

- So, then, we might say that Jesus was just listing *some* of the groups who were blessed, but didn't intend to exhaust all of the possibilities.
- Nice try, except for the fact that, unlike Matthew, Luke couples his Beatitudes with a series of woe statements:
 - "Blessed are you who are poor," but "Woe to you who are rich";
 - "Blessed are you who are now hungry," but "Woe to you who are filled now";
 - "Blessed are you who are now weeping," but "Woe to you who laugh now";
 - "Blessed are you . . . when they exclude and insult you," but "Woe to you when all speak well of you."
- So, if you are *not* poor, or *not* hungry, or *not* weeping, or *not* persecuted, well, then woe to you, Jesus warns, for you will lose everything in the end.

III. Comforting the Afflicted, Afflicting the Comfortable

- No matter how you try to twist it, in Luke's gospel, Jesus takes the side of the poor.
- It's a theme that Luke pushes from the very beginning of his gospel.
- Time and time again, Luke has Jesus siding with the poor, the outcast, the suffering.
- And so Luke's gospel is intended to shake us up.
- Luke is not interested in disciples who are complacent about the difficulties of the world around them because they have so many good things in life.
- And he is not interested in comforting people who think that they can become close to God simply by being grateful for the many things that they have.
- No, Luke wants to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.

IV. The Preferential Option for the Poor

- It's pretty tough stuff, but it's Luke's approach that gives rise to the Church's teaching on the preferential option for the poor.
- While the Church rightly teaches that God loves all of God's children, it also challenges us to see the poor as the people with whom God prefers to be.
- If we are not poor ourselves, then we need to stand with the poor – in our generosity, in our service, in our politics – for that is where we can find God.
- It is wrong for us to spiritualize everything about what Jesus teaches, so that we can be counted among those who are blessed.

- It's bad enough that Jesus can only offer spiritual comfort to those who are physically or materially uncomfortable in life.
- So, why should we, who are physically or material comfortable, be spiritually comfortable, as well?
- It only seems fair that we should experience some of life's discomforts, too.

V. Conclusion

- It's been a rough couple of weeks for us with all of the snow.
 - Many things have been cancelled or postponed.
 - In fact, the Archbishop has postponed his Annual Appeal yet another week.
- Many of us might not feel so blessed right now, trying to deal with all of the inconvenience of the weather.
- But, for as bad as all of this snow is, it will melt away some day and be just a memory.
 - Would that those who are poor or hungry or weeping or persecuted could say the same; would that their situation could just melt away and be a memory some day.
 - And yet, they are the very people Jesus tells us who are blessed.
- So while we continue to contend with all of the inconvenience caused by this weather, perhaps we can also spend some time tending to those with whom God prefers to be.
 - For blessed indeed are the poor, the hungry, the weeping, and the persecuted.