

Luke 6.17-49

The Gospel according to Luke

17He 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. 18They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. 19And all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them.

20Then he looked up at his disciples and said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. 21"Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. "Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. 22"Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. 23Rejoice 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. 24"But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. 25"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. 26"Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.

The Gospel of the Lord

Good morning, My name is Abby and I am a senior at the University of Colorado in Boulder. I am also a member of Bread+Belonging, the Lutheran-Episcopal campus ministry of CU students. We meet weekly on Tuesday nights for a meal and fellowship, and also meet for other bible studies and small groups, events, and we do a retreat each semester. Last weekend, we were in Granby for our annual winter retreat. We also do a student preaching lab each spring, which is what brings me here this morning.

I think this text is interesting. Once again, we hear the good news...Jesus will fill the hungry, the poor, the lowly. It seems like the majority of the stories we hear in church are the good news and miracles of Jesus. And that makes this text stand out to me. Jesus is talking to a crowd, and says...blessings to the poor, the hungry, the weeping, those left out, and so on. These are the same messages we hear consistently throughout the Bible. These are the things I learned about in Sunday school and confirmation class. Jesus has come to love us all unconditionally and take away our sins and take care of us.

But then, Jesus says, "But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. 25"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. 26"Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets...woe to the rich, the full, the happy, and so on. This isn't something you hear a lot of in Bible stories. Isn't this the same Jesus that is here to fill the hungry? why is he suddenly deciding that some of us have had enough. Some of us have received our consolation. Some of us will now weep and morn. Isn't this the God that loves everyone? Then why are some of us going to be left empty?

I think it's easy with our lifestyles today to view this story solely from a material standpoint. Those that are hungry, will be filled. The poor will be made rich. The lowly will be blessed. When I hear that, I think about the way it would apply to my own life. If I was hungry and made full, it would be from food. If I was poor and made rich, it would be from money and wealth.

But what if we view this from a non-materialistic point of view? Suddenly, this story takes on a whole different meaning. Perhaps the hungry are hungry for God's love, or the poor are poor in spirit. And what if those that are rich and full aren't full of the right things? Or, what might we be TOO full of? Ourselves? Greed? Are we too busy? What else are we too full of?

The blessings and woes in this gospel are reciprocal. I think this whole story is about finding a rhythm, a pattern in God. He's here to fill those that hunger, and remind the others what we really need. God isn't leaving the full and the rich to hunger because they've had enough. He's leaving them to hunger for the things they really need—Faith, trust, and love in Him.

To say the past year has been devastating to Boulder county would be an understatement. Between the recent Marshall fire, skyrocketing COVID cases and the King Soopers shooting last year, this community has seen more than its share of tragedy. I lived at home in Elizabeth for the majority of last school year, my junior year. I was working at Walmart on March 22 last year. I had just gotten home from my shift that day, when I got a text from my roommate asking if I had seen the news, and also asking if our other roommate, who was still in Boulder at the time, was alright. I turned on the news and soon learned of the horrific situation happening at that King Soopers that we frequented. In those minutes waiting to hear if my friends were safe, waiting to hear the list of victims names, waiting for any information, you don't think about anything else but the people you care about. You suddenly realize

how much your relationships, your friends and family, your faith... matters. The things that can't be taken away.

This week, almost a year later, that store reopened. I am part of CU's marching band, and we were invited to attend the reopening ceremony. One of the shooting victims, Teri Leiker, was one of the marching band's biggest fans, and always attended our events to watch us perform. We played at the ceremony in her honor. This tragedy shook the Boulder community, but the last year has seen a lot of togetherness and strength built as people rose to overcome this as a community. I wasn't sure what to expect at the reopening, but you could feel the sense of healing and community in the air at the ceremony. People across the nation have been praying for Boulder, and it was amazing to see those prayers answered this week. God filled this broken, hungry city.

It's really easy with our busy lifestyles today to forget that intangible things— faith, hope, love, memories, and relationships, have so much more value to us than any physical item. And I think we often forget the importance of those in our lives, and this text from Luke is a reminder of that.

One way I have been filled is with Lutheran campus ministry. Coming to college in Boulder was a big change in many ways. Being away from home, away from family and friends, and in a completely different lifestyle and atmosphere was a bit of culture shock for me. Campus ministry has been such a blessing. After just the first few weeks of attending as a freshman, I already had a group of people who knew my name and welcomed me. Bread+Belonging not only literally feeds us with a meal each week, but also provides fellowship and a lot of learning and other great opportunities. Through our weekly program, retreats, and other outreach, I have been able to learn and explore more of the Bible, my faith, my education, and the city of Boulder. Most importantly, I have also connected with a wonderful, supportive community of faith.

Those without enough and those with enough will hunger. This may be a hunger for faith, food, or companionship, but regardless, God will fill the hungry. Amen