

Good, transformational behaviour starts with us all

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Epiphany + 6C – Jer 17 5-10 Ps 1 Lk 6 17-26

I had an important conversation this week with a friend who laments the way we want to have good behaviour legislated rather than simply expecting it of ourselves and each other. This desire for legislation seems to arise from an us-and-them mentality – that we need laws to make *them* more decent. But today's scriptures make it clear that an us-and-them perspective is not helpful. As my friend put it, they teach that good, transformational behaviour starts with us – all of us.

In today's gospel Jesus doesn't just talk to one type of person and ignore the others. There's no us-and-them; no goodies and baddies. There're just different sides of the same people; all of us. Jesus' blessing sayings are addressed to you and me, but so are all his corresponding woe sayings. It's not as though the crowd listening to him changes from one saying to the next. We're told that Jesus looked up at *his disciples* and said the blessing sayings *and* the woe sayings to them. We hear them as his words to us. Jesus is talking to us; people who are sometimes blessed, but who sometimes need challenging; the same sort of disciples we've always been; a mixed bunch of people who get the message one minute, but we're deaf the next.

Jeremiah and the psalmist sing from the same song-sheet as Jesus. And there's a pair of images each of them sets beside their blessing and woe statements. It's the image of us by a stream of living water which strengthens and protects us as we seek God's way, but finds us lost in a hot dry desert when we

go it alone.

Our way has been modelled by Jesus – like him, we are to imitate God; to be kind, honest, humble, welcoming, accepting, compassionate, generous. When we follow this way, then Jeremiah and the Psalmist would say our community is like a stream of living water – poured out to refresh all of us, and all whose lives we touch.

Jesus went out to people – regardless of ethnicity, gender, propriety, religion or social standing – caring first, and dealing with explanations later. That's the model he's given us, and now it's our turn. Now we are the bearers of his Gospel of new life in the clear stream of God's love for all. We are the channel through whom the stream of living water flows. May God give us grace to open up unreservedly to the gift of this new life, and to hand it on authentically to coming generations. Amen.