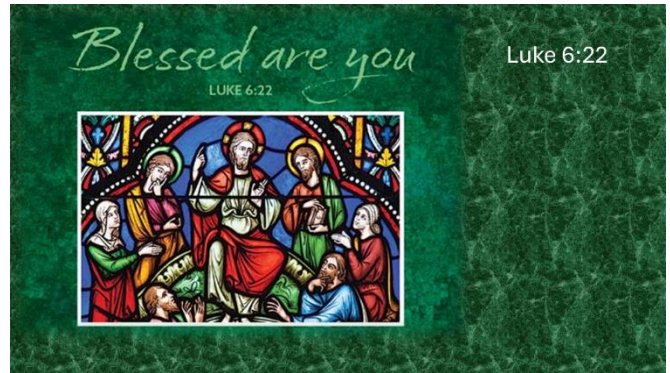


The Readings on This Day

***Click on the links for the Bible Verse(s)

Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany

The metaphors of the fruitful trees or the chaff make it easy for Christians either to overstress active discipleship, as if salvation requires radically altered behavior, or to spiritualize such language, as if one's interior feelings are all that matter. Can both be equally true?



[Jeremiah 17:5-10](#)

This passage is set next to Luke 6 as another biblical example of the rhetorical pattern of Yes and No. Christians understand that the water that nourishes us is baptism, and the tree is the cross. The passage is similar to much Christian ethics in that it focuses not only on deeds, but also on the intentions of the heart.

[The Psalm for the Day](#)

Responding to the curses and blessings from Jeremiah, we join in the similar passage of [Psalm 1](#), which also relies on the metaphors of the fruitful tree and the worthless plant. In *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, Psalm 1 is printed on the same page (339) as the frontispiece of the Psalms, a depiction of the tree nourished by the pool of water, the tree that the church is meant to be.

[1 Corinthians 15:12-20](#)

We who are to bear fruit are empowered by our faith in Christ, who is the first fruit of God's recreation of the world that will come about in the final resurrection.

[Luke 6:17-26](#)

Usually Luke describes Jesus as the forgiving Savior of all and God as merciful without bounds, but in this passage Luke is uncharacteristically harsh: God brings healing and all the gifts of salvation to the poor, the hungry, the persecuted. Yet many of the people worshiping in our churches are not these dispossessed persons. The gospel is proclaimed within a service in which we confess our sins of disregard for the poor and at which we are offered food that fills us with Christ.