

## Luke=s Beatitudes

No one wants to be poor. No one likes to be hungry. No one enjoys crying. No one aspires to be humiliated. Why does Jesus call these blessings? What can he be thinking?

I have to admit, its when I feel powerless, its when I hunger for something more in my life, its when I break down and fall apart, its when I feel ashamed, its then that I feel most like praying. Its then that I know that I can=t live by myself alone. Its then that I feel most clearly my need for others. Its then that I hunger for the presence of God in my life.

On the other hand, when everything is going great, when I am running on all cylinders, when it seems I can do no wrong, its at such times that I can forget that I haven=t really accomplished all these things by myself alone, its then I can overlook all the help I have received from those around me. Its then that I can forget just how much of my life has been the gift of those who love me--family and friends, teachers and colleagues, even strangers. Its at such times that its tempting to fool myself into thinking that my life is all mine--that I=ve done it on my own, that if its to be done right, I will have to do it myself, that I should not need to rely on anyone else.

The curse of such blessings, is that we are tempted to forget the extent to which they *are* blessings. The curse of such blessings is that we are tempted to put our faith in our own strength. And when we do that, when we see ourselves as our own creation, its then that we become like the proud man Jeremiah warns us of. In ignoring our roots we are in danger of becoming uprooted and blown away like a tumbling tumbleweed. Ironically its less our own stamina but our embeddedness in a network of companions that makes us resilient.

Its when we feel cursed that we know that we do not have the strength to live our lives by ourselves alone. Its when we feel cursed that we know that we must put our hope in those we love and place our faith ultimately in our God. Its when we feel cursed that we are drawn to prayer--and it is when we pray, when we can recognize our dependence upon God and our interdependence with one another, its then that we can feel like a tree whose roots reach down to the water table, that can tap into those underground streams beneath the barest wilderness. And once so rooted, once so outside of ourselves, what were once curses need no longer frighten us. We need no longer fear them, for we know we can endure and even flourish in spite of them. Not because *we* are that strong, but because our love is.

Wouldn=t it be great if we did not need to be cursed to realize that we are blessed?

Wouldn't it be great to recognize our blessings as blessings even when we are blessed? This is the task of a life of prayer, to behold the world as the blessing it is, on good days as well as bad; to appreciate our need for one another, our debt to each other, even when we are winning; to cherish our blessings even when we feel we could have done it without them.