you, if it comes at you different ways at different seasons, let that be accepted among us. I quoted this passage for a prayer group I led last Tuesday, and we found it beautiful, honest, not cut-and-dried, but part of our life together. What about you?

(Pause for discussion and/or consideration).

Now let us hear Luke quote Jesus' clear insistence that those who have it easy now will suffer later, and those who are poor, weak, troubled now will be comforted and filled. Give me your sense of that in your life.

Let us pray: Lord, continue opening the doors of our hearts and our minds to more wisdom, even as you confront us with lots of uncertainty, plenty of pain, and great continuing power to pray. We are your trainees. Thank you for our blessings. Increase our wisdom. Love our loved ones. Show us the way of life.

Amen.