

Upside Down Kingdom: Life Under the Rule of Jesus

Luke 6:12–26

Blessed Are the Unlikely

Introduction

We use the word *blessed* casually.

We use it to describe comfort, success, and security when things go our way.

But when Jesus speaks blessing in Luke 6, He does something unsettling. He declares that the people we assume are losing are actually winning—and that those who appear secure may be standing on very shaky ground.

Luke does not give us random scenes here. He shows us **how the kingdom of God takes shape**:

- The Kingdom begins in prayer
- It is formed through calling
- And it is revealed through a redefinition of blessing

This is not simply teaching. This is **kingdom formation**. (Read Text)

I. The Kingdom Is Built Through Prayer, Not Power

(Luke 6:12)

“Jesus went out to the mountain to pray, and all night He continued in prayer to God.”

Luke tells us something here that is easy to pass over, but impossible to ignore once we see it. This is **the only place in the New Testament** where we are explicitly told that Jesus keeps an **all-night vigil of prayer**.

Not before a miracle. Not before a confrontation. But before He commissions apostles—those who will represent Him, proclaim His kingdom, and bear His authority. This moment matters.

Jesus is not gathering strength. He is not uncertain. He is not asking for clarity about His identity.

As Ambrose reminds us, *“The Lord prays not to entreat for himself but to intercede for us.”*

Although the Father has placed all things into the hands of the Son, Jesus chooses to pray—not because He lacks authority, but because **He is fulfilling the form of a servant**. He prays as our advocate. He intercedes on account of our sin.

This is staggering.

Despite being eternal. Despite perfect communion within the Trinity. Despite having all authority. **The Son still prays to the Father for us.**

Ambrose goes on to say, *“With this model, a form is prescribed.”*

In other words, this is not just information—it is formation.

This is why praying “in Jesus’ name” is not a religious cliché. It is a theological necessity. We do not pray on our own authority. We pray as those whose lives are hidden in Christ—whose access to the Father is made possible by the Son who intercedes for us.

The kingdom is not built through strategy, charisma, or influence. It is built through dependence. If Jesus will not choose leaders without prayer, how dare we imagine we can live faithfully without it? When was the last time you truly prayed? Imagine if God sent us a weekly update about how much time we spent in his presence, like our phones do when they give us our scorecard on how much time we’ve spent on those little electronic leashes. How are you doing? What is the update for you?

Look back and consider all of the decisions you’ve made without prayer. How many relationships were started without praying through them? How many job decisions were made without praying for guidance first? Sometimes we struggle to log five minutes in prayer – let alone an overnight session!

Transition:

And after this night of prayer—after interceding for us—Jesus does something else equally unexpected.

II. The Kingdom Is Formed Through Calling Ordinary People

(Luke 6:13–16)

When morning comes, Jesus calls His disciples and chooses twelve to be apostles. Luke does not tell us they were impressive. He does not tell us they were educated. He tells us they were ordinary—and deeply flawed.

Fishermen. A tax collector. A zealot. And Judas.

Are you convinced that there are extraordinary Christians who are going to do all of the things that God has called you to do in your ordinariness? God didn't need Moses to be a polished and experienced speaker. God called him despite Moses lacking a gilded tongue. God didn't need Gideon to be completely confident in his call to leadership. God called him despite his lack of certainty. God doesn't need you to be an all-star, top tier, Bible-drill champion for you to serve. He wants your ordinariness because that points to His extraordinariness.

But notice something important in Luke's movement:

Jesus ascends the mountain with His disciples—but He **comes down to a level place for the crowd**.

The apostles are formed in the heights—but the crowd encounters Jesus in the valley. Why?

Perhaps because the crowd is not yet ready for the deeper, loftier instruction given to disciples. They are burdened. Wounded. Confused. Spiritually stuck.

And Jesus does not demand that they climb before He will speak. How would the crowd ever see Christ if He remained on the mountain?

This is deeply instructive for the church.

We often try to speak to the crowd as though they are already disciples. We use insider language. Lofty theology. Assumed knowledge.

But the crowd does not climb to majestic places. They are in the valley. And Jesus meets them there.

This is why ordinariness matters. God's kingdom advances not through spiritual elites, but through faithful people willing to descend—to meet others where they are.

Jesus does not call the qualified. He qualifies the called. And He does not wait for perfection before sending people into His mission.

Transition:

Once the people are gathered—disciples and crowd together—Jesus finally speaks. And what He says overturns everything they thought they knew.

III. The Kingdom Redefines What It Means to Be Blessed

(Luke 6:17–23)

“Blessed are you who are poor.” “Blessed are you who are hungry.”
“Blessed are you who weep.” “Blessed are you when people hate you.”

Jesus is not glorifying suffering. He is announcing **future reversal**.

Blessed does not mean comfortable. It means favored by God—caught up in His coming kingdom. These blessings are not commands to seek pain. They are promises that God sees, God remembers, and God will act.

And once again, Jesus does not merely speak this truth—He embodies it.

He becomes poor. He hungers. He weeps. He is rejected. The blessed life Jesus describes is the life He lives on our behalf.

Don't equate blessing with professional success or a bursting bank account. You may hear some preacher talk about living “the miracle” or from “the overflow of abundance.” That is NOT what Christ is saying here. We are blessed by His presence. Blessed in our dependance. Not in what the world considers success. Church, we must stop measuring our successes and failures with the systems of this world. Jesus confirms that in Luke 6.

IV. The Kingdom Warns Those Who Trust the Wrong Things

(Luke 6:24–26)

Luke's inclusion of the woes is not harsh—it is merciful.

The danger is not wealth. The danger is fullness without hunger for God. The danger is laughter that numbs us to reality. The danger is applause that replaces faithfulness. These are warnings to those who believe they already have all they need.

And then, suddenly, the sermon turns.

Gospel Invitation: Blessed Are the Ordinary Who Come to Christ

This is where the upside-down kingdom becomes good news.

Jesus does not stand on the mountain waiting for extraordinary people to climb their way up to Him. He comes down. He meets people where they are. He speaks blessing over those the world overlooks.

And that includes us.

Most of us are not powerful. Most of us are not impressive. Most of us are not spiritually accomplished.

We are ordinary people with ordinary failures, ordinary fears, and ordinary sins.

And that is precisely who Jesus calls.

The truly Blessed One—the Son of God—did not cling to power.
He became poor so that ordinary people could become rich in grace.
He entered our hunger so we could be filled with mercy.
He bore rejection so that we could be welcomed by the Father.

Even now, He prays for us. Even now, He intercedes for sinners who know they cannot save themselves.

The question is not whether you are worthy. The question is whether you are willing to trust Him.

If you are tired of measuring your life by success, comfort, or approval—
If you are weary of trying to prove that you are enough—
If you are hungry for something that actually lasts—

Then hear this clearly: The kingdom of God is open to you.

Repent—not because you are especially sinful, but because you are human.
Believe—not because you are strong, but because Christ is faithful.

Blessed are the ordinary who come empty-handed.
Blessed are those who trust not in themselves, but in Jesus Christ.

Today, you do not need to climb.
You do not need to impress.
You do not need to fix yourself first.

Come as you are.
Trust the One who came down for you.
And receive the life of the upside-down kingdom.

This morning, say Yes to Jesus and his invitation to the Kingdom. And
receive the Amen of his fulfilled promise.