

## Blessed

### Luke 6:17–26 (ESV)

**INTRO/CONTEXT:** Historically, the passage before us has been called “The Sermon on the Mount” because, in Matthew's account, we are told that Jesus delivered this sermon from a Mountain. Here in Luke, it says he stood on a level place. This has caused some controversy among theologians. Some believe that the two gospel writers are referring to two different events; others say the content is so similar that it must have been the same occasion, and Jesus was finding the level place on the mountain to stand on. Either way, the content of the Sermon on the Mount was likely the content of most all of Jesus's sermons. It was the life message of Jesus, so to speak. That being the case, it is best to take Luke's and Matthew's accounts and interpret them together.

Notice also, the theme that is developing thus far in the Gospel. Jesus came to be baptized by John. He crossed into the Jordan. Then, he was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted for 40 days. Now, we see Jesus gathering and explaining the Law of God in a fresh and new way on a mountain.

**OT ALLUSION:** Who does that remind you of? Well, Moses, during the Exodus - led the people through the Red Sea, which is figuratively called “their baptism,” then 40 years in the wilderness where they were tempted and tried, and finally to Mt. Sinai, where Moses went up on the mount to receive the law of God. So, the Gospel writers present Jesus as a true and better Moses. The Moses of the New Covenant, as it were.

That should cause us to ask, if the people in Exodus were being delivered from Egypt, from what are we being delivered? We are being delivered from the Kingdom of this World to the Kingdom of God and its King, Jesus Christ.

Understand this sermon from that perspective - what is the world view of citizens of God's Kingdom?

#### **TEXT: Luke 6:17–26 (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup> 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, who came to hear Him.

So the numbers are growing tremendously. The circumference of Jesus's reach is also growing. At one point, his followers were those of Galilee, now they came from all Judea, as well as Jerusalem in the deep south. And Luke even mentions the Seacoast of Tyre and Sidon. That was in the land of Syria. So, likely, Gentiles are beginning to gather around Jesus of Nazareth.

Jesus was first and foremost a preacher. He taught them the word of God. He taught with clarity and authority. Remember, we said earlier that the substance of His

teaching revolved around the Kingdom of God. Jesus was a King and His Kingdom had come and was coming.

18b. and to be healed of their diseases.

So remember, as Jesus was preaching the Kingdom, the blessing of the Kingdom began to spill over. This is important - what happened during the earthly ministry of Jesus was absolutely unique. The King was here, he was inaugurating a Kingdom, and the blessing and benefit of the ultimate kingdom of God was surrounding Him. Heaven was spilling over onto earth, as it were.

18c. And those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured.

Now that is an interesting phrase. It's a bit short of full-out demonic possession. Luke says they were troubled by unclean spirits. This may be described as oppression.

Some of you here today are not possessed, but there are evil spirits who oppress you. We are all tempted, but you are tempted in a way that seems irresistible. We all have to work on our attitude, but depression seems to have its chains around you. This can be a form of demonic oppression. And the text says you need to be "cured."

We believe in medicine and doctors, but a spiritual problem can't be cured by physical means. It can be masked. You can be so drugged that it seems to improve. But you need to be cured.

***If you know someone who may be going through this - download my book, "OUR FIGHT" which deals with this in detail.***

<sup>19</sup> And all the crowd sought to touch him, for power came out from him and healed them all.

That gives us some sense of how this manifestation of the Kingdom worked. As they got close to Jesus, it was like power flowing off a battery.

**ILLUSTRATION:** Later in Luke, we will read that a woman with a discharge of blood touches Jesus, and He stops and says, "Who touched me?". Peter says, "they were all touching you, Lord", but Jesus says, "No, someone touched me because I sensed power go out from me." So, in the same way, power goes out from him here, and he heals people.

BTW, there is a sense when you are operating in your spiritual gift that it feels that way. From my experience, it is a very physical sensation. Julie can tell you that after a Sunday sermon, I have a strange exhaustion. There are times when a lot of unsaved people are present; I can sense it. I will tell the altar workers to get ready for the harvest.

This was the regular rhythm of Jesus. He would be spent during the day, and then at night, Jesus would recharge in the presence of his Father.

Jesus begins the sermon with a series of FOUR blessings. Now, we don't use the word "bless" very much in our regular conversation. I would suggest that most of us don't know what it means. We ask the Lord to, "*bless* the missionaries." Suppose the Lord responded and said, "What exactly are you asking me to do?". How would we answer?

**ILLUSTRATION:** I've told you about when I challenged my first church to pray without saying "bless." Instead, say what you mean by bless. Well, they hardly prayed at all that week.

**\*The word *blessed* in the Greek language** is a word that *goes along with being a god*. Outside of the Bible, it was never attached to anyone but the gods of Greek mythology. "*The blessed gods*."— *This term was so unearthly that it was not used about humans except in the Bible.*

It is an exclamation of **explicit joy and happiness**. It is a term to describe a state of bliss, joy, and happiness that can only be found in someone who is in perfect fellowship with his or her creator.

Well, we might ask, "Who is blessed?", or, "How do we become blessed?". Jesus is going to answer that question in this sermon. If you had to give the Sermon on the Mount a title, you may call it "how to be blessed".

<sup>20</sup> And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said: "**Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.** <sup>21</sup> "**Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied.** "**Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.** <sup>22</sup> "**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!** <sup>23</sup> **Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.**

So, if you want to be blessed, if you want to experience deep and abiding joy and happiness, get **poor, hungry, sad, and unpopular**. Let us pray.

This is the antithesis of everything we yearn for as Americans.

- The American Dream is no longer to own a home, but to own a few homes and several rental units.
- The most popular song in America is Anthony Oliver's protest ballad about people getting fat off of welfare brownies.
- Depression is our true national pastime. What steel barrons were 100 years ago, Big Pharma is today.
- Popularity is an illusion - we check our social standing by looking at the number of followers and likes we have on social media.

Jesus says, to our generation, “if you want to be ridiculously blessed - get **poor, hungry, sad, and unpopular**”.

NOW - in case there was any lack of clarity as to what Jesus meant, he also gives a series of WOES. “Woe unto you” was a typical form of a curse spoken over a city or a person. Perhaps the woes will give clarity to what Jesus meant.

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

Well, that didn’t change the meaning much at all, did it?

- If you want to be blessed: get **poor, hungry, sad, and unpopular.**
- If you want to be cursed: **get rich, eat a lot, party, and have a ton of friends.**

This is where the preacher typically says, “Now, this means something entirely different than it seems to mean”. But I say unto you - it means exactly what it says.

By the way - this line of thought should sound familiar to you if you have been working through Luke with us. Remember the Magnificat? The song of Mary, whom Gabriel said was highly favored and blessed? Remember what she sang?

### **Luke 1:51–53 (ESV)**

<sup>51</sup> He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; <sup>52</sup> he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; <sup>53</sup> he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.

It’s the same idea Jesus is teaching here in this sermon.

NOW, how are we to understand it? There are three ways those in difficult circumstances have an advantage in this life - specifically in how they enter the kingdom, engage with the King, and evaluate their circumstances.

## **1. Those in Difficult Circumstances Hold a Distinct Advantage when Entering the Kingdom.**

The Scriptures offer a myriad of warnings against the danger of riches.

### **Matthew 19:24 (ESV)**

<sup>24</sup> Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.”

- The Gospel of Luke will tell us about the rich fool in **Luke 12:15–21 (ESV)**. A man who had full barns and an empty heart. Rather than looking after his own soul and expressing generosity to others, he decided to just build bigger and bigger. Jesus said, “thou fool, this night your soul will be required of you”.
- Then later the rich young ruler - **Luke 18:18–30 (ESV)**. He went away said because he owned much.

### **1 Timothy 6:9–10 (ESV)**

<sup>9</sup> But those who **desire to be rich** fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. <sup>10</sup> For **the love of money** is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this **craving** that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

At the same time, in every survey I've ever read the vast majority of people come to a true understanding of the Gospel in the midst of difficulty and loss.

***God seems to whisper through pleasure and shout through pain.***

### Paul tells us **1 Corinthians 1:26–31 (ESV)**

<sup>26</sup> For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth.

By saying, “not many” Paul was acknowledging there were a few. A blessed minority who were both successful according to worldly standards and still humble enough to see their immense need of Christ.

If you are wealthy - hear those words of Jesus from Matthew's Gospel - “blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs in the Kingdom of Heaven”.

Though your bank account is flourishing - look to thy soul.

- Have you sinned?
- Have you feasted on the bread of this world but been anemic toward the Kingdom?
- Have you sacrificed your family on the altar of success?
- Have you held your possessions or have they held you?
- Are you willing to relinquish your possessions for the sake of the Kingdom?

If so, there is hope that you too may enter the Kingdom of Heaven. If those questions give you pause, you are still not ready.

*There is an advantage when entering the Kingdom...*

## **2. Those in Difficult Circumstances Hold a Distinct Advantage when Engaging with the King.**

There is something about a difficulty that causes our Lord to draw near. Suffering is like a sweet perfume to the Holy Spirit.

**Psalm 138:6 (ESV)**

<sup>6</sup> For though the Lord is high, he regards the lowly, but the haughty he knows from afar.

**James 4:6 (ESV)**

<sup>6</sup> But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

If you are in the midst of a storm don't be so quick to rush your way through it. Allow it to awaken you to your utter dependence on your Creator and Savior.

This was the perspective of the Patriarchs.

**Paul writes in Philippians 3:10 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> that I may know Him and the power of his resurrection, and *may share His sufferings*, becoming like Him in his death,

Paul recognized that suffering offered a unique ability to understand Christ in a greater way. If Jesus is your world... then knowing Him more fully is not a bad thing. If anything else is what you are really living for, suffering is always a distraction.

Can you say with Paul, for me to live is Christ and to die is gain?  
If so, you can also say, for me to live is Christ and to suffer is gain.

For suffering brings a unique communion that can be found no other way.

**That is why James writes in James 1:2-4 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> "Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds",

Notice he didn't say count it all joy **IF** you face trials, but **WHEN** you face trials.

**That phrase - VARIOUS TRIALS** - The word various is the Greek word where we get the English word "polka-dotted." The word also means "multi-colored." Trials come in all shapes, sizes, and colors.

**It refers to both major tragedies and to minor disappointments.**

<sup>3</sup> "for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness".

### **3. Those in Difficult Circumstances Hold a Distinct Advantage when Evaluating their Experience.**

There is something about a difficult circumstance that shapes your perspective.

You see, we are told that Satan is the god of this world. He holds dominion, because Adam surrendered it to him in the garden. Yet, when Christ came, it reclaimed that dominion - all authority in heaven and on earth was given to Jesus.

So currently, we are living in the overlapping of two Kingdoms -

- Satan's Kingdom is operating on borrowed time.
- The Kingdom of Christ is growing.

**In Matthew 13:31–32 (ESV) Jesus said,**

<sup>31</sup> He put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. <sup>32</sup> It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches."

God the Father is in the process of answering that ancient prayer of Christ and the church, "Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven".

**Psalm 110:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> The Lord says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool."

The day is coming when King Jesus will literally rule and reign over this entire planet. Heaven will come down and there will be a new heaven and a new earth. It's going to happen.

If you follow Jesus Christ as your KING,

- You will one day walk on streets of the purest gold.
- You will feast at a banquet of the finest food.
- You will count among your friends and associates David and Solomon, Abraham and Paul.
- Every tear will be wiped away from your eyes.
- And you will serve King Jesus forever and ever.

In fact, we are told in - **2 Corinthians 4:17–18 (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup> For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, <sup>18</sup> as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

**CONCLUSION/INVITATION:** There will be times on this earth that will seem like hell to you, but remember - this is as close to hell as you are ever going to get if you know Jesus Christ.

But for those of you who do not know Him - this is as close to Heaven as you are ever going to get. So enjoy the fine car, enjoy the best of food, enjoy the likes and follows. For soon, they will perish... and your misery will be eternal... lest you repent.