

We are continuing in Luke chapter 6 today.

Luke 6:12-16 **12** In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God. **13** And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles: **14** Simon, whom he named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, **15** and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot, **16** and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

And so Jesus is growing popular with the masses, but is facing increasing pressure from the religious leaders who are now plotting with the political leaders to put Him to death. So Jesus did what He often did, He retreated and spent a night in prayer to His Father.

And He came down focused on calling out of the crowd of disciples 12 men to be his apostles. It is these 12 that He will spend the most time with from here on out.

This is an important moment.

For one, these were the only formal apostles. Later one was replaced, and then Paul joined their ranks. They were the only people to hold the office of apostle in history. They had to spend time with Jesus to qualify, they had to be specifically chosen by Jesus. And then once they were, they were entrusted with the word of God.

The New Testament that we have today was either written by apostles or by those that interviewed them directly, so Jesus was choosing here the sources for the New Testament. That was a big deal.

Something else Jesus is doing here is showing that He is creating a new community, a new nation, a new people. The Old Testament community of Israel originated with the 12 men who headed the 12 tribes, and here the New Testament community of the church which built upon Israel originated on the 12 men who were the twelve apostles . Jesus is demonstrating here that he is creating a new community, a new kingdom, a new people. He didn't come only to save individuals, but to connect those individuals into a new people. While it is true that He saves one by one as each one is given faith, He makes us part of something a new community, a new society, a new kingdom.

And so much of what Jesus does from this point on is work with these apostles to show them what this new nation that they would be the pillars of would be like.

17 And he came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, 18 who came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. And those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. 19 And all the crowd sought to touch him, for power came out from him and healed them all.

So Jesus is preaching and healing disease and casting out demons.

He's demonstrating what things are like in this new kingdom He's bringing. It's a place with no more sorrow and no more disease, where troubled people lose their troubles, where the demons are gone, where there is real power that heals.

And He is forming this new community, this new kingdom, reigned over by Jesus, where the power of Jesus is present.

Now we hear that, and we are drawn to it. I want to experience true community, I want to experience the power of God, I want to know what it is like to experience the presence of Jesus in my life. And we're rightly drawn to it.

This is what we were made for. To be in relationship with Jesus, to be free from sorrow and trouble, to be free from sickness and death, to experience the power of God in our lives and in our community.

But often, people will seemingly jump in, but then say, "And now I'm done with it."

It's pretty regularly that I meet with someone who is thinking of walking away from Christianity, and one of the regular statements I hear is, "I tried Christianity, but it didn't work."

I did the things Christians do, I expected the things they told me to expect about the life of faith, and I ended up disappointed, disillusioned, and wondering if the whole thing was a lie. It didn't work for me. If we're honest, most of us think those things sometimes, and probably know someone who expresses those things.

And it is so easy to read passage like this and say, "That's what Christianity is supposed to be, but that has not been my experience."

There were moments. Moments of pure joy, moments when our prayers were clearly and miraculously answered, moments where the Christian community was the most authentic thing we'd ever been a part of, moments of real grace and happiness and answered prayers.

But that hasn't been the every day stuff. And many of the things I expected never materialized. I tried Christianity, but it didn't work.

This kingdom hasn't been working for me.

But this is why it is so important to see what Jesus is doing here.

In healing and casting out demons, Jesus is demonstrating real power. And it's real power that we sometimes experience in this life. But the main thing He's doing, and we'll see this proven in the following verses, is showing what it will be like when His kingdom fully comes in the future.

Cody talked a few weeks ago about how we as Christians are living in a time of already and not yet. We are already part of a new community, a new humanity. We already are in the kingdom because Jesus is our king.

But, Jesus hasn't fully come. So the kingdom is not yet what it will be. The enemies of Jesus haven't all been put down yet. He isn't here in person. So we are not yet there.

So here Jesus conquers some of his enemies as a window on what His future kingdom will be when it fully comes. There will be no more disease, no more demons and spiritual evil. We're not there yet, but here He shows what it will be like when His reign fully comes.

At the water park at Sea Breeze, there's the part of the park where you all spray each other with the water cannons, and there is a giant barrel hanging up above everyone. And the barrel is being filled by a big spicket all the time. And because its filling up there are little splashes coming out of it all the time. But when it gets completely full, the weight of the water tips the barrel over and pours it all out and it soaks everybody. So if you stand under the barrel, you will get wet from the splashes. There is water coming

out of the barrel. But you stand under it, looking up, waiting for water to REALLY come out of the barrel.

We are living in an era when we are getting some of the splashes from the kingdom - the blessings of God. Real community, real power, real answered prayers, real miracles. But we're looking up in anticipation at that barrel we see filling up. We know there are more than the splashes coming, so we are looking up praying "Thy kingdom come (Thy barrel tip over)" as we get a little bit wet waiting for the big splash that will come in the future.

We are already wet, but we are not yet soaked. There are greater things yet to come.

In this case, Jesus is healing spiritual and physical disease. We know that Revelation 21 kingdom is coming where there is no more pain or sickness or death. And Jesus preaches the kingdom, and splashes that future healing on all of these people. And when God heals people today, that is a sample of what things will be like in the kingdom to come.

In fact, all of the miracles of Jesus say something about what the future kingdom will be like. He turns water to wine at a wedding party, showing us that God is a God of festal joy and his kingdom is a joyful one. His kingdom is a physical one where there will be celebration and dancing and food and drink.

He multiplies the loaves to show he is the bread of life, and in his kingdom there is no hunger.

He calms the storm to show that in his kingdom, there is no more chaos and fear and calamity.

Now in our day, he doesn't always do those things everywhere. In fact, God does miracles but they are relatively few and far between. A person is

healed sometimes, and we pray because we know God answers and sometimes allows some of that future kingdom to splash out and heal him. But because the kingdom hasn't yet fully come, we know that it isn't all the time.

And a huge reason many people say Christianity didn't work for me, is we confuse what is guaranteed for then with what is guaranteed for now.

It's so important that we keep the guarantees for then and the guarantees for now separate. Then we will be healed. Now, we don't know. Then, death will be no more. Now, everybody dies. Then, there will be a resurrection and the grave will open. Now, it is appointed unto men once to die and after that the judgment.

If we expect Christianity to miraculously solve all of our problems in this life, we will eventually be crushed. In fact, every person that Jesus healed on this day we just read about eventually died. They got sick again, and this time Jesus didn't heal.

Because the full and final healing is for then.

Now this may sound like a cop out. We read a passage that shows Jesus healing, and my point from it is that Jesus doesn't always heal? It might seem like a stretch, but look at what Jesus says next:

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.

Notice how Jesus separates the nows from the then.

Now you are often poor, hungry, weeping, hated. And while it's true you have a kingdom now because Jesus is your king, you shall be satisfied then. You shall laugh then. You have a great reward, but it is in heaven.

The normal experience now in the Christian life is not that we're always happy - we often mourn in the now. It's not that everything goes better, we can be poor now and still be in the kingdom. It certainly isn't that we'll have great relationships and everyone will love the things we believe.

So often, the reason Christianity doesn't "work" for us is because we expect everything that is promised for then to be happening now. And it just doesn't seem to deliver.

So what can we expect?

What does Christianity promise for now? What should we expect if Christianity were to work for us?

Let's walk through it:

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.

One thing we can expect and expect now is that to be a Christian is to be blessed.

But it's really rare that someone knows what that means.

I did a quick search for #blessed - a common hastag on twitter.

The first result was a probably 20 year old guy who came home from work and his parents had bought him a new GMC pickup truck. #blessed. The second one was someone who got first place in an indoor track meet. The third one was a guy who couldn't believe how much love and support he was getting from his friends.

So our view of blessedness is that we are blessed when we have financial and material wins, support from people, and good relationships. Now those are good things, and they are blessings to be thankful for. But we tend to think that if we have a blessed life, those are the things we must have. And to not have those things is to not be blessed.

But Jesus says we are blessed when we have a reward in heaven but don't have any of those things here.

He's talking to a multitude of people that had to give up a ton to follow Jesus. Many in following Jesus had become poor - they left careers and family farms and inheritances. And they were probably wondering when they would be blessed again, because now they were poor.

And Jesus says, "If you're poor because you followed me, and you have *me*, then you're blessed now. You have the kingdom of God."

Later in Luke, Jesus will tell them, **"Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Luke 12:15).**

We can't receive of a blessed reality without material prosperity. But Jesus says blessed are you who are poor. Now remember who he's talking to here, he is talking to His disciples. These are people who are followers of Jesus. They have left all to follow Him, they are poor but they have Jesus. So they are blessed.

Now who does this promise appeal to? This is only appealing to those who believe. To everybody else this is utter foolishness.

Jesus is preaching good news here that is only good news if the Gospel is true. It's only good news if God is really in control, can really see us, really cares about us, and will really reward and act. This is good news if we believe in that God.

But if we don't believe that the ultimate good is having Jesus, then this promise will mean nothing. Followers of Jesus are called to believe that the most important thing is having Jesus, and that having Him means we are blessed, even when we have nothing else.

Christianity works if we have Jesus. But if the expectation for Christianity working is that it will make us better off financially, then that Christianity probably won't work.

Disciples of Jesus who have lost it all for Him have the kingdom. If that's true, it's worth the poverty. If not, then its not.

In Matthew 7:6, Jesus says, “Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.”

Pigs are animals that just want to eat. They just want to feed their belly. And if you give them pearls, they'll trample them and attack you for not giving them something valuable.

And a person who really comes to know Jesus sees Jesus as valuable. They see Him as enough. They see Him as a treasure that's hidden in a field, worth selling everything to possess. But someone who only wants material blessing can even get mad at Christianity because it didn't work. If Jesus

isn't valuable, and Christianity only guarantees you Jesus, then Christianity isn't valuable either.

But if Jesus is God, then any material poverty we accept to have Him is worth it. We are really blessed, we really have the kingdom.

**21 "Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied.
"Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.**

Notice the promises for then: you will be satisfied, you will laugh.

For this to matter we have to trust Jesus and believe in the story of Jesus.

Jesus was crucified and rose again. He turned what looked like the triumph of satan into his defeat. He brought life out of death. So he can certainly bring the deepest belly-laugh from the darkest mourning. So if we believe the story, this is great news.

If we don't, then give me my blessings now.

For those who believe that Jesus is the resurrection and the life, that though those who come to him will someday die, they will live again with him in his kingdom, then the promise of future laughter when we mourn, future satisfaction when we're lacking it now, is water on dry ground.

But if all we have is now, these promises are useless.

But so often people will say, "I tried Christianity and it didn't work," because it didn't make me laugh now and it didn't satisfy my every desire now.

But Jesus didn't promise it would right now.

**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!**

Something else we should expect if we are disciples of Jesus is that we will be hated because of it. And maybe that would be easy if all Jesus was saying here was that, "Sometimes people know they're living the wrong way, and when they get around a Christian, they'll feel guilty so they won't like being around you."

But He is saying it will be worse than that.

They'll call you evil and exclude you. And Jesus says you're blessed when they do. When you're excluded by people because of Jesus, and you accept that, you are showing you have the acceptance that matters with Jesus.

Those of you in junior high and high school - there are going to be people who mock you because you follow Jesus. They're going to think that the things you believe about the Gospel, about right and wrong, about how you should should handle sex and the kinds of things you think are fun are crazy, and sometimes even evil. They'll say you're hateful even when you're as kind as you can be. You're blessed by Jesus.

When the church is thought of as evil because of our views on sexuality and gender and marriage, which is happening today, we are blessed.

And if we change beliefs to adapt to the present age, we are showing that we belong to this present age and not to the age to come. There are constant cries: the world will think we're crazy if we stick to these things, so we have to change if the church will survive! But Jesus is talking to a church that will be hated by its age, and blessed.

We can gain the whole world and lose our soul.

So much of the New Testament was written to a church that was persecuted on account of Jesus. Listen to

Hebrews 10:32-39 “But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, 33 sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. 34 For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. 35 Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. 36 For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. 37 For, “Yet a little while and the coming one will come and will not delay; 38 but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.” 39 But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.

Christians need to be prepared to suffer scorn and exclusion and loss for Jesus, but joyfully accept it because we know we have a better possession.

The spirit of our age says, “change, accommodate, don’t offend,” but the scriptures say, “be faithful, and persevere to the end.” But certainly not without joy in it all. In fact the only commands Jesus gives in this who section are in verse 23:

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.

Jesus says, “Celebrate, leap for joy, do a little dance,” because you do have a reward in heaven. You’re rejected here and now, but accepted there and then.

And the second reason he says to rejoice is because this is how prophets were treated.

And expectation of what Christianity is really like is that is a kingdom of prophets. And prophets are people who speak the words of the Lord.

But throughout the Old Testament, prophets were mistreated. Isaiah was sawn in half, Moses was grumbled against, Samuel saw constant sin in the kingdom, Jeremiah was known as the weeping prophet. They had hard lives, men of whom the world was not worthy Hebrews says.

And rather than think, “Something must be going wrong because the world doesn’t love the church,” Jesus says, “That’s what it’s like when you’re a prophet, so rejoice.”

And just in case we still think that Christianity is all about giving us our most enjoyable life right now, Jesus goes on:

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.

And if you’re rejecting Christianity because it isn’t doing it for you now, you are rejecting a false version of Christianity with false claims, not the real thing.

To say “I tried Christianity and it didn’t work because my circumstances aren’t better” means you weren’t even trying Christianity. I’d urge you to try the real thing!

It's as if you went on a date with Christianity's evil twin called prosperity Gospel, and you believe the worst about Christianity because of how prosperity gospel acted the whole time.

Christianity's evil twin said blessed are you when you're rich.

Christianity's evil twin said blessed are you when you are rising to the top of the social food chain.

Christianity's evil twin said if you just have enough faith your loved one will always be healed because you prayed.

Christianity's evil twin promised that following Jesus would make your life better and give you happiness and fulfillment all the time.

Christianity's evil twin, prosperity gospel, said if you follow Jesus your marriage will be great and your church experience will always be encouraging.

Christianity's evil twin says you can live your best life now. Jesus says if you live your best life now, you've already received your consolation.

And again, prosperity Gospel is Christianity's evil twin. It looks like Christianity in some ways, it calls itself Christianity, many people who look like Christian pastors with beaming smiles preach it.

So when it turns out to be a liar, you are tempted to say, "Christianity lied."

You got home from that date and said, "I don't want anything to do with Christianity because of how it treated me."

Meanwhile Christianity is saying, "I didn't even go on a date with you. That wasn't me!"

What Christianity guarantees you now is forgiveness of sin and a right relationship with God.

What it promises you then is everything else on top of it.

And that always works.

Our problem is not that Christianity doesn't work.

It's that it doesn't keep the false promises many have made for it.

Our solution is not to run away from Christianity, but to run to the real thing.

Scriptures Referenced:

Luke 6:12-16

Luke 6:17-19

Luke 6:20-23

Luke 6:20

Luke 12:15

Matthew 7:6

Luke 6:21

Luke 6:22

Hebrews 10:32-39

Luke 6:23

Luke 6:24-25

Sermon Notes

Luke 6:12-26

- I. A New Kingdom (Luke 6:12-19)
- II. Surprising Blessing (Luke 6:20-22)
- III. Unexpected Woe (Luke 6:23-25)

Sermon Questions for Discussion in Small Groups:

- 1) Why do so many people say that “Christianity didn’t work for me?”
What were they expecting?
- 2) Read the Beatitudes in Luke 6:20-26 again. What should we expect of Christianity now, and what should we expect in the life to come?
- 3) Why do Christianity’s promises seem worthless to some?
- 4) What makes Christianity’s promises compelling to us?