

Sunday, May 14, 2023 | Everyday Disciple

Week 5 | Luke 6:20-26 | "The Great Reversal"

A couple weeks ago, we resumed our study of Luke's gospel account by starting a series called "Everyday Disciple." In it, we'll explore a part of Luke's writing that gives us a peek into the day-to-day activities of Jesus' ministry. And, in doing so, we'll discover what it means to be like Jesus in everyday life.

The first two messages revolved around the Sabbath. We've learned that Jesus is the "Lord of the Sabbath." And, in doing so, we understand that this means the Lord is **inviting his followers to rest in his presence**. But also, Jesus' example on the Sabbath demonstrates that it is always lawful to do good. So much so that withholding good when it is in our power to do it actively promotes evil.

We then explored the moment when Jesus chose the Twelve Apostles. These men were ordinary. They were what we would call 'blue-collar.' Yet through this band of brothers, the Lord Jesus will reach the four corners of the world. Though men like Peter, John, and Thomas were ordinary folk, they were chosen for an uncommon task. This led them to do extraordinary things for God. And it was all because, one day, they obeyed when Jesus told them to follow him.

Last week, Pastor Bob unpacked the introduction to the Sermon on the Plain. In that message, we learned that Jesus came off the mountain and was met by many people. People from far and wide had come not only to hear Jesus teach but to be healed. Great miracles were performed that day, preparing the people to receive a message from the Lord.

Today, we'll begin unpacking the so-called 'Sermon on the Plain.' The Lord begins by presenting his audience with equal blessings and curses. And the first thing you'll notice about this passage is that the things he calls "blessed" don't seem blessed, and the things he pronounces "woes" against don't seem like they should be cursed. This shows us that, in God's Kingdom, there's been a great *reversal*. Though someone may appear to be hated by God, they are favored. And though someone may appear to be favored by God, they're condemned. If we understand these so-called 'beatitudes' and 'woes,' our entire value system will be flipped. And, in doing so, we'll begin valuing what God values.

Now, if you'll recall from last week, Jesus has just come down off the mountain after selecting the twelve apostles. But in that description, we're also told that, aside from the apostles, there

are two other groups: “a great crowd of his disciples” and “a great multitude of people.” So, as Jesus is preaching the Sermon on the Plain, three groups are present: his inner circle, his general followers, and the curious masses. But, as we’ll see, this message is specifically addressed to his *disciples*.

i. The disciple is blessed if they value God’s kingdom more than this one.

READ: Luke 6:20-23 (ESV)

²⁰ And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples and said: “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. ²¹ Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. ²² Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, **on account of the Son of Man!** ²³ Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.”

These are an abbreviated list of the Beatitudes. A fuller list is found in Matthew 5:2-12. That there are two lists likely indicates that Jesus had multiple versions of the same sermon. We did an entire sermon series on the Beatitudes in the fall of 2020 called 'Kingdom Manifesto.' If you want a more in-depth discussion, head to our website.¹

We get the term 'beatitude' from a Latin word that means "state of blessedness."² And it is helpful to know the etymology of this term because, right up front, you must understand that the Beatitudes are not ways to make you blessed. They are characteristics of those who are *already* blessed. They describe individuals exhibiting specific features (i.e., poor, hungry, sad, hated, etc.).

These individuals are blessed because they still trust God despite their unenviable state. Their difficulties do not turn them away from their Creator; their troubles draw them to the only One who can help. For the faithful follower of God, "one's fortune is not measured by either current or external criteria."³ They see their physical state through the eyes of heaven.

¹ <https://www.gracepointelife.com/sermons/kingdom-manifesto/>

² Harper, Douglas, “Etymology of beatitude,” *Online Etymology Dictionary*, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/beatitude>, [Accessed May 12 2023], “beatitude (n.) - early 15c., “supreme happiness,” from Old French *béatitude* (15c.) and directly from Latin *beatitudinem* (nominative *beatitudo*) “state of blessedness,” noun of state from past-participle stem of *beare* “make happy” (see *Beatrice*). Attested from 1520s as “a declaration of blessedness,” usually plural, *beatitudes*, especially in reference to the Sermon on the Mount.”

³ Bock, Darrell L., *Luke: 1:1-9:50*, The Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids, MI; Baker Academic, 1994), p. 576.

a. Blessed are those who are poor in this world but rich in the world to come.

So, when Jesus says that the “poor” are blessed, he’s not saying that being poor is something we should strive for. In scripture, while poverty can be the fault of no one, it can also be a self-inflicted curse (cf. Pro. 6:10-11; 30:8-9).⁴ In fact, nothing that Jesus calls “blessed” should be actively sought. The point is that the poor who trust in God can rest assured that “the kingdom of God” is theirs. This could also be said for the rich person who trusts in God. There have been many wealthy individuals who saw riches for what they were: *fleeting*. And because of that, they saw themselves as spiritually poor, as those were materialistically poor. This led them to do great things for God, for they knew they could not take their money with them when they died, so they used it to further the kingdom (cf. Lu. 8:1-3; Phil. 4:10-20). They became shareholders of the Kingdom of God rather than the Kingdom of Earth. When people trust in God, whether wealthy or destitute, they are made richer than the wealthiest person on this planet.

b. Blessed is the disciple who is hungry in this world but is full in the world to come.

Again, hunger is not something we should strive for. In fact, should you refuse to work, the Bible says you should go hungry (cf. 2 Thess. 3:10). The point is that those who are hungry for God will be filled. God is waiting to supply all our needs. Do you have a hunger inside for the things of God? If so, God promises to satisfy that hunger. Do you long for peace, righteousness, justice, forgiveness, restoration, etc.? Come to the Lord, who is ready to hand out seconds, thirds, and even fourths!!

c. Blessed is the disciple who weeps in this world but who will laugh in the world to come.

And, again, not to sound like a broken record, but should we want to weep? No. Of course not. But should we not also cry about the things that upset God? Though the Psalms are filled with wonderfully encouraging passages, more than a few are written by authors who were hurt, angry, and upset over the state of things. Were their feelings wrong? No! They were grieved for the things of God. They shed tears because they saw how wicked their world was. They cried for justice, and the Lord heard them. Sometimes, justice came swiftly; other times, justice has yet to have her day. But, either today or tomorrow, God will vindicate those who weep when God weeps. And on that day, when every wrong will be judged and wronged will be justified, there will be joy. So much so that they will even laugh.

⁴ Morris, Leon, *Luke*, The Tyndale New Testament Commentary, (Downers Grove, IL; InterVarsity Press, 1988), p. 147.

d. Blessed is the disciple who is hated, excluded, reviled, and spurned in this world but who will be honored, included, praised, and remembered in the world to come.

And, lastly, should you ever want to be persecuted? NO! Who would ever desire a thing like that. Some attribute the fact that no one likes to be around them because they're so close to God. But, in my experience, it's more that they're just not very friendly (cf. Pro. 18:24). Jesus, who was the holiest human being who ever walked the face of the earth, was a "friend of sinners" (cf. Matt. 11:19). And he went out of his way to converse and socialize with not only sinners but tax collectors (cf. Lu. 5:27-32)!

So, we should NEVER seek out persecution. We should never be initially mean or unkind. Nevertheless, should you follow God, you *will be* persecuted (cf. Jn. 9; Ac. 14:5-7, 19; 16:19-24). But, in God's view, this is a good thing. Should you be hated for "the Son of Man's sake," this is cause for joy, not sorrow. Why? Because what grief we incur as a result of our attachment to Jesus in this life will be rewarded a hundred times over in the future. And though we've lost the company of friends and family, our devotion to God puts us in the company of a far better sort: *the prophets*. Later, after the apostles had been beaten, they "...left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name" (Ac. 5:41).

ii. The disciple is cursed if they value this kingdom more than God's.

READ: Luke 6:24-26 (ESV)

²⁴ "But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. ²⁵ Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. ²⁶ Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets."

Notice there is no break between the woes and the beatitudes. The same group of people—i.e., the disciples (cf. vs. 20)—who were just given the beatitudes were also given the woes. Every listener, even so-called 'disciples,' will fall into one of two camps: blessed or cursed. Followers of Jesus must beware that their conduct determines their attachment to Jesus. Their values and what motivates them will show to which camp they belong. Lest we forget, among the masses are the disciples, and among the disciples are the apostles, and among the apostles, there is Judas. He is a cautionary tale for all true believers. We must go to great pains to reverse what we value. If we don't, we will become a traitor.

a. Cursed is the disciple who is rich in this life but poor in the life to come.

This beatitude is NOT saying that being rich is wrong. Such a literalist interpretation cannot stand since, immediately after Jesus pronounces the "woe" on the rich, he says that they are doomed *because* they have already "received [their] consolation." The wealthy person awaiting his consolation in heaven is not being condemned; the rich person who succumbs to the greed of riches and uses it to satisfy themselves is condemned. Money is a tool that can be used for the kingdom of God. But when it is only used to fulfill selfish desires, it condemns a man to hell. After all, while Jesus did say that nothing is impossible and that he can save anyone, he also said that of all the people who are least likely to get saved, the wealthy are the most resistant to the gospel (cf. Mat. 19:16-26). There will be rich Christians who will be in heaven. But the fires of hell will be filled with some of the wealthiest people who ever lived (cf. Lu. 16:19-31; Ja. 1:9-11). And, to be clear, you don't have to be rich to be condemned like the wealthy. The poor can have such an over-fascination with wealth that they miss the kingdom of God. In their pursuit of riches in this life, they miss the opportunity to lay up treasures in the next life.

b. Cursed is the disciple who is full in this life but who will be hungry in the life to come.

Again, is it wrong to have a full stomach? NO! But if you live such a life that you never feel the hunger for the life to come, you are fat in this life and thin in the next. To live the "good life" where you lack for no material thing and where you care nothing for God's kingdom condemns a man. Jesus said in Mark 8:36, "[For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?](#)" Have you ever fasted? Have you ever felt a spiritual hunger deep in your soul?

c. Cursed is the disciple who laughs in this life but who will cry in the life to come.

Once again, is it wrong to laugh? NO! The point is that when we see nothing wrong with this world, we get lulled into a false sense of security. In other words, ignorance is bliss. If you aren't moved, emotionally, by the pain and sin around you, if you can laugh when God weeps, then you are living a blessed life. You are cursed. Proverbs 14:9 says, "[Fools make fun of guilt, but the godly acknowledge it and seek reconciliation.](#)" Sometimes, it is God's will that we cry. We ought to be grieved for the things that grieve God's heart (cf. Eph. 4:30).

d. Cursed is the disciple who is well-liked in this life but who will be judged in the life to come.

Lastly, is it wrong to have friends? No. But if you've never offended someone because of your Christian beliefs, you're cursed in God's eyes. You're a plague on the church. James didn't pull any punches when he wrote, "[You adulterous people!\[a\] Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God](#)" (Ja. 4:4).

Being too preoccupied with this life may make us wealthy, fat, happy, and popular, but God calls us cursed. Getting too comfortable in this life makes us ill-prepared for the life to come.

So, what's the takeaway?

What we value will determine whether God calls us blessed or cursed.

How do I know if I value the things of God? Evaluate your time, talents, and treasures.

Video Description

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Pastor's manuscript can be found here: