



Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany

13 February 2021

The Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd in Athens, Ohio--seeking to know and serve Christ in loving service to the campus, the community, and the world.

The Lessons

Lessons for the Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany: Jeremiah 17: 5-10; Psalm 1; I Corinthians 15: 12-20; Luke 6: 17-26.

<https://www.lectionarypage.net>

The Collect

O God, the strength of all who put their trust in you: Mercifully accept our prayers; and because in our weakness we can do nothing good without you, give us the help of your grace, that in keeping your commandments we may please you both in will and deed; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

The Gospel



Luke 6:17-26

Jesus came down with the twelve apostles 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.

The Sermon

Turning Blessings into Woes

Some beliefs are really superstitions in disguise. They often show up in conversations, usually as well intended attempts to show sympathy or empathy. But they have far more potential to harm instead of heal. Comments like, “it was just their time to go.” Or “God must have needed another angel in heaven.” Or “It was God’s plan; we shouldn’t feel sad or question it.” While recovering from two complete hip replacement surgeries I heard comments that are little different but same sort of thing: “you are too young to have this happen to you, what did you do to make your hips wear out so fast?” When I asked my surgeons and physical therapists this question, they thought it was not a good one because there is no answer and contrary to our superstitious belief, there is no age limit on bones and joints. It was probably a combination of multiple factors that led to the development of a disease in my hip joints; and blaming me or shaming me or looking down on me for it will do nothing to help me heal. Instead, such a question is most likely an expression of fear or discomfort because my situation exposed the fallacy that hip replacements are only for people of a certain age or someone who had an accident.

I even had a family member unfriend me on Facebook because of my surgeries. And said some unkind things about me. When confronted about those behaviors, they confessed seeing someone they are related to who is younger than they are have such a severe disease made them afraid it could happen to them.

When our false beliefs – the ones usually based on stereotypes, misinformation, or

prejudices around disease, age, race, gender, color, religion, orientation – get challenged or proven wrong, it can cause discomfort, fear, and disruption. It is natural to look for any form of stability in a world where there are no guarantees. Superstitions exist to give the illusion of certainty in an uncertain world, but we don't usually call them superstitions. We dress them up as science or religion or what we deserve.

To be clear, I am not talking about consequences of our actions. That is something different. If you choose to park illegally and get a ticket, that is a consequence of a choice. I am not talking about that. I am talking about confusing consequences for superstitions, the belief that if something beyond our control happens it is either our fault for something we have done or God's fault because God was punishing us or planned it, because we mistakenly think that is what it means for God to be all powerful.

This is nothing new. It has been with us for hundreds of thousands of years. We can see it in the Bible. If you read through the psalms you will come across psalms where the author is angry at God because they lived a blameless life and are suffering illness or poverty or loss while their wicked neighbor who caused harm got blessings galore in the form of money, success, health, and popularity. That can't be right, that can't be the way God wants it.

And it isn't. But it is easier to blame God or self because there are so many things we are powerless to affect. Since we can't fix the problem, we fix the blame because that gives us some comfort. Which is why challenging or contradicting this assumption can lead to things like family members estranging each other.

Contradicting such unhealthy superstitions disguised as beliefs is what Jesus is up to in our Gospel today where the author described how Jesus used his power to manifest the love of God on earth. Did you notice in today's Gospel great crowds of people came to Jesus, and the people in those crowds who weren't his followers were the ill? This is an important detail to pay attention to.

In Jesus' day, and long before Jesus, the accepted belief in society and religion was that any disability, illness, or deformity, was a sign of God's punishment or displeasure. And was evidence a person or their family did something terrible and deserved punishment. Which means in some cases, disease was considered a justifiable reason to exclude a sick person from their family and community, not something to be cured or cared for. I learned the hard way this falsity exists today when I saw people turn from me in disgust, believing the disease the surgeons removed from my body made me of less value.

That Jesus healed people should never be taken for granted. Jesus used the power of God not to punish, not to judge, not to exclude, but to heal. Jesus did not use the power of God to endorse the fallacies of the time, he did not use God's power to gain wealth, status, or property for himself or his followers. He used that power to disprove the belief that illness is a sign of God's wrath by welcoming and healing those who were ill and suffering. God incarnate, God with us in Jesus shows us God is all powerful, and this power is God's love, embodied in mercy, forgiveness, and restoring people to wholeness. Which means things like aging, disease, illness are not divine punishments, they are simply part of life.

That is what Jesus' teaching about blessings and woes in the Gospel is about. Another superstition of the time and perhaps our time, was that if you had money, prestige, and property they were signs of God's blessing or favor, proving you were better than others in God's eyes and could get away with not caring for your neighbor. When

Jesus pronounced blessings on the poor, the hungry, the grieving, and the oppressed he was stating that these are people who have a special place in God's heart. This does not mean the poor and suffering are superior to others, nor that they deserve to stay in poverty. It means God is with them in their suffering and notices who causes them to suffer.

When Jesus pronounced woes on the wealthy, those who look down on others, who do not share and do not care, who use their wealth and status to separate themselves from their neighbors, Jesus was saying he pities them because God will judge them harshly.

Jesus turning society's and religion's superstitious blessings into woes and visa versa is both a commentary on the inequality of the present time and the promise God's Kingdom will reverse the inequalities our human fears and superstitions create and hold on to. This reversal is not a punishment, although it might feel like it to some, it is God's intention for the world, for all of us.

Which means whenever we welcome those society would prefer to ignore, when we refuse to blame a person or God for illness, when we grieve with someone instead of blame God for a loss, when we make room for the differently abled or those who can't join us for in-person worship by enhancing our on-line worship option, we are joining with Jesus transforming superstition into love and reminding someone they are loved by God. These things help create a little piece of God's Kingdom right here; transforming hurt into healing not only of individuals, but of the world.

It is not easy to let go of those superstitions, after all they look simple and clear and are so easy to say and remember. They give such a comfortable buffer between us and pain; and might even make us feel better by giving the illusion of certainty in a world where you can eat healthy foods, exercise and still gain weight and get sick, never smoke a day in your life and get diagnosed with lung cancer, be a faithful, loving spouse whose partner wants to end the relationship, be a good driver and get in a car accident. Children who caused no offense still get caught in the crossfire of school shootings. None of these things are God's will. They can make us feel powerless, afraid and can cause us to exchange hope for fatalism. But it doesn't have to be that way. We can turn to Jesus who manifests God's love for all people and the world by turning woes into blessings and blessings into woes and restores the excluded to wholeness of body, mind, heart, and strength. So, when we are confronted with situations that contradict those harmful superstitions we can have the power, the compassion, and the grace to see them through God's Light and love and find ourselves part of the restoration of God's kingdom here on earth.

** A video of Today's sermon is not available at this time.

6 Epiphany, February 13, 2022 Turning Blessings into Woes

The Rev. Deborah Woolsey, Church of the Good Shepherd, Athens, OH

Please include in your prayers

In our world, we pray for Justin, Archbishop of Canterbury, and for Michael, our Presiding Bishop; we pray for peace with justice throughout the Middle East. We pray for the victims of the coronavirus. We pray for all people affected by natural and

environmental disasters. We pray also for the people who are suffering from war, especially all asylum seekers, immigrants and refugees. We pray for Joe our President, Kamala our Vice-President, Mike, our Governor, the Supreme Court and the members of Congress.

In our diocese, In our diocese, we pray for our Provisional Bishop Wayne, the search process for a new bishop, and for Kenneth, Nedi, and Wendell our assisting bishops. We pray for the National Guard being deployed to help with the coronavirus.

In our parish, we pray for Good Shepherd's continued growth, for our Rector Rev. Deborah Woolsey, for our Associate Priests, Rev. Leslie Flemming, Rev. Katharin Foster and Rev. David McCoy, for our ministry to students, the university, and the community. We pray for our friends at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Merida, Mexico.

Those Whom our Prayers are Requested: Belle, Bill S., Bud and Carol, Chris L., Elena, Gloria R., Gordon, Jan S, Lacey, Land and baby Risponse, Laura, Miriam, Sharon, Bill, Annie and Kathleen, Tommy, Jeannet Barratt, Danny Cain, Douglas Campbell, Zelma Coleman, Lee Kembell-Cook, Glinnis Davies, Dick Dean, Phyllis Dean, Richard DeNune, Caryl Docherty, Chris Eaton, Ben Foster, Norm Fox, Jan Gault, Jennifer Hall, Susanne Hill, Debbie Hunsberger, Nancy and Bob Jackson, Peter Kachenko and family, Monya Monroe, Julie Nehls, Linda Nippert, Lauren O'Brien, Doug and Michelle Parsons, Jane Patton, Dale Paul, Dan and Nancy Reedy, Ann Shelly, Sandy Spades, Michael Vaughn, Consuelo Walker and family, Benjamin Woolsey, Emily Woolsey, Zita Zolpys, and we pray for all who care for them. **

Anniversary: Luisa Lescano and Thaden Brient (2/18)

Birthdays: Katyana Sayrs (2/14), Luisa Lescano (2/18)

** Full names for this section are normally not published online but since there is not a printed Sunday Bulletin or in-house 10:30 service, for the time being we will publish full names unless requested otherwise. If you have a name to be added to the prayer list, Lynn Graham maintains this information. Lynn may be reached at **740-593-5098** or **grahammowery@aol.com**.

Music



NOTE: The music for the links below is not available at this time and will be uploaded after computer repairs.

Music for February 13,
Epiphany 6 – year C 2022

Prelude – [Chorale Prelude on “Immortal, invisible God only wise”](#)

(St. Denio) Wilbur Held

[Gloria - S280](#)

Offertory Hymn – Hymnal 656 – [Blest are the pure in heart](#)

[Sanctus - S130](#)

Communion Music -- [Agnus Dei \(from Exultate: A Liturgical Suite for organ\)](#) Craig Phillips

Postlude -- [Ita missa est \(The mass is ended– from Exultate: A Liturgical Suite for organ\)](#) Craig Phillips

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Prayer for Super Bowl Sunday

Walter Brueggeman lives in Cincinnati, Ohio and is the Theologian in Residence in our Diocese. Before the Cincinnati Bengals were in the Super Bowl, he wrote the prayer below for Super Bowl Sunday. While many of us are excited about Joe Burrow leading the Bengals into the Super Bowl and hopeful he and his team will come back to Cincinnati with the trophy, there is more to the day that isn't worthy of our cheering. American football, like any sport, does have its dark side, which is why some people choose not to follow it. Like anything, we can both enjoy it and acknowledge the parts of it that are not healthy without taking any of the fun away.

For example, our support of Joe Burrow should have nothing to do with whether he returns to us with a Super Bowl ring or not. Win or lose, we can cheer him on so he knows no matter what happens, he will always be welcomed home to Athens with open and loving arms.

So, on this Super Bowl Sunday, we can pray for Joe and the Bengals and to keep our hearts and minds on Christ who loves us all, win or lose.

Prayer for the Super Bowl Sunday

By Walter Brueggemann
From Prayers for a Privileged People

The world of fast money,
and loud talk,
and much hype is upon us.
We praise huge men whose names will linger only briefly.

We will eat and drink,
and gamble and laugh,
and cheer and hiss,
and marvel and then yawn.

We show up, most of us, for such a circus,
and such an indulgence.
Loud clashing bodies,
violence within rules,
and money and merchandise and music.

And you—today like every day—
you govern and watch and summon;
you are glad when there is joy in the earth,
But you notice our liturgies of disregard and
our litanies of selves made too big,
our fascination with machismo power,
and lust for bodies and for big bucks.

And around you gather today, as every day,
elsewhere uninvited, but noticed acutely by you,
those disabled and gone feeble,
those alone and failed,
those uninvited and shamed.
And you whose gift is more than “super,”
Overflowing, abundant, adequate, all sufficient.

The day of preoccupation with creature comforts writ large.
We pause to be mindful of our creatureliness,
our commonality with all that is small and vulnerable exposed,
your creatures called to obedience and praise.

Give us some distance from the noise,
some reserve about the loud success of the day,
that we may remember that our life consists
not in things we consume
but in neighbors we embrace.

Be our good neighbor that we may practice
your neighborly generosity all through our needy
neighborhood.

At-Home Worship

Christ Church Cathedral Cincinnati live streams via Vimeo its services Sundays at 10 a.m. These are saved and can be watched later without having to log in.

<https://vimeo.com/event/4306>

Though the doors of the National Cathedral in Washington are, like ours, temporarily closed, there's much to explore at the the Cathedral's online portal.

Coming up on the Calendar

Coming Up:

Wednesday, February 10, 9:30 a.m. - - Prayer Shawl Meeting

Thursday, February 17, 7:00 p.m. - - Vestry Meeting, ZOOM

Sunday, February 20, 10:30 a.m. - - Holy Eucharist

Wednesday, February 24, 9:30 a.m. - - Prayer Shawl Meeting

Sunday, February 27, 10:30 a.m. - - Holy Eucharist

**CrossRoads Café now open Sundays after church service
and Monday - Friday 9:30 - 11:30 am.**

Notes

– Reclaiming Stewardship – Mother Deborah’s Continuing Education for 2022

Part of every parish priest’s compensation is to provide funds and time for them to further their education. There are usually no parameters on how or what this will look like. This year, Mother Deborah is participating in a 6-month one day a week via video conference program that seeks to “shift the mindset and practice of fundraising from a series of transactional requests for money to a deeper, more meaningful transformational experience of giving.” This interactive program is designed for campus ministries and parishes located in university campuses and is being funded by a grant from Province V.

Church of the Good Shepherd is not the only parish in the diocese nor the national church to experience a decline in giving since the 1980’s and 90’s. The wider culture and society is shifting and changing and this program seeks to help move from complaining about the shift/change to empowering us to learn to ask for money as part of ministry. Ministries like the Brent House in Chicago have already benefited from this type of stewardship. Vestry can look forward to hearing about what Mother Deborah learns about herself, the parish, and how we can improve upon our financial health so that we can continue to grow our ministry to our neighbors. Want to learn more? Send Mother Deborah an email or call her, she will be happy to share what she is learning with everyone.

In case you missed it,
information regarding the
Parish Annual Meeting
last Sunday can be found
[HERE](#) (Friday Bulletin Feb 4).

Volunteers Needed to Help with Sunday Services

Counter

We need your help counting the financial gifts given during the church service. All you have to do is stay a few minutes after the church service on Sundays and count the money collected during the service, fill out a form stating what you counted, then put the money in a pouch and put the pouch in the closet in the church office. Time: it will take approximately 15 minutes to accomplish. How often you are asked to do it depends on how many people volunteer. Volunteers will be put on a schedule. If you are interested, please contact Mother Deborah at revdebwoolsey@gmail.com

Greeter

We need your help greeting people when they enter the church for the service. All you have to do is arrive 10 minutes before the church service starts, stand or sit by the door or on the porch, warmly greet people as they enter, remind them to put their mask on if they forgot or offer them one of our free masks, and answer any questions like where the bathrooms are if they ask. Once everyone has arrived, you have no other duties. How often you are asked to do this depends on how many people step up to volunteer, all volunteers will be put on a schedule. If you are interested, please contact Mother Deborah at revdebwoolsey@gmail.com Thank you for your help, it is by working together that we can offer in-person Sunday morning church services.

Contacts, Information

Quick Links

[Parish website](#)

Pandemic Notes:

[Link to the DSO guidelines for returning to in-person worship](#)

[Sermons](#)

[Parish calendar](#)

[Contact us](#)

[Campus Interest](#)

[E-News Guidelines
and Back Issues](#)

[Diocese S Ohio](#)

[\[E\]Connections](#)

[Episcopal
News Service](#)

[Episcopal Café](#)

As of August 5 the Diocese COVID Guidelines request all persons wear masks inside the church building regardless of vaccination status.

Office Hours: 10:00 a.m.– 2:00 p.m.,
Monday through Thursday.
Masks are required.

The **Church Building** is not open for public meetings and gatherings but during office/CrossRoads hours the **thrift shop** and **chapel** are available for individuals.
Masks are required.

CrossRoads Café is only open Sundays after the service until the news school year.

Contact Information

For pastoral needs, please contact The Rev. Deborah Woolsey at 937-689-8895 (cell) or 740-593-6877 (church), or by e-mail at revdebwoolsey@gmail.com.

To find out more about Good Shepherd and other matters, please contact Alex Buckley, Senior Warden, at 740-593-5513 or by e-mail at macbuck@yahoo.com.

For maintenance matters, please leave a note at the office or contact Ted Foster, Junior Warden, at 740-593-8615 or by e-mail at foster.theodore@gmail.com. **For emergencies**, please call The Rev. Deborah Woolsey at 937-689-8895.

NON-emergency messages can be left on the church's answering machine (740-593-6877). The parish office administrator is Barbara Martin (740-593-6877) or barbara@chogs.org.

The Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd
64 University Terrace, Athens OH 45701
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[DONATE to Good Shepherd](#)

This takes you to the Parish Home page where you can donate on-line via PayPal, If you have a preference, please indicate on the the "Add special instructions to the seller" section the purpose of the donation -- e.g. organ fund, plate collection, etc.

Check out the Church's [YouTube Channel](#).

LIKE us on Facebook [Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd 45701](#)

Office Hours:

10:00 am - 2:00 pm
Monday - Thursday

www.chogs.org

Masks are required.
