

“Blest Are They”

February 17, 2019 - Sixth Sunday After the Epiphany

“Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven.” - Luke 6:23a

This Sunday’s Gospel text contains a shortened version of the Beatitudes, some of the most beloved and oft quoted verses of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. Generally associated with funerals and memorial services, these statements put forth an example of faithful living, and grant assurance to Christ’s followers. Unique to Luke’s Gospel, the four statements of hope are followed by four warnings, which mirror the blessings. The fourth statement on enduring the rejections and insults of others seems especially poignant for those of us who occasionally encounter difficult people in the church.

For the Beatitudes to be counted among the most popular portions of Scripture, they seem to also be one of the most difficult for which to select corresponding music in worship. A quick search on Hymnary.org produces many obscure results from out-of-print hymnals, including a very interesting one by Isaac Watts. However, only one well-known song from our modern day repertoire rises to the top of the list. This song, “Blest Are They,” is a gift to us from David Haas, a prolific composer of post Vatican II liturgical music. His hymn breaks apart the longer version of the Beatitudes from Matthew’s Gospel and ties them all together with the refrain, “Rejoice and be glad! Yours is the Kingdom of God!”

During those moments when it is easy for us to become discouraged in our work, let us rejoice in the fact that our God is faithful, and that we are blessed with an eternal promise.

Prayer: God of blessings, grant us laughter when we feel poor in spirit and are hungry for love. Comfort us when we weep for our hurting world and when we experience that hurt first-hand through the actions of others. Help us to rejoice in the knowledge that the Kingdom is ours, and that we will be filled with all goodness and joy. Amen.