

Sixth Sunday After Epiphany
Cycle C RCL

Jeremiah 17:5-10

This is a collection of *wisdom sayings* inserted here by the editor to underline the foolishness of Judah in following the religious practices of the Canaanites (Jeremiah 17:1-5). Wisdom sayings derive not from the schools of the prophets but from the wisdom schools associated with the court of the king where young men were trained to become courtiers. This material, however, sometimes makes its way into the prophetic books, especially during and after the exile in Babylon where the wisdom schools joined with the prophetic schools in attempting to explain how it was that Judah had suffered such a great catastrophe.

Psalm 1

Wisdom psalms were composed by the scholars of the royal court's school in Jerusalem to help young pupils understand and apply the fundamentals of honesty, modesty, and right-dealing to every aspect of their lives. Although these songs were not composed for the Temple, as were the other psalms of the Psalter, they came to be part of Israel's treasury of sacred songs during the exile in Babylon when the Temple stood in ruins.

1 Corinthians 15:12-20

The Corinthian Christians had no difficulty in affirming Christ's resurrection, an action appropriate in their minds to a divine man like Jesus; but they could not understand exactly why Paul insisted that they too should hope for resurrection. Based on their experience in the Greek world, the Corinthians believed that their faith would insure the salvation of their souls; and they did not care what happened to the shell of the body. Paul, from his background in Jewish apocalyptic (end-of-the-world) thought, could not imagine a single resurrection (Daniel 12:2) or a disembodied salvation. If Christ was raised, then the general resurrection must have begun. So, he uses the figure of Christ as the "first-fruits" of those who have died in verse 20.

Luke 6:17-26

The "Sermon on the Plain" (Luke 6:17-49) is parallel to Matthew's "Sermon on the Mount" (Matthew 5:1-7:29) and derives its content from the common source scholars call "Q," a collection of sayings of Jesus and John the Baptist reflected in Matthew and Luke but not in Mark. Luke's version of the Beatitudes here puts the emphasis upon the Gospel as good news for people who are poor and suffering in this age. Matthew's version on the other hand spiritualizes these afflictions. Throughout Luke and Acts Jesus and his followers are the special friends of the sick and oppressed, and their message offers them real, tangible salvation from their woes.