

Blessings in Disguise
Based on Luke 6:17-26

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Rev. Erin Klassen & Rev. Lee Spice

Erin: When I hear this story, I imagine the disciples hearing Jesus' words, and feeling very confused or frustrated. Or perhaps they were like Inigo Montoya in the Princess Bride, "you keep using that word, I do not think it means what you think it means." I mean, seriously, what kind of blessing is this? How is it a blessing to be poor, or hungry, or weeping? How is it a blessing to be hated and excluded and reviled? I remember last week, when you spoke on joy and sorrow. How they are intermingled and necessarily so. To feel one, we need the other. They balance. Maybe it's like that with these other blessings that Jesus names. Maybe it is a blessing to have felt pain, so that I can have compassion for someone else in pain. Maybe it is a blessing to know what it feels like to be left out (not that it feels that way in the moment) so that I know just how important it is to include everyone and am ready and willing to put in the hard work to make that a reality. This isn't to put a happy face on what harms us, but to remind ourselves that God is in it.

Lee: That reminds me of a story of a small boy in church. The kids were all up front for the children's story, and the minister asked, "We've been talking about blessings. What is a blessing?" The boy answered, "A blessing is a little piece of God."

Maybe, it's a reminder that God is with us in all things - in joy and in sorrow.

And more than that, maybe we can know that a piece of God is with us, maybe especially in the times of being poor, or hungry, or left out, or sad.

So, does that mean it's better to be hungry, or left out, or sad? Because that kind of thinking has been used to keep people in their place, and wait for better times in heaven.

Erin: It certainly sounds that way, especially when you add in the "woe to you" part. Woe to you who are rich, or full, or laughing, or who have a good reputation. Because that could, theoretically, be any of us. I'm not rich, but I'm not lacking. We had breakfast this morning. Where is the good news here if that is our reality?

Lee: Maybe that's the reminder - whenever we feel too content...

Erin:we're not really paying attention to what is going on around us. God is big enough that these blessings and these woes include us all. So, if one of us is hungry, we all need to remember what it's like to be hungry, and fill them up.

Lee: And if one of us is sad, we need to remember what it is like to be sad, and come alongside.

I wonder about the times in people's lives when they were sad, or hungry, or left out, or having hard times...I wonder about the times when you knew that God was in that place with you - when you experienced a "little piece of God."

Erin: I've heard people refer to something like that as a "blessing in disguise." Now, we're going to have some time to share these experiences.

Lee: I invite you to take a moment to think about a time like this - when there was a blessing in disguise - and either write it down or draw an image. There are post-it notes in the bulletin. If you didn't get your own bulletin, perhaps your neighbour will give you one of theirs, because each bulletin has two post-its.

Erin: When you are ready, we invite you to bring your post-it forward, to place on the river poster.