

Homily for VI (6) Sunday in Ordinary Time Year C 13-02-2022 by Fr. Lubem Robert Waya, osj.

First Reading: Jeremiah 17:5-8

Psalm: Psalm 1:1-4, 6

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:12, 16-20

Gospel: Luke 6:17, 20-26

HOW CAN I BECOME HAPPY?

Today's readings reflect on happiness. The question on how to be happy in life seems superficial but it is actually a perennial question that many philosophers over the centuries have grappled with. For Aristotle, happiness is the ultimate end and purpose of human existence. It is only reasonable then that since the human person though finite can through Christ lay claim to immortality, man must also aspire to be happy not only in this life but also in the next. Responding to this, Aristotle proposes the union of theoretical wisdom with practical wisdom which enable us to discern and choose the right way to act. As theoretical wisdom manifests in insightfulness, understanding, practical wisdom on the other hand manifests in virtuous dispositions like courage, justice, generosity, and self-control. This means that to act otherwise would lead us in the opposite direction which is the way of unhappiness. We are therefore at every point of our lives confronted with these two basic choices: to choose to be happy or unhappy. Jeremiah confronts same question in the first reading premised on trust with attendant consequences. We either trust in man and end up unhappy or we trust in God and remain happy forever. The one who trusts in man and relies on things of flesh (the world) is cursed, while the one who trusts in the Lord and relies on hope in Him (God) is blessed. Such a person can truly be happy here and hereafter. Ask yourself today, are you truly happy? Why not choose God?

Jesus also teaches on same subject-matter of happiness in today's sermon on the plain, which parallels the one in Matthew that took place on the Mount. Here in the beatitudes, He gives us the basic conditions of Christian living that can lead us to happiness. The word beatitude itself means happiness or blessedness. In Matthew there are eight beatitudes but in Luke there are four beatitudes and four warnings. These beatitudes remain our only sure path to happiness in life. They do not immune us from the inevitable trials of life such as pain, suffering, sickness and death. But then they guarantee us happiness that transcends the momentary difficulties and troubles that weigh us down with grief, adversity and despondency. Luke's four beatitudes are emphatic on the concrete life circumstances that we should follow in order to be happy. Hence, the one who has faith and follows them can truly be regarded as blessed. This does not consist in wealth, fame or affluence but in confronting the challenges of living a true Christian life head on even when despised by the world. They are those who choose to be poor and hungry, who weep and are hated, all for the sake of Christ. Not for any other reason but Christ. They have chosen the better part that shall not be taken from them because their joy will be complete and they shall rejoice and dance for joy on the last day. We have the assurance of the coming of that day in the Lord's resurrection as succinctly captured by St. Paul in the second reading. He says 'if our hope in Christ has been for this life only, we are the most unfortunate of all people.' Christ's resurrection remains the bedrock of our Christian faith and our hope.

With the way and manner you are living now, do you think you will end up in happiness or unhappiness? Why not re-evaluate your choices and resolve to do what you were created by God to do? Then, you will be seeking happiness rather than pleasure because you see life's true beauty. As Christians we must see life beyond here and embrace it as a continuum whole. Let us not allow the anxieties of life to break us and make us begin to view life's phases as separate from each other. In this way, our sufferings here can become salvific and even death is not termination but transition, as a passage through which we get to immortality to see God. Do you view death as the end? Such a view can push us to prioritize pleasures here over our true happiness, in the name of enjoyment. Beware! this does not last, and it only leaves us even empty and bitter than we were. Let us all seek to empty ourselves with all that can shut God out so that we can be filled with the beatitudes and be truly happy in this life and in the next. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.