

## Jesus' Reality Check

E6-19, Feb. 17, 2019  
Lk 6:17-26

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Good news to the poor.  
Release to captives.  
Liberty to oppressed.  
Rebuking demons.  
Casting out fevers.  
Healing diseases.  
Boats of fish.  
Food for villages.  
Cleansing lepers.  
Paralytics walking.  
Welcoming sinners.  
Calming spirits.

What's *not* to like?

What's *not* to like about Jesus?

All this happening, so you understand why "a great crowd of his disciples  
and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon"  
had come to hear Jesus.

What's *not* to like about Jesus?

*This* is how to gather a great multitude from Minneapolis, St. Paul, and surrounding suburbs.

This is *how* to add to the number following Jesus,  
how to increase this church and bless this neighborhood.

Want to add to our membership?

*This* is how.

*Good news to the poor that opens doors to prosper in America.*

*Liberty and fair chances for those fighting to climb the economic ladder.*

*Release to captives through reform of our criminal justice system.*

*Rebuking institutional racism and facing our own white privilege.*

*Healing and health care for all, regardless of ability to pay, a basic human right.*

*Baseline security so that no one need go hungry in this richest nation in history.*

*Safe place to be one's self.*

*Affordable housing and accountable landlords.*

*Church that makes a difference, that brings real solutions to life problems.*

*Moving past giving-to and doing-for, to actually joining-with and confronting-at.*

You want the multitudes that Jesus had?

Make a difference in peoples' lives.

Address the real injustices our neighbors know.

Shake the notion of bringing people in to be like us

and do as *Jesus* did, go to where people are and join *their* struggles.

Take on one righteous, just cause all out

that will change unfair circumstances,

change skewed economics and unequal politics,

that will improve the people of this neighborhood,

and you will have *multitudes* ready to join this kingdom Jesus brings.

Then, in this reading from The Gospel According to Luke,

Jesus lets us know what to expect when we do this.

In this Sunday's reading, Jesus lays out clearly how this plays out.

It will not be all feel-good, Sunday uplift.

Others will put on a good show Sunday mornings.

Others will entertain, make you feel good about the status quo.

Others will tell you you are OK just the way you are and nothing has to change.

But Jesus will not.

The kingdom of God will not tolerate the status quo that keeps people impoverished.  
Real church makes real difference and real change.

Some around us are poor,

don't have what it takes to make it in this world.

Some here struggle to hold it together as one disaster after another strikes.

Some here wonder why life has to be so hard.

Be assured, it is precisely for you that God's kingdom comes.

Be assured, you are closer to God than you think.

For all the blows life lays,

you have the kingdom, the community of Christ with you.

Some here are hungry,

there is not enough paycheck to get through the month,

there is not enough time in the day to care for family well,

there is not enough energy to make it through the day.

This church, Lake Nokomis Lutheran Church, is here for you.

We care.

Each of us will go out of our way, will set aside our small preferences  
to make sure you get through.

*Do you all hear?*

We will take care of each other,

even if it means we don't always get our own way.

Blessed are you who weep,

both for the tragedies that have come your way,

but also for those weeping for this wayward world.

Blessed are you

who weep for children abused and neglected,

who weep for hate, incited violence, rage, unfettered slander, lies,

who weep for the rape of nature, poisoning of air and ocean,

squandering resources belonging to future generations.

Blessed are you who weep now because you will one day laugh with delight

as we humans come to our senses

and achieve a sustainable, healthy society and natural environment.

But it all comes at cost.

People will hate you, exclude you, revile you, defame you

as you strive to carry out the ways of Jesus.

Expect it.

Sin has so skewed society that those privileged don't want to lose their advantage.

Satan has so smoked our sight that we like the disparities and injustices

that keep us comfortable at the expense of those down the street struggling.

Entrenched powers will not like real changes called on by Jesus.

Expect it.

And rejoice that even as resistance and challenge and sown-doubt piles upon

we are assured that we make a difference,

that we unveil God's kingdom,

that we carry forth the redemption and reclaiming Jesus began.

Lake Nokomis Lutheran Church,

you people, and the people in the pew next to you,

have tremendous leverage, tremendous resources, tremendous opportunity

to be a force for real change in real ways in this corner of Minneapolis.

You already have a strong ministry of nurturing faith,

of raising children as a village of this congregation,

of nurturing faith from infancy into twilight years of life.

Lake Nokomis Lutheran Church is a place of welcome, of extreme hospitality and place.  
 Hennepin Middle School, the charter school in this place,  
     is an example of your hospitality and place,  
     a safe place for children to learn,  
     a beautiful place that honors and cheers the children,  
     a good place that welcomes children from all faith traditions and ethnicities.  
 Hennepin Middle School is a blessing and extension of your welcome.

Passion for our natural world and insistence that we live within our creation space  
     in caring for this world as God directed in Genesis 1,  
 is a hallmark of this congregation.

Reducing waste, recycling, composting, fuel efficiency,  
     are ways we honor God's gift of nature,  
     and ways we live out our God-given duty of stewards of creation.

Food ministries, food shelf, food donations provide for those needing immediate help.  
     We are in this world together and when one of our neighbors goes hungry,  
     we all are less as a community.

In the next couple of months we will have conversations  
     about where God is leading this congregation next.

During Lent, Sunday morning education hour,  
     we will explore how the Bible describes what it means to be church  
     how Lake Nokomis Lutheran Church is bigger than our membership,  
     what it means to be a "holy, catholic, apostolic church."

Later this spring as a congregation we will discuss and discern  
     what God is asking of this congregation in the coming years,  
     what is our core calling as a congregation,  
     and what skills you need in a future leader.

A safe Sunday space for like-minded Lutherans will no longer work.  
 God, our Lord and Creator,  
     has put churches across America on notice,  
     that taking care of our own and keeping things nice and pleasant for ourselves  
     is not enough.

God has put churches on notice  
     that we are to step out of comfort zones, take risks and make changes,  
     because change is what redemption really is.

The "woes" at the end of the gospel reading  
     are not judgments on the rich, satisfied, smug.

The "woes" are expressions of regret, of sorrow.

*And so, woe to you who settle for the way things are  
     for this is all you get.*

*Woe to you who feel satisfied and want to keep things the same  
     for this is not enough,  
     this is not what pleases God,  
     this is not what brings lasting joy and peace.*

God's kingdom is now come.

Lake Nokomis Lutheran Church is witness to the way God wants things done.

This church, you people  
     are called to be a blessing to this neighborhood,  
     to your families, each others' families,  
     and especially to those who have yet to know the love of Jesus.

And this church has the people, the values, the potential, the opportunities to bless well.  
 Amen.