

Blessings and Woes

Scripture: Luke 6:20-26 — April 14, 2024

Welcome from wherever you are joining us...

11 AM— Pray for Kids Church.

INTRODUCTION:

Derwin Gray — Married, Drafted, Fame, Money, MISERABLE.

I was living the American Dream, *The good life*, and I thought happiness would be mine. But just like chasing shadows, I wasn't able to catch lasting happiness...

I WAS FAMOUS, I HAD THE GIRL, I HAD THE MONEY, YET IT MADE MY LIFE WORSE BECAUSE I WAS SUPPOSED TO BE HAPPY, AND I WASN'T.

50 books on happiness in 2000 to 4000 books in 2008 to more than I could go through on Amazon. The most popular class at Yale in school history was in 2018-19. Psychology and the good life.

As a pastor, I see a lot of unhappy people...I have learned that both those who follow Jesus and those who do not are longing and desperately searching for happiness. In their search, many are learning all the places where it can't be found: a career, a marriage, in sexual escapades, in having children, in partying, or anything else. **Derwin Gray, *The Good Life: What Jesus Teaches about Finding True Happiness* (Nashville, TN: B&H Books, 2020), 6.**

Maybe CSL was on to something when he wrote:

If I find in myself desires that nothing in this world can satisfy, the only logical explanation is that I was made for another world. If none of my earthly pleasures satisfy it, that does not prove that the universe is a fraud. Probably earthly pleasures were never meant to satisfy it, but only to arouse it, to suggest the real thing. **CS Lewis, *Mere Christianity*— Hope, pg 121.**

Pastor Derwin Gray asks these questions:

What if the happiness we are chasing after can never be caught?

What if the happiness we are running ourselves into physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion for is inferior to the happiness we've been made to experience?

What if created things were never meant in the way we desire to experience happiness?

Happy are the people who know the joyful shout; Lord, **they walk in the light from your face.** ¹⁶ They rejoice in your name all day long, and they are exalted by your righteousness. **Ps 89:15-16.**

You reveal the path of life to me; in your presence is abundant joy; at your right hand are eternal pleasures. **Ps 16:11.**

What if happiness is found by gazing into the face of God in Jesus Christ and walking in His way of life, light, and righteousness?

TRANSITION:

What if when Jesus came down the mountain and began to teach the disciples and the crowds from Jerusalem and Judea, and Tyre and Sidon, he was giving them the "SECRET" to the good life?

STAND TO READ—Luke 6:20-26

CONTEXT: Jesus spent the night in prayer and came down from the mountain. He appointed twelve apostles from his disciples, and now he begins to teach.

20 Then, looking up at his disciples, he said:

Blessed are you who are poor, because the kingdom of God is yours.	24 But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your comfort.
21 Blessed are you who are hungry now, because you will be filled.	25 Woe to you who are now full, for you will be hungry.
Blessed are you who weep now, because you will laugh .	Woe to you who are now laughing, for you will mourn and weep.
22 Blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you, insult you, and slander your name as evil because of the Son of Man . 23 Rejoice in that day and leap for joy. Take note—your reward is great in heaven, for this is the way their ancestors used to treat the prophets.	26 Woe to you when all people speak well of you, for this is the way their ancestors used to treat the false prophets.

Ok, we've all got it now, right? Let's pray and go home...

Romans 12:2 says— *Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.*

LET'S PRAY

Let's break this down a little—Beatitudes in Matthew vs Luke...

RC Sproul says— Jesus was delivering the word of God to define the new covenant—the new situation that came to pass with His appearance. The Beatitudes have two emphases. The first is the kingdom of God.... Jesus associated the kingdom of God with His own life and ministry. We can't separate the person of Christ from the content of the Beatitudes because **the Beatitudes themselves point to Him as the ultimate source of our blessedness.**

Blessed are you who...

The word for "blessed" is *Makarios*. It is often translated as "happy." Happiness tends to be associated more with feelings...

Scot Mcknight writes: on this one word the entire passage stands and from this one word the whole list hangs. Get this word right, the rest falls into place; get it wrong, and the whole thing falls apart. We need to drill down to get it right... First, the one who is blessed is blessed by the God of Israel, YHWH. Second, there is a future (end-time) focus, not an immediate circumstance.

Third, those blessed are marked by specific attributes or characteristics and those who are implicitly not blessed (the Bible's word is "cursed"; see Luke 6:20–26; cf. Deut 28) are marked by the absence of those characteristics and by the presence of the opposite characteristics. Fourth, there is an "others" component: blessed people are noted by godly, loving relations with God, self, and others. Fifth, reversal or contrast. What Jesus blesses is countercultural and revolutionary and so turns culture inside out and society upside down.

If we add all this together, we get something like this: a "blessed" person is someone who, because of a heart for God, is promised and enjoys God's favor regardless of that person's status or countercultural condition. **Scot McKnight, Sermon on the Mount, ed. Tremper Longman III and Scot McKnight, The Story of God Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 36.**

Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes—The Beatitudes are not statements of what people must do to be blessed, but statements affirming the blessedness that certain people already possess because of a present or future condition (Bailey, *Middle Eastern Eyes*, 68). Jesus does not prescribe action, but affirms a blessed state. **Kenneth E. Bailey, Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels, 68.**

So let's see how this plays out...

Blessed are you who are **poor** b/c the kingdom of God is yours. =**humble, not proud.**

AJ Swoboda writes— Humans are a vulnerable species, made to need help. When we refuse the need for help, we refuse our humanity. **We become less than human.**

In the storyline of Scripture, Jesus critiques the church in Laodicea for this very thing: "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" **Rev. 3:17. To need nothing is inhumane. To be needy, holy.** **A. J. Swoboda and James Bryan Smith, The Gift of Thorns: Jesus, the Flesh, and the War for Our Wants (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2024).**

The poor of this beatitude possess the blessedness of being the object of God's favor. **R. Stein**

What if Jesus is reminding them and us that when we recognize our weakness, need, and poverty, then we actually become rich?

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ: Though he was rich, for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich. 2 Co 8:9

What is the kingdom of God?

Paul writes:...for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. **Romans 14:17**

The kingdom that Jesus preached and lived was all about a glorious, uproarious, absurd generosity. Think of the best thing you can do for the worst person, and go ahead and do it. Think of what you'd really like someone to do for you, and do it for them. Think of the people to whom you are tempted to be nasty and lavish generosity on them instead... Not a list of dos and don'ts—The point was to imprint and illustrate an attitude of heart, a lightness of spirit in the face of all that the world can throw at you. And at the center of it is the thing that motivates and gives color to the whole: you are to be like this because that's what God is like. God is generous to all people, generous (in the eyes of the stingy) to a fault: he provides good things for all to enjoy, the undeserving as well as the

deserving... **this list of instructions is all about which God you believe in—and about the way of life that follows as a result.** Tom Wright, *Luke for Everyone*, 73–74.

Blessed are you who weep now, because you will **laugh**—

¹ When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream. ² Our mouths were filled with laughter then, and our tongues with shouts of joy. Then they said among the nations, “The Lord has done great things for them.” **Ps 126:1–2.**

22 Blessed are you when people **hate** you, when they **exclude** you, **insult** you, and **slander** your name as evil **because of the Son of Man.** **23** Rejoice in that day and leap for joy. Take note—your reward is great in heaven, for this is the way their ancestors used to treat the prophets.

Note the progression from **hate** (v. 22) to **exclusion** (which later took the form of being banned from the synagogue) to **insult** (cf. 1 Peter 4:14) to **slander** of their name (cf. Matt 5:11). Walter L. Liefeld, “Luke,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 891.

Jewish prayer called the Shemoneh 'Esreh. Dated around a.d. 85, it reads: “For the renegades let there be no hope, and may the arrogant kingdom soon be rooted out in our days, and the Nazarenes [Christians] and the ...[heretics] perish as in a moment and be blotted out from the book of life and with the righteous may they not be inscribed. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who humbles the arrogant.” Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, vol. 24, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 200.

We must not become the ones who hate, exclude, insult, and slander...

Blessed or Happy are the poor, the hungry, the weeping, and the hated.

How does that compare with your plan of happiness?

Are you ready to leap for joy?

What implication does this have for us today in an increasingly hostile culture?

Woe — *oúai f*: a state of intense hardship or distress—‘disaster, horror.’ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, 242.

24 But woe to you who are **rich**, for you have received your comfort.

Think Lazarus and the Rich Man, Rich Young ruler— we’ll get there someday.

For Luke “the problem is not possessions as such, but the failure to use them properly. Those who do not use even what little they have, like the pathetic servant who hid the money he was given by his master (Luke 19:20–27) are as blameworthy as those who use what they have for selfish purposes, without thought for others” (Juel, 35). Charles H. Talbert, 74.

William James said, “The desire to gain wealth and the fear to lose it are chief breeders of cowardice and propagators of corruption. There are thousands of conjectures in which a wealth-bound man must be a slave, whilst a man for whom poverty has no terror becomes a free man”.

Martin Luther said, “Rich folks’ children seldom turn out well. They are complacent, arrogant, and conceited and think they need to learn nothing because they have enough to live on anyway.” Bruce Larson and Lloyd J. Ogilvie, Luke, vol. 26, *The Preacher’s Commentary Series* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Inc, 1983), 126.

What do we do with all this? What does it mean for us today?

The Beatitudes are a picture of what God’s people, under his rule and reign of grace, live like on earth. They are the values of heaven invading earth. It’s like God’s people bring the currency of heaven and spend it on earth, enriching everyone’s life. Derwin Gray, *The Good Life: What Jesus Teaches about Finding True Happiness*, 10.

To live a blessed life, you must see that there are only two ways to live: under God’s rule or by the world’s values.

To live a blessed life, you must adopt an eternal perspective.

To live a blessed life, you must adopt God’s values while rejecting the world’s values.

Will I trust Jesus and inherit the kingdom of God?

What if happiness is found by gazing into the face of God in Jesus Christ and walking in His way of life, light, and righteousness?

PRAYER

OFFERING and Connect cards

BENEDICTION

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ: Though he was rich, for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich. 2 Co 8:9

May you and I, may we together— *know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ: Though he was rich, for our sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might live in his kingdom, may we be hungry, trusting God will fill us, may we weep now, knowing a day is coming when we will laugh with joy, and may we rejoice and leap for joy because we know Jesus rose from the grave and is alive.*