

“Blessings and Curses”

(Luke 6:20-26)

Introduction

➤ One of the more significant interpretive challenges with the passage before us this morning, is whether Jesus was teaching spiritual truths or moral lessons. Those who think that Jesus was giving lessons on morality interpret Jesus’ sermon (and particularly the “Beatitudes”) as a teaching on religious or ethical reform (a legalistic morality). They understand Jesus to be a crusader for social justice and religious piety – promoting asceticism (temperance or deprivation), and renouncing materialism (abundance or luxury).

I think it is more accurate to understand Jesus to be teaching spiritual truths, and not moral lessons. That is, this sermon is about the Christian’s salvation and not about Christian ethics. This paradigm interprets Jesus’ message describing what it means to be saved – the spiritual marks of the righteous, and the spiritual marks of the unrighteous.

To be sure, spiritual realities lead to righteous behavior. But we must not make the grave mistake of thinking that living moral or ethical lives (apart from saving faith in Christ) will draw closer to God or merit salvation from God. Salvation is by God’s grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone! No one is saved by good works, but everyone who is saved is saved unto good works. If God is in you, then godliness will come out of you; if Christ is in you, then Christlikeness will come out of you; if the Spirit is in you, then spiritual things will come out of you.

Eph 2:8-10 ~ “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” (see Lk.6:46; Jn.3:36; 14:15, 21; 1Jn.5:2-3)

1 John 2:4-6 ~ “Whoever says ‘I know him’ but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, ⁵but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: ⁶whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.”

➤ Jesus never taught morality as man’s highest good (nor is this found anywhere in Scripture). In fact, Jesus repeatedly and emphatically condemned the religious leaders for their hypocrisy and self-righteousness – they were utterly religious and completely unsaved.

Jesus’ teaching was shocking and scandalous to some, not because He called them to live moral lives (that would hardly be shocking or scandalous) but because called everyone to repent of their sins – even those who were religious and moral – and turn to Him alone as their Savior.

Luke 5:32 ~ “I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.” (Matt.4:17; Lk.13:1-5; Jn.14:6)

Luke 18:9-14 ~ “He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: ¹⁰Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ ¹³But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ ¹⁴I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Luke 19:10 ~ “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

Matt 5:20 ~ “For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

Matt 5:48 ~ “You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

- God’s Word makes it abundantly clear that that no one can be saved by their own goodness or good works (see Is.53:6; Rom.3:10-23, 28; Eph.2:1-5, 8-9; Gal.2:16; 3:11; Tit.3:4-6). In fact, Scripture teaches that apart from God’s saving grace in Christ no one can actually do good or be pleasing to God (Is.64:6; Lk.18:19; Rom.8:7-8). Those who truly receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior will be saved, and will be blessed as they seek to faithfully follow Christ. However, those who reject Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior will be condemned – no matter how religious, moral, or virtuous they sought to live apart from Christ (see Jn.3:16, 18, 36; 14:6; 1Jn.5:11-12).
- For the Old Testament prophet, there were two kinds of prophetic announcements: an oracle of weal and an oracle of woe. The oracle of “weal” (meaning happiness or prosperity) was the pronouncement of divine blessing (or benediction) – i.e., good news. The oracle of “woe” (meaning sorrow or calamity) was the pronouncement of divine judgment (or malediction) – i.e., bad news. There were blessings (salvation) for the righteous and curses (condemnation) for the unrighteous.

As He often did, Jesus utilized these prophetic oracles in the first part of His sermon as recorded in the Gospel of Luke.

Luke 6:20-26 ~ “And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said: ‘Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. ²¹Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. ²²Blessed 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! ²³Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets. ²⁴But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. ²⁵Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. ²⁶Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.”

- In these seven verses, Jesus announced a four-fold divine blessing (“*blessed*” [*Makarios*]; “weals”), and a four-fold divine cursing (“*woe*” [*ouai*]; “woes”).

A. The Oracles of Weal: Blessings (vs.20-23)

- Once again, it is important to remember that each of these statements are not promises of blessings for those who live moral but Christless lives. These are not silly “fortune cookie” sayings, or secret keys to unlocking (miraculous) blessings from God. These are not universal promises given to every human being; they are promises for those who are truly disciples of Christ.
- As we saw last Sunday, the audience who heard this sermon from Jesus was massive and consisted of 1) the apostles [“*them*”; Lk.6:17], 2) the disciples [“*a great crowd of his disciples*”; Lk.6:17], and 3) the crowd [“*a great multitude of people*”; Lk.6:17]. It is, therefore, interesting to note that before preaching this sermon Jesus “*lifted up his eyes on his disciples*” (vs.20). While Jesus was certainly talking to everyone, it seems as though He was directly preaching this message to those who claimed to be His disciple – those who claimed to be followers of Jesus. Yet, not every professing Christian is a true and faithful Christian (see Matt.7:21-23; Jn.6:66).

☞ The spiritual marks of the righteous:

- These truths are spiritual marks of the righteous. That is, these blessings (beatitudes) are for those who are faithful followers of Christ. For those who are faithful followers of Christ will possess each of these spiritual traits as they byproduct of truly being saved by Christ. These marks identify true Christians; those who are truly saved.

1. Poverty (vs.20)

- The first one is spiritual poverty: “... *Blessed are you who are poor*” (vs.20). Jesus was not referring to financial or material poverty. There is no piety in poverty. Poverty does not equal morality or godliness. Poverty does not necessarily draw a person to God. And poverty cannot save.

Jesus was referring to spiritual poverty. We see this more clearly in Jesus’ “Sermon on the Mount”:

Matt 5:3 ~ “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

- To be “*poor*” (vs.20), or “*poor in spirit*” (Matt.5:3), is to be spiritually humble. This is the exact opposite of being spiritual arrogant or proud (vs.24). The Greek word translated “*poor*” (*ptōchos*) literally refers to one who is crouching or cowering like a beggar. It refers to one in extreme poverty, who is utterly helpless and completely destitute. This is extreme poverty (the likes of which most of us will never know).

✓ Illust: “The blessed are those who understand their spiritual poverty and the bankrupt condition of their soul, no matter how much or how little wealth they possess. They acknowledge that they are bankrupt in righteousness and have absolutely no spiritual resources with which to obtain God’s favor, and that salvation cannot be by good works, morality, or religious rituals” (John MacArthur; *The*

MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Luke; 6:20b-23).

- While financial wealth can be a great barrier to one’s salvation (Lk.18:18-31; Jms.5:1-6), financial poverty does not merit anyone salvation. Poor sinners go to hell just like rich sinners. A person is not saved by the measure of the bank account or the scarcity of their material possessions. Salvation comes only to those who recognize their spiritual bankruptcy apart from a saving faith in Jesus Christ – the one and only Son of God and one and only Savior from God (see Lk.4:18-19; Is.66:1-2).

Ps 51:16-17 ~ “For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. ¹⁷The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.”

Isa 57:15 ~ “For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: ‘I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite.’”

Mic 6:8 ~ “He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”

1 Peter 5:5 ~ “... Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’” (Prov.3:34)

- This becomes more evident when we understand the promise given to those the poor: “*for yours is the kingdom of God*” (vs.20). Again, financial poverty does not merit salvation. The “*kingdom of God*” is only for those who, by humility, put their faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

John 3:3 ~ “Jesus answered [Nicodemus], ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.’” (Rom.14:17)

1 Cor 6:9-10 ~ “Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? ...” (see Gal.5:21).

2. Hunger (vs.21a)

- The second mark of the righteous is a hunger for God: “*Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied*” (vs.21a). As with the previous one, Jesus here is referring to the spiritual not the physical. In itself, starvation – no matter the degree – is not a blessing. Just as no one is saved by the emptiness of their bank account, so too no one is saved by the emptiness of their stomach.

Again, we can look to “the Sermon on the Mount” for help:

Matt 5:6 ~ “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”

➤ This is a spiritual hunger for God – a passionate spiritual desire for godliness (true righteousness). Again, the picture here is of a person who is not mildly hungry (or hangry) but famished or starved [*“hungry”*, vs.21; (*peinaō*)].

Luke 4:1-2 ~ “And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness ²for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry [*peinaō*].”

Ps 42:1-2 ~ “As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. ²My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?”

At first glance, it is easy to see that the Psalmist is comparing his desire for God with the desire a deer has for water. But that understanding only scratches the surface of what the Psalmist is intending to communicate. The Hebrew word for “*pant*” describes more than a simple thirst for water. Rather, it expresses an intense longing, earnest desire, and desperate need for something (see Joel 1:20). The Psalmist is not comparing his desire for God to that of a mildly thirsty deer before a brook, but a dehydrated deer that is in desperate need of a drink of water. The picture is not serene, but severe. The deer is not just wanting just a taste or sip of water, but he is panting (gasping) for it!

This is a perfect illustration of the Christian life. For as Christians, we ought to have an intense longing for God! We must recognize our desperate need for God, and our utter helplessness and hopelessness apart from God (Lk.18:13; Jn.15:5; Eph.2:1-3; Phil.3:9). The sinner must realize that he/she brings nothing to their salvation except the need for it – i.e., the sin that made it necessary.

➤ This is an oft-repeated refrain in the Psalms:

Ps 63:1 ~ “O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.”

Ps 84:2 ~ “My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.”

Ps 143:6 ~ “I spread out my hands to you; my soul thirsts for you like a parched land.”

➤ Those who are truly hungry for God and not satisfied by the things of this world (or worldliness; 1Jn.2:15-17), will find true and eternal spiritual fulfillment in Christ. *“Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied”* (vs.21a). The Greek word translated “*satisfied*” (*chortazō*) refers to being filled or full – that is, completely satisfied (see Jn.6:26). God alone can satisfy our spiritual needs, and He promises that “... *those who seek the LORD lack no good thing*” (Ps.34:10; Matt.6:33; 2Pet.1:3).

Ps 23:1 ~ “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.”

Isa 55:1-3 ~ “Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. ²Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. ³Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David.”

Matt 5:6 ~ “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied [*chortazō*].”

John 6:35 ~ “Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger [*peinaō*], and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.’”

- May we never be so satisfied in this world, or in the things of this world, that we fail to have a supreme passion and ultimate hunger for God! May we never think that we have ever merited God's saving grace or have any goodness in ourselves apart from Jesus Christ.

3. Sorrow (vs.21b)

- The third spiritual mark of the righteous is sorrow: "... *Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh*" (vs.21b). Again, this is spiritual and not merely physical. Spiritual blessings are not automatically associated with physical tears. Crying crocodile tears will not get anyone to heaven. And weeping is not necessarily a sign of spiritual maturity or godliness.
- To be sure, "*The LORD is near to the brokenhearted*" (Ps.34:18) and "*comforts us in all our affliction*" (2Cor.1:4), but Jesus here is referring to those who mourn over sin – over ungodliness, immorality, and evil. The Christian is to be grieved at that which grieves the Spirit of God (Eph.4:30). This is a genuine remorse for and repentance of sin; not merely mourning the consequences of sin. Those who truly weep over their sin mourn not only the fruit of their sin but also the very root of it.

Matt 5:4 ~ "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

2 Cor 7:10-11 ~ "For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death."

James 4:7-10 ~ "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you."

- God is not fooled by any disingenuous confession or any pretense of sorrow for sin. God is not duped by false repentance or by false humility. God cannot be deceived and He "*is not mocked*" (Gal.6:7).
✓ Illust: "Those who mourn but remain alienated from God will never receive the comfort that is promised here [Matt.5:4]. The promise of comfort for those who mourn is not universal" (R.C. Sproul; *St. Andrew's Expository Commentary: Matthew; 5:4-9*).
- As we will see, those who truly mourn their sin will "*laugh*" (vs.21) for all eternity, and those who laugh at their sin will mourn for eternity if they do not truly repent (vs.25).

Rev 7:17 ~ "For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

Rev 21:3-4 ~ "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.'"

4. Persecution (vs.22-23)

- The fourth spiritual mark of the righteous is persecution. Like the previous ones, this beatitude is attributed only to those who are in Christ (not universal). This is persecution because of Christ and for Christ. "*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!*" (vs.22).
This is being hated [*"hate"* (*miseō*)] because you love Christ; being excluded [*"exclude"* (*aphorizō*)] because you follow Christ; being reviled [*"revile"* (*oneidizō*)] because you honor Christ; having your name spurned [*"spurn"* (*ekballō*)] because call yourself a Christian. This is persecution "*on account of the Son of Man!*" (vs.22).

Matt 5:10-11 ~ “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.”

- Persecution is not the same thing as opposition (although opposition can lead to persecution). Persecution is not someone who disagrees with you (persecution is not someone saying, “Season’s Greetings!” instead of “Merry Christmas!”). Persecution is not even someone who dislikes you. Christian persecution is an intentional and personal attack against a person because they are a follower of Christ (see Heb.11:35-38; 1Cor.11:23-27).

John 15:18-25 ~ “If the world hates [*miseō*] you, know that it has hated [*miseō*] me before it hated [-] you. ¹⁹If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates [*miseō*] you. ²⁰Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. ²¹But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me. ²²If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. ²³Whoever hates [*miseō*] me hates [*miseō*] my Father also. ²⁴If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated [*miseō*] both me and my Father. ²⁵But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: ‘They hated [*miseō*] me without a cause.’”

Phil 3:8-10 ~ “Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith – ¹⁰that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death”

1 Peter 4:12-16 ~ “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴If you are insulted [*oneidizō*] for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. ¹⁵But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. ¹⁶Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.”

2 Tim 3:12 ~ “Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted”

- It is quite surprising to read that Jesus said the Christian who is persecuted is blessed, and it is even more surprising to read that the Christian should rejoice when suffering persecution. Jesus said, *“Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets”* (vs.23). Talk about counterculture and contrary to human nature! We are right to conclude that we cannot obey these commands (or any of God’s commands) in our own strength or wisdom. We must have a constant attitude of desperate dependence on God. Otherwise, we will never truly *“rejoice ... and leap for joy”* when suffering persecution.
- Christians are not to be spiritual masochists or self-made martyrs. We are not to enjoy the pain of suffering or overtly pursue the suffering of martyrdom. Pride can motivate us to suffering persecution as can humility. We must be sure our motives are pure and our actions are godly. Christians do not rejoice in persecution for persecution’s sake, but for the reasons they are persecuted and the desired results of that persecution.

Scripture assures us that God is working in and through our sufferings. Christians do not suffer in vain, and their sufferings in Christ are not futile. Whether we can see it or not, we can be assured that God will ultimately use our suffering – even our suffering persecution for the will and name of Christ – for our good and His glory.

Rom 5:3-5 ~ “More than that, we rejoice [*kauchaomai*] in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”

James 1:2-4 ~ “Count it all joy [*chara*], my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”

- Both of these verbs are imperatives which, in this context, serve as commands. We are called to “*rejoice*” and “*leap for joy*” in the midst of suffering persecution for the sake of righteousness and of Christ – knowing that God is working for our good and His glory.

Acts 5:40-42 ~ “and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. ⁴¹Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. ⁴²And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.”

- There are countless examples of this in Scripture and throughout history. While the idea of rejoicing in suffering may seem strange to us, it is actually a normal part of Christians’ lives throughout the world – even today.

✓ **Illust:** Richard Wurmbrand (1909-2001) was a Romanian Christian pastor who was brutally tortured and persecuted for fourteen years while imprisoned in communist Romania during the 1950’s and 1960’s for preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In his book, *Tortured for Christ*, Wurmbrand detailed some of the horrific sufferings he endured while in prison:

“It was strictly forbidden to preach to other prisoners, as it is in captive nations today. It was understood that whoever was caught doing this received a severe beating. A number of us decided to pay the price for the privilege of preaching, so we accepted their terms. It was a deal; *we preached and they beat us*. We were happy preaching; they were happy beating us – so everyone was happy.

The following scene happened more times than I can remember: A brother was preaching to the other prisoners when the guards suddenly burst in, surprising him halfway through a phrase. They hauled him down the corridor to their ‘beating room.’ After what seemed like an endless beating, they brought him back and threw him – bloody and bruised – on the prison floor. Slowly he picked up his battered body, painfully straightened his clothing and said, ‘Now, brethren, where did I leave off when I was interrupted?’ He continued his gospel message. I have seen beautiful things!” (Richard Wurmbrand, *Tortured For Christ*; p.41).

B. The Oracles of Woe: Curses (vs.24-26)

- Contrary to what many believe, Jesus did not preach moralistic messages teaching people to be His sermons were not “feel-good” messages focusing on people’s innate goodness. His preaching did not inflate a person’s ego or protect his/her fragile self-esteem. His messages were often offensive – especially to the self-righteous religious leaders – and He readily condemned those who thought they were righteous (moral, saved) apart from God’s saving grace in Christ (see Matt.23; Lk.11:37-54).

Luke 6:24-26 ~ “But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. ²⁵Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. ²⁶Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.”

☞ **The spiritual marks of the unrighteous:**

- The “woes” (curses) in this passage are in extreme contrast to the “weals” blessings. This parallelism shows, once again, binary nature of salvation: those who are saved and those who are unsaved (those

who are blessed and those who are cursed). There is no middle ground; no third tier; no neutral territory (see Jn.3:36; 14:6; 1Jn.5:11-12).

Luke 11:23 ~ “Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.”

- These “woes” cannot be overstated. They represent God’s judgment, God’s wrath, and even God’s condemnation against the unrepentant sinner.

1. Pride (vs.24)

- In extreme contrast to those who are spiritually “*poor*” (vs.20), are those who are “*rich*” (*plousios*; vs.24). Again, this is not an absolute condemnation on those who are wealthy. There were many people in the Bible who were both godly and wealthy (e.g., Abraham, Job, Joseph of Arimathea). In fact, God blessed people with great wealth (e.g., Abraham, Job, Solomon).

While there are many temptations and difficulties associated with having material wealth (Lk.16:13-14; 18:18-30; Jms.5:1-6), money and possessions are not – in and of themselves – evil (Deut.8:18; 1Tim.6:10; Heb.13:5).

- In this context, in verse twenty-four, the “*rich*” are those who think themselves spiritually rich apart from Christ. This is spiritual pride (see Lk.16:19-31; 18:11-12) – the refusal to repent of sin and to receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Luke 12:13-21 ~ “Someone in the crowd said to him, ‘Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.’ ¹⁴But he said to him, ‘Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?’ ¹⁵And he said to them, ‘Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.’ ¹⁶And he told them a parable, saying, ‘The land of a rich man produced plentifully, ¹⁷and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’ ¹⁸And he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. ¹⁹And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.’ ²⁰But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ ²¹So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.’”

Rev 2:9 ~ [to the church in Smyrna]: “I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.”

Rev 3:16-19 ~ [to the church in Laodicea]: “So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. ¹⁷For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. ¹⁸I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. ¹⁹Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.”

- Those who think themselves spiritually (or morally) rich apart from Christ, are living their “best life now”: “*But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation*” (vs.24). While this certainly includes those who are ungodly and (financially) wealthy, it also applies to those who are ungodly and (financially) poor. There is no salvific merit in poverty, and there is no salvation for those who think they are spiritually rich apart from Christ.

2. Self-righteousness (vs.25a)

- In direct opposition to those who are spiritually hungry, are those “*who are full now*” (vs.25a). This represents those who are self-righteous. They have no true hunger for God. They are fully satisfied with their own moral goodness, their own religious works, their own (Christless) spirituality.

Luke 18:9-14 ~ “He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: ¹⁰Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' ¹³But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' ¹⁴I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

- While they may be very moral and religious, the self-righteous are utterly (justly and eternally) condemned by God because they have not received Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior: *“Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry”* (vs.25a).

3. Boasting (vs.25b)

- Those who truly mourn their sin in this life, will laugh for all eternity. On the contrary, those who *“who laugh now”* at their sinfulness *“shall mourn and weep”* (vs.25b) for all eternity. Again, this is not a condemnation of laughter but a sobering warning to those who find or pursue a happiness and joy apart from Christ.

Luke 13:22-28 ~ “He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem. ²³And someone said to him, ‘Lord, will those who are saved be few?’ And he said to them, ²⁴‘Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. ²⁵When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, open to us,' then he will answer you, 'I do not know where you come from.' ²⁶Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.' ²⁷But he will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!' ²⁸In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out.”

Luke 16:22-25 ~ “The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried, ²³and in Hades, being in torment [*basanos*], he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. ²⁴And he called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish [*odynaomai*] in this flame.’ ²⁵But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish.”

- Those who pursue a Christless religion (or morality) boast in their own “goodness” and “good works” apart from Christ (e.g., willingness to “give the shirt” off your back). They effectively laugh at the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ, thinking that they can be saved (spared from God’s wrath) on their own.

4. Popularity / Acceptance (vs.26)

- The true Christian will be hated, and even persecuted, for their faith in and faithfulness to Christ. Conversely, those who are *“of the world”* will be accepted by those who are *“of the world.”* As the saying goes, “Christians are called to be in the world but not of the world.”

John 17:14 ~ “I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.”

- This does not mean that every non-Christian will hate every Christian (see 1Tim.3:7). The general principle here is that Christians will not be popular or accepted in a world that hates and rejects Christ. *“Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets”* (vs.26).

James 4:4 ~ “You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”

Rom 12:1-2 ~ “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ²Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

1 John 2:15-17 ~ “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For all that is in the world – the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life – is not from the Father but is from the world. ¹⁷And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.”

Conclusion

➤ These spiritual contrasts could not be more severe or more clear:

Luke 6:20-22

²⁰Blessed are you who are poor

²¹Blessed are you who are hungry now

²¹ ... Blessed are you who weep now

²²Blessed are you when people hate you ...

Luke 6:24-27

²⁴But woe to you who are rich

²⁵Woe to you who are full now

²⁵ ... Woe to you who laugh now

²⁶Woe to you, when all people speak well of you

➤ You are either under God’s blessings or under God’s curses. You are either saved or unsaved. You are either righteous or unrighteous, godly or ungodly. The only way to be blessed by God is to repent of your sin and receive Jesus Christ as your only Lord and Savior!

✓ Illust: “There are only two kinds of people in the world. Christ’s true followers, the spiritually poor, hungry, sorrowful, and rejected, cry out to God for pardon and mercy through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. They are blessed with eternal riches, satisfaction, joy, acceptance, and reward. In contrast, those who see themselves as spiritually full, rich, happy, and accepted will be cursed with eternal poverty, emptiness, sorrow, and judgment” (John MacArthur; *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Luke*; 6:24-26).