

“Blessings and Woes”

October 13, 2019

Luke 6:20-26

I. Introduction

The teachings of Jesus Christ are totally opposite to those of human thinking—in [Isaiah 55:8](#) the Lord said, “**For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways.**” Many of the Jewish people, especially the religious leaders, found Jesus’ teachings unacceptable, offensive, and threatening. In their minds, His teachings were so wrong that they had to be satanic; Mark wrote in [Mark 3:22](#), “**The teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, ‘He is possessed by Beelzebul! By the prince of demons, he is driving out demons.’**” Then, and now, Jesus’ teachings go counter to popular worldviews. The Beatitudes recorded in today’s Scripture are a prime example. From the human perspective, it seems foolish to say that poverty, hunger, sorrow, and rejection are the producers of blessings and riches, satisfaction, happiness, and honor. But as God incarnate, Jesus declared who is blessed and who is cursed.

The sermon that Luke recorded in [Luke 6:20-49](#) is probably a shorter version of what we call “*The Sermon on the Mount*” found in [chapters 5, 6 & 7](#) in [Matthew](#). The “**plain or level place**” in [Luke 6:17](#) could easily be a “*plateau in a mountainous region.*” However, neither gospel writer recorded everything Jesus said on this occasion, i.e., neither Luke nor Matthew recorded Jesus’ complete sermon. Even Matthew’s account can be read in about ten minutes and Jesus surely preached much longer than that.

Jesus was preaching to His disciples, including the Twelve, as well as to the multitudes that were gathered there ([Luke 6:20, 27](#)). Even the chosen Twelve had to unlearn many things before they could effectively serve Him. They had left everything to follow Jesus ([Luke 5:11, 28](#)), and, as [Matthew 19:27](#) records, were asking, “**What then will there be for us?**” Jesus explained in this sermon that the truly blessed life comes not from getting or from *doing* but from *being*. The emphasis is on godly character; on having the correct attitude.

This sermon is not “*the Gospel*;” nobody goes to heaven by following the Sermon on the Mount. The sermon is not a “constitution” for the kingdom God will one day establish on earth. The Sermon on the Mount or the Sermon on the Plain is not a statement of ethics. This sermon is on salvation and the life that follows. It applies to the Christian life today and describes the kind of godly character one should have as a believer in this world. It is not the outwardly religious, superficially moral people who are saved, but rather people overwhelmed with their sinfulness who cry out to God for forgiveness and mercy.

Luke’s record of the Beatitudes consists of four blessings bestowed on the righteous, and four woes or curses pronounced on the wicked. Each blessing has a promised benefit connected to it, while each woe has a corresponding promised threat.

II. Four Blessings

A. Blessed are the poor in spirit. First is “Blessed are the poor”—the poor are those who are entirely dependent on others for support. But Jesus wasn’t teaching that those who are materially and economically poor are thereby blessed—turn to Matthew’s account, [turn to Matthew 5:1-13](#). As Matthew’s parallel account shows, Jesus was speaking of those who are “**poor in spirit.**” The spiritually blessed are those who understand their spiritual poverty and the bankrupt condition of their soul, no matter how much or how little *physical* wealth they possess. Jesus wasn’t calling for material poverty; rather, He was calling for the brokenness of heart that confesses spiritual poverty. Such people are like the contrite tax collector in [Luke 18:13](#), who “**would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'**” The poor in spirit realize that they cannot save themselves but look to God for His mercy and grace. Jesus said in [Matthew 11:28](#), “**Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.**” As the familiar verses from [Ephesians 2:8-9](#) say, “**For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-- and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.**”

The promise to the spiritually poor is that theirs “**is the kingdom of God.**” The verb “**is**” indicates that more than just the future blessings of the earthly millennial kingdom are in mind. As **Romans 14:17** says, believers enjoy now the kingdom’s blessings of “**righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.**” **Romans 8:17** says that they are “**are heirs-- heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.**” As children of God, the poor in spirit are possessors of all the kingdom blessings including eternal life, grace, mercy, forgiveness, joy, hope, security, comfort, peace, love, and righteousness now—today.

B. Blessed are those who hunger after righteousness. A 2nd mark of the blessed is hunger. **Matthew 5:6** indicates that this hunger doesn’t come from lack of food, but from lack of righteousness, i.e., being right in God’s eyes: Blessed are those who hunger after righteousness. This is an intense, deep, consuming longing for acceptance with God. David wrote about such a desire—**turn to Psalm 42:1-2.** Later, in **Psalm 63:1**, he wrote, “**You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water.**”

The blessing promised to those that are spiritually hungry is that they “**will be satisfied.**” Those who *truly* hunger for righteousness will be completely satisfied. **Psalm 34:10** says, “**Those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.**” In **Jeremiah 31:14** (NAS) we read, “**My people shall be satisfied with My goodness,’ declares the LORD.**”

C. Blessed are those who weep now. The 3rd mark of the blessed is those who weep now. This is a sorrow of repentance. **2 Corinthians 7:10** says, “**Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret.**” **Turn to James 4:7-10.**

The promise to those who mourn—those that see the hopelessness of life without the Savior—is that they “**will laugh.**” This is the joy, the relief, and the freedom of those who have been forgiven. **Psalm 30:5** promises, “**Weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning.**” In **Jeremiah 31:13**, God promised, “**I will turn their mourning into gladness; I will give them comfort and joy instead of sorrow.**”

D. Blessed are those who are hated, excluded, insulted, and rejected. The first three beatitudes describe how the repentant sinner views himself—heart-felt thoughts that lead to salvation and then to growth as a child of God. The fourth describes how the world sees him. The Lord used four verbs, hate, exclude, insult, and reject to sum up the hostility and animosity poured out on His disciples by the unbelieving world. This 4th Beatitude indicates that the work of the first three has been accomplished. Genuine salvation has occurred. Since the world does not reject its own, the world’s hostile reaction to Christ’s followers is evidence or proof that they are among the blessed.

Instead of being fearful and upset when persecution comes, Jesus commanded believers to “rejoice in that day and leap for joy.” Paul wrote in [Philippians 3:10](#), “I want to know Christ-- yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.” When we are treated like the world treated Jesus, it is evidence that we are starting to live as He lived, and that is a compliment. All of the saints of the ages past were treated in this way, so we are in good company. Also, God promises a special reward for all those who are faithful to Him—the best is yet to come.

[2 Corinthians 4:17](#) puts it this way, “For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.” [Revelation 21:3b-4](#) says, “They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

III. Four Woes or Curses

A. Curse on the rich. To those who reject Jesus Christ, to those who refuse to see their need, instead of blessings there are woes or curses. The first woe—a curse on the rich—is not on those who are materially rich, but on those who imagine themselves rich in the spiritual realm. In [Revelation 3:17](#) Jesus said, “You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.” These are those who think that their many righteous or good deeds are sufficient to earn their way into heaven. An example is the Pharisee found in the *Parable of the*

Pharisee and the Tax Collector in [Luke 18:11-12](#) who “stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people-- robbers, evildoers, adulterers-- or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’” The curse pronounced on them is that they “have already received their comfort” in this life. What awaits them in eternity is the comfortless, ceaseless torment of hell.

Turn to [Luke 16:19-25](#). The rich “have already received their comfort” in this life.

B. The 2nd curse is on those “who are well fed now.” These are the people who are totally filled up with their hypocritical self-righteousness. Unlike those who hunger for righteousness, those who “are well fed” imagine that they have everything they need. They lack nothing—they think they are well fed. They reject “the Way, the Truth and the Life” ([John 14:6](#)). The curse pronounced on them is that they “will go hungry.” Because they reject the “Bread of Life” ([John 6:35](#)), they will experience the never-ending hunger and thirst of a lost soul in hell.

C. The 3rd curse is on those “who laugh now.” Like the Pharisees of Jesus’ day, such people are smugly content with their own religious achievements and superficial morality. Because of their self-righteous acts, they happily contemplate the eternal bliss that they foolishly imagine awaits them in the eternal kingdom. Instead of laughter, Jesus says, “You will mourn and weep.” Writing of judgment and salvation, [Isaiah 65:14](#) says, “My servants will sing out of the joy of their hearts, but you will cry out from anguish of heart and wail in brokenness of spirit.” As compared to the everlasting joy promised to the true disciples, they “will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” ([Matthew 8:12](#)).

D. Finally, there is a curse on those of whom “all men speak well.” Earlier, Jesus had compared the treatment of unpopular true disciples with the treatment of the true prophets; here He links the false disciples with the false prophets. Those who are spoken well of by others in the world are just like the false prophets of old. In [Jeremiah 5:30-31](#) we read, “A horrible and shocking thing has happened in the land: The prophets prophesy lies, the priests rule by their own authority, and my people love it this way.”

Refusing to acknowledge their spiritual poverty, arrogant self-righteousness, and baseless contentedness, the cursed enjoy the company of others who are all walking the “**broad way ... that leads to destruction**” (Matthew 7:13).

IV. Conclusion

There are only two kinds of people in the world. First are Christ’s true followers, the spiritually poor, hungry, sorrowful, and rejected, who cry out to God for His pardon and mercy offered through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. They are blessed with eternal riches, satisfaction, joy, acceptance, and reward. **Philippians 4:7** says, “**The peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**” In contrast, the second group is those who see themselves as spiritually full, rich, happy, and accepted; sadly, they will be cursed with eternal poverty, emptiness, sorrow and judgment. They will hear the words from **Matthew 25:41**, “**Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'**”

Jesus was not teaching that poverty, hunger, persecution, and tears were blessings in themselves. If that were true, He would never have done all He did to alleviate the suffering of others. Rather, Jesus was describing the *inner attitude* we must have as we come to God for eternal life and if we are to experience the blessedness of the Christian life that follows. That doesn’t mean that we shouldn’t do what we can to help others in a material way—Paul wrote to Timothy in **1 Timothy 6:18**, “**Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.**” **Turn to 1 John 3:16-18.** But we must remember that no amount of “things”—good as they may be—can substitute for a personal relationship with God. What is your salvation based on? **Acts 4:12** says, that “**Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.**”

Blessed are the poor in spirit.

Blessed are those who hunger after righteousness.

Blessed are those who weep now.

Blessed are those who are hated, excluded, insulted, and rejected.