

Good dark EST mild Fall morning from a hill in Rockport....

“You have power over your mind, not outside events. Realize this and you will find strength.” I can’t recall if I’ve reflected on this quote recently, but it feels particularly helpful at the moment.... These words of Marcus Aurelius, Roman emperor from 161 to 180 and a Stoic philosopher, are as relevant for us today as they were in the second century, that’s approximately 140 plus years after Jesus’ living and dying. Yes, we can all vote on Tuesday coming up, but the outcome of that voting will not be to the liking of half or more of us in our country. We are divided. Many of us are very angry. Most of us have a hard time understanding anything at all about those with whom we disagree and surely will vote against this coming Tuesday. How to cope with it all, get through it without despair, and live with the election results regardless of their outcome is our task....

I try hard not to “discuss politics” in my meditations and in my sermons.... as I respect each person’s right and privilege in our democracy to come to their own conclusions about many things, politics being one of them.... But this week is different because of the stress, uncertainty and high emotion we are feeling on all sides.

Can we hold onto Aurelius’ words, “You have power over your mind, not outside events. Realize this and you will find strength.” Can we find some internal fortitude to strengthen our resolve as we go forward, however the coming months and years play out? Can we find some internal peace in the midst of so much external chaos? Can we hold onto our faith as those who proclaim faith is “on their side” cause us to want to cover our ears and shield our eyes? Can we believe in the blessings of our text for today – Luke 6:20-31 – and go forward, strengthened and assured that, indeed, what goes around does come around?

I pray that is so..... Join me for worship this morning, if you can, and stay afterward to have a brainstorming session about how we can serve our community in even more ways than we already do, and invite those who would care to join us into the Federated family of followers of Jesus.... Oh, and there’s homemade soup to follow our brainstorming!

Blessings to each one this balmy Fall morning..... Susan

p.s. I will attempt to send out my sermon via Facebook this afternoon, but it may be tomorrow before I can accomplish that posting. Two Sundays ago, I couldn’t seem to get the sermon posted to the church’s Facebook page. It did post to my personal Facebook page – freerangepastor..... thanks so much for your patience with my cyberspace challenges!

**"Do to others...."**

**A Sermon for the Federated Church of Thomaston**

**Thomaston, Maine**

**Sunday, November 6, 2022 – reflecting All Saints’ Day, November 1**

**Rev. Dr. Susan Stonestreet**

**Luke 6:20-31 (including verses 17-19)**

He [Jesus] came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon. They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. And all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them.

Then he looked up at his disciples and said:

"Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled.

Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.

Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.

But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.

Woe to you who are full now, for you will be hungry.

Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep.

Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.

But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. I

If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. Do to others as you would have them do to you."  
Luke 6:17-31

Will you pray with me. Eternal God, be with us in the coming moments as we do our best to ponder the holy words of our sacred ancestors. Help us to find a blessing from you in their message to us this day. Amen.

I want to begin by reading the three verses that come right before the verses that Ron read for us this morning.....

Here's the bottom line for today -- what goes around comes around. You've heard me preach about this before! What goes around comes around is a mantra I try to live by -- in my personal life and in what I see of other people's actions. Jesus proclaimed the same -- what goes around comes around. If what we do and all we say comes from a place of goodness and justice, we will be blessed. If what we do and all we say comes from a place of hubris and haughtiness, a place of privilege and pride, we will not be blessed.

But what does it mean to be blessed, really? We say "bless you" to someone when they sneeze. "Bless you," we say to someone when they have done something nice for us. We say "what a blessing" when the storm passes us by, or when the sick baby lives or the oldster among us recovers from a fall or pneumonia. We bless others, and sometimes they bless us.

In the late first century, blessings were hard to come by for those early Christians living in a Roman world. They were forced to put their faith to the ultimate endurance test. They were not free to worship God as they chose. We've talked about this before. They were supposed to worship the Roman emperor. Within their Christian community, immorality and apathy weakened their hearts and their commitment to God. From without, their refusal to practice idolatry often led to martyrdom. Many of us are familiar with this unfortunate reality for our early Christian ancestors.

Into this world stepped the writer of the Gospel of Luke. He wrote what has been called "the most beautiful book in the world," to explain and proclaim the universal significance of the life and death of someone who would come to make a difference for all time. As with the other Gospel writers, Luke had his own point of view and a particular audience in mind when he put his story together. Luke was a Gentile, like us!, writing for Gentiles. He was most likely the only Gentile author in the New Testament.

The authors of the Gospels were not neutral in their interpretations of what they had seen and heard of Jesus' life and death. They were not writing newspaper accounts. They were not writing historical reports. They wrote down their stories in order to make a difference in the lives of those early Christians who listened to and read their words. Jesus made a difference then. Jesus still makes a difference, or we wouldn't be here this morning!

Our scripture reading from the Gospel of Luke relates "The Sermon on the Plain," as it is commonly called. Even though the text for today doesn't include verses seventeen through nineteen, that I read, they are important for the understanding of the passage. "He came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of the people...." (Lk 6:17), verse seventeen describes.

The corollary to Luke's "Sermon on the Plain" is the longer "Sermon on the Mount," described in the Gospel of Matthew. It was preached from "up on a mountain" where "his [Jesus'] disciples came to him." (Matt 5:1) The "Sermon" Luke describes is shorter than Matthew's. It has fewer teachings and its beatitudes,

its blessings, are written in the second person -- "Blessed are YOU poor, for yours is the kingdom of God." (Lk 6:20) rather than in the third person -- "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," as Matthew writes (Matt 5:3)

Three points stand out to me as I reflect on all of this. First, Luke speaks of Jesus delivering the blessings while he stands *among* the people -- his disciples and a great multitude of people. Matthew positions Jesus up on a mountain *with only his immediate disciples near by*.

Second, Luke speaks of Jesus referring to the *literal poor*. Matthew speaks of Jesus referring to the poor *"in spirit."*

Third, Luke speaks of Jesus talking directly *to* the people -- you poor, you who are hungry, you who weep now. (Lk 6:20-21) Matthew speaks of Jesus talking *of* others -- the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and search for righteousness. (Matt 5:3-6)

Do these points make a difference? The different, to me, is the type of relationship implied in each account. Jesus preached of relationships. He taught of justice and fairness for all. Luke tells us that Jesus stated in the "Sermon on the Plain" that he supported people in their suffering, all kinds of suffering, and encouraged them to "hang on," for they would receive the kingdom of God. They would be filled and they would laugh. Matthew tells us that Jesus described in the "Sermon on the Plain" the ideal character of a disciple.

Both messages are important. We need to hear them both. We need to hear the *intimacy* of the personal message of Jesus to those who were suffering AND the *proclamation* of what it meant to lead a "disciplined," faithful life. *A gift and a responsibility are implied.*

WE suffer and search for discipline in our personal lives. But we also have much, sometimes too much as Americans, to be thankful for. Sometimes we hide from the responsibility and the relationship we all bear towards one another as children of God. This is why we so often pray together a prayer of confession in our worship services.

Blessedness comes in many forms. It has a long and varied history in the Bible beginning with Genesis when God blesses Abraham. (Gen 1:1-3) I won't go through them all.... it's a nice day, and once again, I know you don't want to sit in these pews til noon!

The words preserved on the oldest scrap of scripture we have are the familiar words of the blessing of Aaron in the Book of Numbers which begin, "*Ye va re ka adoni vi yish mer a kah.*" "May the Lord bless you and keep you." (Num 6:24) This blessing of Aaron was found not that long ago on a piece of silver in a tomb, just south of Jerusalem, that dates from about 600 BCE. That's approximately 2,600 years ago.

The prophet Jeremiah from the Hebrew scriptures proclaimed, "Blessed are those who trust in the Lord, whose trust is in the Lord. They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream.... I the Lord test the mind and search the heart, to give to all according to their ways, according to the fruit of their doings." (Jer 17:7-8, 10) To trust in God is to be blessed, Jeremiah says.

What are we to make of the blessings and woes proclaimed by our sacred ancestors? How do we interpret them for our lives? In this early 21st century, we may be blessed with good health, good looks, money, a nice home, a decent job. Or, we may not be blessed with these things. In either case, God delivers us a blessing if only we practice our faith in God with our words and our actions. "What goes around comes around," again and again, later, if not sooner....

But the text for today which is the assigned text for All Saints' Day, goes beyond the "Sermon on the Plain" and includes three more verses,

To be blessed by God is to feel comforted by the faith that God is with us in our daily lives.

To be blessed by God is to know in our hearts that we have a place in God's dominion, both now and in the future.

To be blessed by God is to acknowledge that the relationship we have with God and with one another is the most fragile and consequential aspect of our lives.

Beyond their individual words, the beatitudes -- the blessings -- of Luke's Sermon on the Plain remind us of the power of blessing and being blessed. It is easy to forget that God's promise to bless Abram, and that Jeremiah's confidence in trusting God are carried forward in the words of comfort which Jesus brought to his first followers, and to us, on the way. "*Ye va re ka adoni vi yish mer a kah.*" May God bless you and keep you this day.

In this time, two days before our state and national elections – more heated and fractious than any we have known in our country – we need to remember that what goes around does come around.... And we need to hold dear the blessings

which Jesus offers to each of us – “Do to others as you would have them do to you.” (Luke 6:31)

Let the people say, "Amen."

**Federated Church in Thomaston  
United Church of Christ    United Methodist Church  
All Are Welcome  
Sunday, November 6, 2022**

Rev. Dr. Susan Stonestreet, Pastor    Alice Billheimer, Organist/ Choir Director  
Lector: Ron Anderson

*Please be respectfully silent once our worship service has begun.*

*An asterisk (\*) indicates where you are invited to stand.*

***Bold print** indicates that the people speak these responses & prayers.*

**GATHERING FOR WORSHIP**

**Welcome and Announcements**

**Prelude** Come, Ye Disconsolate -- Samuel Webbe

**Call to Worship**

One: Eternal God, you know our yesterdays, our todays, and our tomorrows.

**Many: Thank you for working in the lives of all your saints. Give us faith this day to engage the world according to your ways.**

**All: We live in hope and with confidence of your saving love. Let us worship God!**

**\*Opening Hymn** “Sing with All the Saints in Glory” #702 Blue Hymnal

**Responsive Reading – A Prayer of Confession** (from [holdfasttowhatisgood.com](http://holdfasttowhatisgood.com))  
**God of all the saints, God of all the sinners, hear our prayer. We would be saint-like – holy, good, patient, loving. But we end up feeling more like sinners – full of failures of morality, selfish, mean. Perhaps you see us simply as human – as beloved, and flawed, and trying, and failing, and succeeding. In all of this, forgive the wrong that we have done, and bless the good we have accomplished. Keep on loving us, and helping us, and molding us more and more into the image of Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.**

**A Moment of Silence, then words of forgiveness**

## SERVICE OF THE WORD

**Scripture Reading** Luke 6:20-31

**\*Gloria Patri**

**Message** “Do to others” Rev. Dr. Susan Stonestreet

**\*Hymn of Meditation** “I Sing a Song of the Saints of God” #712 Blue Hymnal

## RESPONDING IN FAITH

**Sharing Our Joys and Concerns with God and Each Other**

**Pastoral Prayer & The Lord’s Prayer...**

**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 debts as we forgive our debtors, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, Amen.**

**Offertory** The Lord's My Shepherd -- "Brother James' Air"

**\*Doxology No. 95 Blue** “Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow....”

**\*Prayer of Dedication**

**Service of Holy Communion** (see insert)

**\*Closing Hymn** “Come, Let Us Join Our Friends Above” #709 Blue Hymnal

**Benediction**

**Postlude** Finale! From Organ Concerto -- George Frederic Handel

**Revised Common Lectionary Readings for Sunday, November 13, 2022**

**remembering Veterans Day.....**

**Isaiah 65:17-25; Isaiah 12; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13; Luke 21:5-19**

**Prayer List** -- Hold in your prayers all those affected by the corona virus and the families of those who have died from the virus.... And all those families affected by the use of addictive drugs and alcohol among their members.... And all those dealing with the ravages of cancer near and far..... And all those living through the aftermath of Hurricane Ian....

Please hold in your prayers all those affected by the coronavirus and the families of those who have died from the virus..And all those families affected by the use of addictive drugs among their

members And all those dealing with the ravages of cancer near and far..And all those affected, which should be every one of us, by the cruel condition of racism which continues to take the lives of too many of our Black brothers and sisters..And all those who have worked tirelessly for the building and rebuilding of our nation into one people, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all And, from Jackie a request for prayers for Kyle Cloudier..and for Parker's daughter, who has had brain surgery and is home now!; Enid, Ann Foster, Carol Moss, Julie Pollitt, Zeke Bryant, John Flaherty, Heather Van Buskirk, and for Tiffany, Lucy's granddaughter... And for Arlene from NH..And for Rev. Wayne Sawyer, And for Amber Thomas.... And for James Armstrong and family... And Dale O'Neal (Kristen O'Neal's husband who has tonsil cancer). And Jeffrey Northgraves who is receiving treatment for lung cancer.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Sunday-11/13/22.....9:30 am: Worship  
 Service .....10:30 am: Council  
 Meeting

Suggested Food Pantry Donation.....Canned Soup

The flowers for the Alter this week are given by Karen Wincapaw.

Deacon for November, 2022: Sandra Caron

Reminders for next Sunday, November 13, 2022

Greeter/Usher: Sandra and Lou  
 Caron

Coffee

Host:  
 dra

Caron

wers: Kay Sylvester

Lector: San  
 Flo

Collection Total for Sunday, October 30, 2022:

Pledges -

\$231.00

- \$ 48.40

- \$279.40

Loose

Total

The 2022 weekly budgeted operating cost for the Church and parsonage is \$1623.00 per week.

**Federated Church of Thomaston  
 United Church of Christ  
 &  
 United Methodist Church**



**Together Since 1929**

***Sunday, November 6, 2022***

**8 Hyler Street, Thomaston, Maine 04861 (207) 354-6105**

To contact the pastor via e-mail: [freerangepastor@gmail.com](mailto:freerangepastor@gmail.com)

WiFi password is #1Church