



Introduction

Blessings and curses abound on the sixth Sunday after Epiphany. We would do well to listen closely to whom the “blessed are” and the “woe to” are directed and to find our place in the crowd among those who desire to touch Jesus. The risen Christ stands among us with an invitation to live in him, and offers power to heal us all.

Confession and Forgiveness

In the name of the Father, and of the ✚ Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

God of all mercy and consolation, come to the help of your people,
turning us from our sin to live for you alone.

Give us the power of your Holy Spirit that we may confess our sin,
receive your forgiveness, and grow into the fullness
of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Most merciful God,

we confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves.

**We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done and by what we have left undone.**

We have not loved you with our whole heart;

we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.

For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us.

Forgive us, renew us, and lead us,

so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways,

to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

God, who is rich in mercy, loved us even when we were dead in sin,
and made us alive together with Christ. By grace we have been saved.

In the name of ✚ Jesus Christ, our sins are forgiven.

Almighty God strengthen us with power through the Holy Spirit,
that Christ may live in our hearts through faith. **Amen.**

Opening Hymn ELW #705 / LBW # 415

God of Grace and God of Glory

Listen and sing along [here](#).

Prayer of the Day

Living God, in Christ you make all things new. Transform the poverty of our nature by the riches of your grace, and in the renewal of our lives make known your glory, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

First Reading: Jeremiah 17:5-10

These verses compose a poem that is part of a larger collection of wisdom sayings that contrast two ways of life. Life with God brings blessing; the power and vitality of God is active in our life. Life without God brings a curse, the power of death.

Read the complete text [here](#).

Psalm: Psalm 1

¹Happy are they who have not walked in the counsel of the wicked,
nor lingered in the way of sinners, nor sat in the seats of the scornful!

²**Their delight is in the law of the LORD,
and they meditate on God's teaching day and night.**

³They are like trees planted by streams of water,
bearing fruit in due season, with leaves that do not wither;
everything they do shall prosper.

⁴**It is not so with the wicked;
they are like chaff which the wind blows away.**

⁵Therefore the wicked shall not stand upright when judgment comes,
nor the sinner in the council of the righteous.

⁶**For the LORD knows the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked shall be destroyed.**

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:12-20

For Paul, the resurrection of Christ is the basis for Christian hope. Because Christ has been raised, those who are in Christ know that they too will be raised to a new life beyond death.

Read the complete text [here](#).

Gospel: Luke 6:17-26

After choosing his twelve apostles, Jesus teaches a crowd of followers about the nature and demands of discipleship. He begins his great sermon with surprising statements about who is truly blessed in the eyes of God.

Read the complete text [here](#).

Reflection on the Text

How is your heart? Tomorrow is Valentine's Day and we always seemed to be concerned about the heart – to whom have you given your heart? Has Cupid shot an arrow into your heart so that you will find your true love? Does your true love even know you exists? Tomorrow is the day to find out, or so they say.

But our texts today are about more than our love life. To whom have you really given your heart? To the LORD? Or to someone or something else? We choose – each and every day – to whom or what do we pledge ourselves. Is it to being a better person? To being more productive? To becoming rich or powerful? What is most important to you?

In our text from Jeremiah, we hear these words,
“Cursed are those who trust in mere mortals
and make mere flesh their strength,
whose hearts turn away from the LORD.”

Our hearts, those things that we love, those things that we put our effort into – what are they? Are they of the flesh? Something that we were told was a good thing to do because it would make our lives better in some way? Why do we put our lives, our trust, our hearts, into these things?

Jeremiah tells us that to trust in mere mortals is not a good thing. Trusting in mere mortals makes our hearts turn away from God. How we invest our lives, and our fortunes makes a difference – to us, to our families, and to those around us.

We then hear from Jeremiah,
“⁷Blessed are those who trust in the LORD,
whose trust is the LORD.”

Trusting in the LORD is very different than trusting in mortals. Trusting in the LORD means that we do things differently. We do them not just for ourselves, but also for others. We do things not to gain wealth or recognition, but we do them so that what we do benefits others – maybe even more that it benefits ourselves.

Where is your trust? Where is your heart? How do you make decisions about your life? So that your actions benefit yourself? Or others?

Jesus gets more to this in his list of blessings and woes in our Gospel text from Luke. Those who want instant gratification get it, but at what cost and to whose benefit? Those who work for the LORD, whose actions are for others, who do what they do not for instant gratification or for the glory of themselves will also be rewarded, but not in the same way.

We might be more familiar with Matthew's words, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also (Matt 6:21)."

Putting our trust in the LORD, giving our heart to the LORD, means putting our treasure there as well – our time, our talent, and our money.

I have told the story before about a former co-worker who told me all about this elaborate plan he had to make lots of money – through hard work and investments – so that he could retire early and then work in the church to help people. My question for him then, and my question now – is simply this: Working to help others after you are wealthy is fine, but what about all the people who are hungry now? What about all the people who are in need now?

Where is your heart? Is your trust in the LORD? If you trust in the LORD, and put your heart, your treasure, your life to work for the Kingdom of God, then you are assured that when the LORD tests your heart and your mind that it will not be found wanting. As Jesus tells us in Luke's gospel, you will "²³Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven". Thanks be to God. Amen.

Hymn of the Day ELW # 769/ LBW # 453

If You but Trust in God to Guide You

Listen and sing along [here](#).

Apostles' Creed

We profess our faith with the whole church in all times and places:

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession

The Spirit of the Lord is poured out upon us in abundance; so we are bold to pray for the church, the world, and all that God has made.

A brief silence.

Blessed are those whose trust is in you. Strengthen the faith of those who profess your name and bring reassurance to those who doubt or fear. Through your church speak continued blessing into the world. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Those who trust in you are like trees planted by streams of water. Bless fruit trees with an abundant harvest. Protect rainforests from destruction. Restore land that has eroded after deforestation. Resurrect woodlands after forest fires. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Search the hearts of those who govern, that they lead with humility. Inspire leaders to collaborate on policies that protect people and the planet. Sustain truth-tellers and social movements that challenge society to become more honest and just. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Send your blessings of mercy upon those who long for consolation. Tend to those struggling with poverty, unemployment, or uncertainty. Provide for all who are hungry. Console those who face persecution. Grant peace to all who suffer, especially those we name now. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Renew this congregation in our shared mission. As we plan and dream for the future you are preparing, inspire us by the examples of Martin Luther and all the reformers. Bless new projects and new ministry partnerships. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Christ is raised from the dead, and so we cling to the hope of the resurrection. We praise you for the lives of the saints who lived and died in the hope of eternal life with you. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Since we have such great hope in your promises, O God, we lift these and all of our prayers to you in confidence and faith; through Jesus Christ our Savior. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come,
thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Closing Hymn ELW # 729/ LBW # 433 *The Church of Christ, in Every Age*
Listen and sing along [here](#).

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Today's reflection was written by Pastor Ray Sipe.