

# Sermon

‘Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven’

Year B 2021, Pentecost 24, Hebrews 9.23-28<sup>1</sup>, Mk 12.38-44<sup>2</sup>



Jesus appearance to his disciples in resurrection life, on the shore that morning, after the long night, at the breaking of day, was the appearance, of a new heaven and earth. The dawn of hope. Hope for the world.

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<sup>1</sup> Thus it was necessary for the sketches of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves need better sacrifices than these. For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made by human hands, a mere copy of the true one, but he entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. Nor was it to offer himself again and again, as the high priest enters the Holy Place year after year with blood that is not his own; for then he would have had to suffer again and again since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to remove sin by the sacrifice of himself. And just as it is appointed for mortals to die once, and after that the judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

<sup>2</sup> **Jesus Denounces the Scribes**

As he taught, he said, “Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets! They devour widows’ houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.”

**The Widow’s Offering**

He sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. Then he called his disciples and said to them, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.”

The Christian hope is for a future that will overcome all suffering once and for all. In the Book of Revelations the future of the kingdom of God, that has appeared once, in the resurrection of Jesus, is the place of God himself dwelling with human beings. The place where God "will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

Anyone who has grasped the significance of the Christian proclamation, of the good news of the future kingdom of God, grasps that nothing else in this world, comes close to, the Christian vision for the world.

In the words of the Greatest Showman

I'm trying to hold my breath.  
Let it stay this way.  
Can't let this moment end.

You set off a dream in me  
Getting louder now  
Can you hear it echoing?

Take my hand  
Will you share this with me?

All the shine of a thousand spotlights  
All the stars we steal from the night sky  
Will never be enough  
Never be enough

Towers of gold are still too little  
These hands could hold the world but it'll  
Never be enough  
Never be enough  
For me.

The coming of Jesus, was the coming of the future. Jesus is not the middle of history. Jesus is the end of history. Like a flash forward in a movie, the end of history, the goal of history, the completion of history, has now appeared, in advance, in Jesus. But in a surprising way. In such a way that, although he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty, you may become rich.

In Jesus, God, the Greatest Showman, has taken into himself, our sins. All that one separated us from the love of God. The offence, the guilt, the consequences. Removed. We are reconciled to God. And to all who are in him.

In Jesus, God became a human being so that we might become like God. Become who we were created to be. The image of God. A destiny, there at creation. But lost in the Fall. A destiny restored, in Jesus Christ. The image of God.

This is expressed by the priestly prayer, prayed silently over the communion elements, 'By the mystery of this water and wine, may we come to share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled himself to share in our humanity.'

At peace with God, by the once for all sacrifice of Christ, we are at peace with the world. The world of the worldwide Christian church. The world of the future kingdom of God. World without end.

The new world that has come in Jesus Christ, is the future kingdom of God. It is the power of the future. The future reconciliation of the world of human being to God. On the basis of the our reconciled relationship with God, we are reconciled to all who are in Christ.

God's action to reconcile the world to himself, in the once for all sacrifice of Christ, was the future judgment of the world, already now. At peace with God, and one another, by the death of Christ, we live already now, in the future kingdom of God. The kingdom is not here, in its final form. It is not yet the day. But the day has dawned. This perishable world, and ourselves with it, has not yet put on imperishability. The mortal world, and ourselves with it, has not yet put on immortality. We still await, the day of the Lord. But that day has now come, in Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ, the new day has dawned. In Jesus Christ, the future kingdom of God, is now.

By our present experience of peace with God, and on that basis, peace within the worldwide Christian community, we are assured of our final participation in future salvation. As we hear in today's epistle, 'When Christ will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, God has already finished that work, on the cross, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.'

Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when Jesus Christ hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For God has put all things in subjection under his feet. Jesus is the Christ, the

Messiah of God. The Son of God. The Saviour of the world. The hope of the world. The hope of the human race.

In his famous sermon on the mount, Jesus said blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Not only are those blessed who are reviled and persecuted, against whom people utter all kinds of evil, falsely, because of their steadfast confession to Christ. But also all those who suffer because they long for the future salvation that can be brought about by God alone. Therefore, they are open to receive Jesus proclamation of the good news of the future kingdom of God. But Jesus proclaims woe upon the rich and saturated, because they think they have obtained satisfaction already in this life, and are no longer in need of the salvation of God.

In a perishable world, suffering is meaningless, when it is considered only in itself, as only damaging and crippling of our life. It receives significance, however, when it becomes the occasion for our longing for future salvation, that transcends this perishable world. For the future salvation that comes, not from within, but from beyond, this perishable world. For the salvation that will come, like a thief in the night, in a moment, at the twinkling of an eye, by the hand of God alone. The meaning of suffering is in the salvation that God will bring about. Our destination as human beings transcends this perishable life. It points beyond this life, to our participation in eternal life. In the meantime, in a perishable world, our suffering, all suffering, is no offense against God. Instead it gives expression to our destination beyond the fragmentary form of this perishable life. 'Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.'

In our Gospel today, Jesus sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the crowd putting money into the Treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. Then Jesus called his disciples and said to them, 'Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.'

In a world that judges by outward appearances, that contributes, out of its abundance, Jesus looks into our hearts.

He who held nothing back from us, who gave up everything for us, even his only, beloved Son, looks into our hearts, for our response. Will we hold back from him, who did not hold back from us. Will we give up everything to him, who gave up everything for us?

Will we allow ourselves to become poor in spirit, there to receive the kingdom of God?

Will we follow in the way of Jesus? That although he was rich, yet your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty, you may become rich. In obedience to the mission we have received from God our Father?

Will we, although we are rich, become poor, so that by our poverty, others may become rich?

Will we take up our cross, and follow Christ, and become a witness to the good news of the future kingdom of God, bringing the good news to others?

Will we give your life, in the way of Jesus, to the proclamation of the good news of the kingdom of God, and the call to repentance and faith?

That is the question being posed to us this morning, by the poor widow who has put in more than all of those who are contributing to the treasury. For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on. And so she is commended by Jesus.

As Jesus makes her a character, like the woman at Bethany who anoints Jesus head, who is remembered for her extraordinary commitment. In response to the extraordinary commitment, of Jesus Christ, towards her.

For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that although he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty, you may become rich.

Rev'd Jon Chamberlain

Vicar