

Last week we heard the beginning of this peroration of Paul's to the Church in Corinth, to the Corinthians --a fractious and divided church, quarreling amongst themselves about so many things. He is, one by one, taking issue with what he regards as their misunderstandings. Last week we heard him begin the list, and thus week we hear him continue to dispute what he regards as their most important controversy - that there are those who say that there is no resurrection from death.

He keeps urgently insisting that the Resurrection of Jesus the Christ --not his revivification but Jesus' Resurrection to new and changed life, to different and glorified life-- is the foundation of the Faith that he is preaching. And Paul urges that because Jesus has been resurrected from the dead to new and different life, so all human beings, all human flesh, will be as well.

Even as the seed dies and so becomes a plant, so it is with the resurrection of the human body: what is buried is perishable and what emerges is different because imperishable, imperishable because different. We are summoned in the resurrection always to be changing, always to becoming something, someone, new and different. We have the summons to change, over and over again, and our deaths are just one moment in this sequence of changes, of transformations.

And on this morning we also hear St Luke's version of the Beatitudes, which are very much what Luke understands Paul to be saying. The Beatitudes in Luke's Gospel are about in what particular ways we human beings need to change in order to become nearer and nearer to life in the Christ's resurrected body, into life in the Risen Christ.

In Matthew's Gospel, the Beatitudes are the beginning of the famous Sermon on the Mount, and thus is the version that most of us probably remember best, like best. And in Luke's Gospel, the Beatitudes are the beginning of the Sermon in the Plain and they are a bit more challenging Matthew's Jesus preaches, Moses-like, from a high place to the crowds on the ground; Luke's Jesus is in the ground and confiding to his disciples in front of the crowds: he is seated amongst his followers and it is an intimate moment amidst a great many listeners, some of them not listening at all

There is nothing about how blessed are the meek, or the peacemakers, or the poor in spirit; rather it begins with 'Blessed are you who are poor now' and each of the four 'blessed are's' have, unlike the case in Matthew's Gospel, are followed by four coordinate 'woes'. 'Blessed are you who are poor now' comes before 'Woe to you who are rich now', because people with many possessions are not nearly as clear about bringing their trust in God as those who gave much less, who live lives far closer to the edge

Which is where Luke's Gospel and Paul's letter to the Church in Corinth this morning connect: Paul is summoning the Church to live more and more into the ways of the Christ, and Luke is insisting that we recall Jesus' first sermon in the synagogue in Nazareth, where he grew up and which we heard a couple of weeks ago. There, citing the prophet Isaiah, he tells his childhood neighbors that, 'The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor'.

In Luke's Gospel the starting place of Jesus' ministry is always with the poor, with the outcast, with the marginalized, with those who cannot care for themselves. Luke's Gospel is about a summons --a clarion call-- for those who hear it more and more to grow into the Christ's concern for those who are poor, for those who have no defenses in this world other than those living in the Risen Christ can provide them, for this'd of us who have possessions to bless those who have much less.

Throughout this year, until next Advent, we are going to be hearing, primarily, from Luke's Gospel rather than from Matthew's, Mark's, or John's. And in this morning the invitation is for us to notice in Luke's Gospel the significance of the the Spirit always moving in this world, but also of the Spirit summoning Jesus --and in Jesus everyone else who seeks to hear his voice-- to care for those who have little, to care for those who are marginalized, to remember always the poor. The invitation is for us more and more to change, growing more and more into this image of the Christ. Amen.