

Prayers of the People, BWCOB 11/2/2014

O God,

We have heard it said that the poor in spirit are blessed, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. But when our spirits are heavy, our minds weighed down, and hearts seem to carry the weight of the world – we do not feel so blessed. And so we pray for those who struggle under the weight of such blessings, that their promised inheritance might indeed come to pass, and they might find that the kingdom of heaven is indeed among them.

We have heard it said that those who mourn are blessed, for they will be comforted. But when loved ones are ripped away from us too soon, when we watch a friend or family member waste away with cancer, and when grief lingers long after the meals and the calls and the cards have stopped coming – we do not feel so blessed. And so we pray for those who know the sting of loss, that the assurance of comfort might not be in vain, and they might indeed know the peace that passes all understanding.

We have heard it said that the meek are blessed, for they will inherit the earth; that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness are blessed, for they will be filled; that those who are pure in heart are blessed, for they will see God. But we have seen otherwise. We have seen the meek trampled underfoot, victims of the proud and the powerful and those who use and abuse those who do not resist; we have seen good people who pursue righteousness and yet don't have enough to eat or clean water to drink; we have seen good people with pure hearts who are racked with guilt and shame and spiritual torment. And so we pray for the meek, and the pure in heart, and those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, that the systems and the powers and the realities that we have known and experienced might be subverted, and that all these shall indeed get what is promised to be coming to them.

We have heard it said that the merciful are blessed, for they shall receive mercy; that the peacemakers are blessed, for they shall be called your children; that those who are persecuted for your sake are blessed, for their reward will be great in heaven. But when we listen to the news, and we hear reports of innocents slaughtered, school children kidnapped and missing, journalists and aid workers tortured and killed, unarmed teenagers riddled with bullets fired by police, families and schools and churches and businesses overrun with terrorists and forced to flee for their lives – when we just hear the names ISIS or Boko Haram or Ferguson or Nigeria or Syria – O God we may feel angry or sad or hopeless or confused, but we certainly do not feel blessed. And instead of mercy and peacemaking most of us in our heart of hearts would just as soon have Captain America show up and unleash some good old fashioned fury in the name of goodness and justice.

And so we pray. Forgive us, for we know that our ways are not your ways, and our thoughts are not your thoughts. We know this because of those who have gone before us, those who have served your higher call, those who have given witness to us that there is a love more powerful than hate, a love that will not let us go even when we feel lost and forsaken, a love that surrounds us even in the darkest of times, a love at work even we do not feel it, and even when we do not believe it. And so we pray, that you would put a new and right spirit within us, that we might know the blessings to which the saints have testified to us, and follow them in loving and serving, trusting and following you.

We pray all this Jesus' name.

Amen.

~CWZepp