

What It Means to Be Blessed by God (Luke 6:17-26)

Summary (v.12-16):

- Jesus ascended an undisclosed mountain to pray all night. His prayer depicts the alignment of His human will (as a man) with His divine will (as the eternal Son).
- The purpose of this prayer was to be sovereignly informed about who, according to the will of the Father, will be mentored and disciplined by Jesus of Nazareth and inevitably empowered by the Holy Spirit to perform miracles and cast out demons (9:1-6) during Jesus' earthly ministry and the age of the apostles (Acts 2).

Context (v.17-19):

- At some point in the morning, Jesus called the twelve disciples to Himself (v.13). We are unsure of the exact process how He went about this.
- Regardless, when He came down with them (twelve disciples) to a level place (v.17), there were other disciples and a great multitude.
- The great multitude came for two reasons: to be healed of their infirmities (physical and demonic) and to hear Jesus preach.
- Previously, Jesus healed others by touching them (4:40; 5:13). This time, the process was reversed, as anyone who touched Him was healed. Jesus is greater than Elijah and Elisha, who were limited in their authority and power to heal.
- Jesus will take this opportunity not only to heal them but also instruct them. The "people" from Judea, Jerusalem, Tyre, and Sidon are "mixed people" of Jews, Gentiles, and Samaritans. Jesus' popularity and following are increasing.
- The "people" (v.17) is used almost forty times in Luke and nearly fifty times in Acts. This is the preferred term to describe those whom the gospel is for. They are the object of the Savior's teaching (7:1, 29; 9:13; 19:48; 20:1, 9, 45) yet will also abandon Jesus in His passion and then call for His crucifixion.
- Jesus preaches the "Sermon on the Plain," which is a distinct and separate sermon from Matthew's "Sermon on the Mount" (Matt. 5-7).

Jesus "lifts His eyes on the disciples" (v.20). Which disciples?

- The Twelve (v.13-15) and the great crowd of His disciples (v.17).
- Secondarily, especially regarding the "woes," He addresses those who will become His disciples by listening to and following Him (v.18) and warning those in the crowd about the programmatic reversal of His kingdom.

Four Encouragements to the Faithful Disciple (v.20-23) and Four Warnings to the Unfaithful Disciple and Unbeliever (v.24-26):

*Blessed begins each verse (v.20-24) and means "a prosperous soul in the presence of God to whom it always walks before."

*Woe is an utterance of frustration, sadness, or judgment.

1. Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God (v.20).
Woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation (v.24).
- Luke does not include "poor in spirit" as Matthew does in (Matt. 5:3) since Luke is unpacking the practical outworking of Mary's song (1:46-55) and Jesus' fulfillment of Isaiah 61.
- Poverty and wealth are social constructs and in themselves "morally neutral."

There are four categories of poverty: (1) Those who are poor due to a catastrophe. (2) Those who are poor due to oppression (1 Kgs. 21). (3) Those who are poor because of righteousness. (4) Those who are poor because of slothfulness and laziness (Prov. 14:4; 22:13; 26:13; 2 Thess. 3:10).

There are three categories of rich people: (1) Philanthropists and generous unbelievers who give with no concern for the spiritual well-being of others or the glory of God. (2) Those who are hoarders and amass fortunes. (3) Those who are in Christ and generous with their wealth, as they recognize that their affluence is a gift from God.

Not all poor people are part of the kingdom of God, as poverty is virtue-less.

Jesus is concerned with the spiritual state and attitude of the poor and the rich. No rich man in Scripture is rebuked for being rich. The "poor" are already in the kingdom ("is").

2. Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied (v.21).
Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry (v.25).
- The hungry one is promised to be satisfied (v.21). This is not a promise to be delivered from "worldwide hunger" but a promise for those who are spiritually hungry and empty (which may or may not be the consequence of physical hunger) to be content in God's provisions.
- Primarily, though not exclusively, it is imagery of the messianic banquet (Ps. 107:3-9; Isa. 25:6; 49:10; 55:1-2; Lk. 22:18; Rev. 19:9). God will pour out plenty on those who have sacrificed and suffered for Him.
- Those who are "full now" (v.25) are hedonists. They are full, yet empty. They live in a world of paradoxes: they are frustrated if they don't achieve their goals. When reaching their goals, they are bored. The thing sought, either way, wasn't worth the sacrifice.
3. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh (v.21).
Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep (v.25).
- The "weeping" is presumably over sin, for not all of those who mourn (for the sake of mourning) are comforted. The mourning is spiritual bankruptcy through the conviction of the Holy Spirit, as the laughter (joy) will only come to fruition in the forgiveness of sin.
- This "mourning" can also result from sadness over personal sin, the sin of others, and as a natural byproduct of living in a fallen world. The promised comfort is in this life and the next (Rev. 19:7).
- This "laughing" (v.25) describes the shallow and superficial person who is selfish, passive, and indifferent to the purposes of God. They find religion and faith trivial. They have no time for spiritual matters (Jas. 4:9; 5:1).
4. Blessed are you when others hate, exclude, revile, and spurn your name as evil on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice, leap for joy, for your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets (v.22-23).
Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets (v.26).
- The "blessing" is when others associate your name with the name of the Son of Man.
- There is a progression from the attitude of hate to verbal and physical mistreatment (exclude, insult, reject) with a growing intensity of persecution.
- When a disciple is persecuted for the name of Christ, it is a badge of honor that he shares with the prophets of old (2 Tim. 3:12; Heb. 11:35-38; 1 Pet. 4:14-16).
- On the other hand, Jesus rebukes those spoken well of by all people. While we should desire to live at peace and have a good reputation with outsiders (1 Tim. 3:7), no one walking in obedience can remain "invisible" or desires to.
- Eventually, truth confronts error, and light reveals darkness.
- Jesus warns His disciples about the cost of discipleship and the crowd rejecting Him. In His sermon, Jesus brings division, forcing those listening to follow or reject Him by establishing a culture of discipleship, which is a reversal of the cultural norm of this world.