

Cursed is the one who trusts in human beings, who seeks his strength in flesh, whose heart turns away from the Lord.

Although these are ancient words spoken by the prophet Jeremiah, they are by no means outdated. St. Augustine refers to the words of Sacred Scripture and the presence of Christ in them as “beauty ever ancient, ever new”ⁱ. They, like Our Blessed Lord, are eternal; *the same yesterday, today and forever*. The Eternal Word of God contain unchangeable truths because God is immutable—God can’t change. And why should he? He is perfect!! But humanity changes, and the problem is we want God to change with us.

This is the tension between God and man today, was then, and probably will be until the end of time; our natural desire and conception of living freely and happily versus God’s plan laid out in Sacred Scripture, in the person of Jesus Christ and His Church. Readings like today’s can be disturbing, antagonizing, and even threatening.

Cursed threatens Jeremiah; *pitiable* declares St. Paul if we *hope for Christ only in this life*; *woe* warns Our Blessed Lord! Sad and sorrowful will be the rich, the comfortable and revered of the world. We might ask “where’s the love”? It is here, but we don’t, or won’t see it, because man too often sees with his eyes and his belly and not his heart.

Place yourself in this beautiful scene, as Our Blessed Lord gives His blueprint for Discipleship. He humbly delivers the Sermon by “raising his eyes toward you. St. Ambrose wrote that he lifted his eyes “to disclose a more hidden light”; a light from heaven to a world living in darkness. No different today.

Jesus reveals a new divine reality; a new existence undetectable to our human senses; a completely new image of man and the world, turning everything upside down. Beatitude is a consciousness that tears down all that the world calls great in order to build something so much greaterⁱⁱ-the Kingdom of God.

This new Kingdom is given to the poor, hungry, those hated because of their belief in Him; to those who love their enemies, who love those who mistreat them, those who are willing to give the clothes off their backs to those who have none; to those who are merciful. And not the worldly rich and powerful.

It isn’t given to the poor simply because of poverty, or closed to the rich because of wealth. Poverty and wealth can impel man to steal, to covet, to break any commandment. But the rich man may recognize his wealth is a gift from God and in

gratitude is generous to the poor, and the temporal needs of the Church. The poor man may live in complete reliance on God and the generosity of his neighbor as the other side of the same gift.

When we encounter the homeless who do we see? A dirty, disheveled, lost creature of the world? Or a child of God, a brother or sister in Christ who is begging us for God's love and mercy? Yes, God's love and mercy through us! For their dignity, do we at least talk with them and ask their name?

What drives our desire for money? To meet our living needs or wealth to acquire earthly treasure to make us happier and more comfortable? And if we get more, are the first fruits returned to the Kingdom of God, regardless of whether or not there is a tax deduction? Do we envy and covet the rich, famous and powerful for the worldly kingdom they rule and desire a part of it?

How are we dealing with people who give us a hard time, who really don't like us and let us know it? Are we anxious to exact revenge? As hard as it is, and I assure you I am preaching to myself, do we absorb the blows out of sincere mercy, and bless them with prayers and sacrifices? Some of our Bishops and Cardinals are giving us a lot of heartburn these days. What response comes from our lips, hearts or fingers on the keyboard?

Blessedness, far, far greater than happiness, is bestowed on those who love God and neighbor, whose hearts are pure so that they can see God and receive his love in order to give it to those who are in most need of itⁱⁱⁱ. This is the divine life, the life that comes only from heaven and leads us to heaven. It is called Beatitude, and is the very heart of Jesus preaching and life. It must be ours then too.

Our struggle is to extricate ourselves from the whole worldly vortex of defense and aggression, of misguided rights and possession of wealth, power, and satisfying the desires of our eyes rather than the longing in our hearts. This is the life of the worldly man, not saintly disciple. This is the world's way, not God's. And succumbing to it will ruin us.

"In the evening of this life we will be judged on love alone"^{iv} writes St. John of the Cross. How can we be rewarded with Eternal Beatitude at the end of our life if we are not striving to live it today? Is it hard? Absolutely! Especially with the world bombarding and seducing us into the lie of self-satisfaction!

God, contrary to popular heresy is not a harsh taskmaster demanding something from us beyond our ability. He has divinely infused the Beatitudes into our hearts in order to lead us to himself, who alone can satisfy us. And he has sent us His Son to redeem us, and show us as St. Paul writes, *a more excellent way*.

The truth of the Incarnation; that God became man so that man might become like God; that God loved man so that man might love God and neighbor forever changed human nature and the world. And because of it all religions are not the same. The world is wrong again! Only through Christ, with Christ and in Christ do we participate in the divine life here on earth, and rewarded with the crown of glory in the next.

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ⁱ *Confessions*, St. Augustine of Hippo

ⁱⁱ *The Lord*, Romano Guardini

ⁱⁱⁱⁱ *Ibid.*

^{iv} *An Exorcist Explains the Demonic*, Fr. Gabriele Amorth