

Luke 6C

- Imagine for a moment, you're in Jesus' shoes
 - You have come to this world
 - You've started your ministry knowing you will die in three short years offering yourself for the sins of the world
 - And you know that You leave behind a worldwide church that carries your message forward until the day of your return
 - And you have selected 12 simple, untrained and even unstable men to be the first missionaries for this church
 - How do you prepare them for such a task?
 - You have three years with these men
 - They can't possibly understand everything about who you are, and why you've come and what will happen to you or to them
 - They can't possibly comprehend how different your message will be from the one carried by the religious leaders of the day
 - They can't possibly appreciate the resistance they will encounter in their missions
 - And you only have three years
- Quite a task, to be sure
 - Jesus, in last week's lessons had selected the 12 apostles who would accompany Him for the better part of three years,
 - And now He begins His formal training in earnest
 - Actually, all four of the Gospels essentially present a record of the apostles' training program from a third person perspective
 - They're like documentaries of how Jesus prepared the apostles even as he prepared for His own death
 - We see their weaknesses, their confusions, their questions and even a little of Jesus' frustration with them at times

- And at some point in his ministry, Jesus provided the instructions known as the sermon on the mount - recorded here in the remaining verses of Luke 6.

[Luke 6:20](#) ¶ And turning His gaze toward His disciples, He *began* to say, “Blessed are you *who are poor*, for yours is the kingdom of God.

[Luke 6:21](#) “Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.

[Luke 6:22](#) “Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man.

[Luke 6:23](#) “Be glad in that day and leap *for joy*, for behold, your reward is great in heaven. For in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets.

[Luke 6:24](#) “But woe to you who are rich, for you are receiving your comfort in full.

[Luke 6:25](#) “Woe to you who are well-fed now, for you shall be hungry. Woe *to you* who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.

[Luke 6:26](#) “Woe *to you* when all men speak well of you, for their fathers used to treat the false prophets in the same way.

- We call these verses in Luke the Beatitudes and the Woes
 - Beatitudes means consummate bliss
 - The name comes from the fact that each idea begins with the word “blessed” which can also be translated happy spiritually
 - And that’s our first clue in how to interpret the meaning of these verses – it’s a spiritual happiness that we’re talking about here
 - Woes mean alas or divine judgment
 - Only Luke gives us the woes in his gospel, and he presents them to punctuate the meaning of the blessing by illustrating the opposite condition
- Each of these four statements is a paradox
 - Each begins by listing something that is undesirable
 - Being poor, being hungry, being sorrowful, being hated
 - And each ends with the opposite condition

- Being rich in the kingdom, being satisfied, being happy, and celebrating being persecuted
- I find these verses to be great family disciplining material
 - When my daughter comes to me complaining about not having enough money for some toy, I remind her that blessed are the poor...
 - When my son complains about being too hungry to wait until dinner, I point out that blessed are those hunger now...
 - Annette...
- It's in the paradox that we can understand Jesus' meaning, and we're going to explore the paradox in each
 - But before we do that, we need to dismiss two incorrect perspectives that are common today
 - First, this teaching is not simply a state of mind issue
 - Jesus is not proposing that turning lemons into lemonade is the answer to life's problems
 - His sermon is not suggesting that happiness in life is simply a matter of convincing ourselves to take on these better attitudes as a response to life's trials
 - But that's the message heard in too many pulpits today
 - It's become vogue in our world today – even in the Christian church – to apply pop psychology and motivational thinking to our interpretation of scripture
 - It's as if Jesus and the message He delivered was merely one giant attitude correction
 - That might have been true if our problems were merely bad attitudes – but that's the least of our concerns
- The second error in interpreting these verses is to think that Jesus is promising us a trouble-free Christian life: one of bliss and financial blessing on earth
 - The church today is being inundated with messages peddling the Gospel in financial terms

- Teaching Christians to think of God and His word in strictly financial terms
- Every time the word blessing is used, it means money or financial prosperity
- That the real benefit in living the Christian life is in how it will improve our life here and now
- These are false, unbiblical teachings, by teachers that twist scripture and change it's meaning to suit their purposes
- Nor is Christ suggesting in these verses that our life on earth will be without trial or suffering
- So what does Christ mean
 - Well, consider the word blessing again
 - It's spiritual happiness
 - In other words, eternal things – the things of the eternal realm
 - So the first clue is that we're looking at a spiritual gain, not a material gain
 - Secondly, the proper interpretation of Jesus statements requires we know who He is talking to and what time He is talking about
- Jesus, the text tells us, fixed his gaze on the disciples
 - In Greek, this is a very specific action – it's the lifting up, the raising up of the eyes to meet the eyes of another
 - We would probably say "Looked them in the eyes and said..."
 - Luke's point here is to tell us that Jesus' audience was the disciples, not just a random group within the crowd
 - As I mention at the beginning today, imagine how difficult it was going to be for Christ to prepare these men for ministry
 - They had been raised in a culture that had completely distorted the truth of who God was and how it was that we could please Him

- Religious leaders taught that men were righteous by works, by keeping the law
- And they demanded that the more righteous you appeared, you more you gave the impression of knowledge and obedience to the law, the more you should be honored

[Matt. 23:1](#) ¶ Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to His disciples, [Matt. 23:2](#) saying: “The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses;

[Matt. 23:3](#) therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say *things* and do not do *them*.

[Matt. 23:4](#) “They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with *so much as* a finger.

[Matt. 23:5](#) “But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels *of their garments*.

[Matt. 23:6](#) “They love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues,

[Matt. 23:7](#) and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called Rabbi by men.

- So, Jesus begins with His disciples to systematically tear down these false notions of righteousness so He can replace them with the truth
 - And he does this through paradoxes that describe the righteousness that is eternal – that results in eternal life
 - And contrasting that, Jesus pronounces woe on those who focus on obtaining the righteous that is worldly, and on the riches and pleasures that come from their own labors – their own work
- He begins the first Blessing in verse 20 saying that blessed are the poor, for they will have the kingdom of Heaven
 - Matt records the statement a little differently
 - In fact, if you want to find Matt 5 and place a finger in the page...
 - Matt 5:3, He says blessed are those who are poor in spirit
- So it’s not those who are financially poor – it’s those who are spiritually poor – but what does it mean to be spiritually poor?

- When we consider Christ's purpose in contending with the religious teaching of the day, with countering the false religion of the Pharisees, we can understand what spiritual poverty is
 - It's being willing to recognize and understand that we are miserable, poor and desperate spiritually
 - That we have an evil, self-serving heart
 - That we are all born spiritually empty and utter hopeless
- But in that recognition, we have hope to know the truth
 - Our true righteousness lies in Christ alone, but before we can understand that, much less accept it, we must first be willingly to acknowledge our own inability to please God of our own effort
 - We call this repentance
 - An act of turning from our sin, but more specifically, turning from the sin of believing we can earn our own salvation
 - Turning from thinking ourselves spiritually rich
 - Remember, the Pharisees were constantly preaching a message of works – which is the opposite of spiritual poverty
 - Works theology is a view of self that believes we have the ability to earn our own ticket to heaven, and by doing good works, we are building up spiritual wealth, so to speak
 - If that's were your trust lies But Christ says, that to be blessed, we must first be spiritually poor
- Jump down to verse 24 and let's make the quick contrast
 - In verse 24, Christ says those who are rich are receiving their comfort in full
 - Christ says the same thing to an apostate, unbelieving church in Revelation 3, when He says:

[Rev. 3:17](#) ‘Because you say, “I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,” and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked,

[Rev. 3:18](#) I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and *that* the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see.

- Those who are content to earn their own righteousness, to trust in their own ability rather than in Christ are blind to their own predicament
- They are naked, exposed to God’s judgment
- But to the one who recognizes his spiritual poverty and trusts in Christ, to him will be the eternal blessing – the Kingdom of God, salvation
 - By our spiritual poverty, we gain access to true spiritual wealth
 - We gain access to the Kingdom of God by faith in Christ
 - And in that Kingdom, ultimately, we will find our inheritance, all that God has in store for us in eternity
 - This promise is not of earthly wealth, but eternal riches
- The second beatitude follows in a similar pattern
 - Jesus says, blessed are those who hunger, for they will be satisfied
 - Again, look at Matt 5:6, and you’ll notice that Jesus says hunger and thirst for righteousness
 - Those who understand the truth will hunger and thirst for the true righteousness that can only come from God
 - Christians understand this kind of hunger almost instinctively
 - A Christian yearns for true righteousness,
 - In our world
 - But mostly in ourselves
 - We hunger and thirst for it

- The unbelieving world has no special desire for true righteousness, much less do they seek it in themselves
 - Remember, the Pharisees...they sought a form of righteousness that men can achieve and be recognized for
 - And they gained the benefit of their efforts in this world
 - They were filled, satisfied by their efforts, and therefore they had no hunger for true righteousness
- Generally, men obey laws and rules only when it suits their own selfish interests
- We break even our own rules when it suits us (New Orleans)
 - And they are filled, satisfied with the righteousness found in the world
- The woe in verse 25 amplifies the point
 - Those who are satisfied now – in this world – by the kind of righteousness they can obtain in this world, they will have no part in the true righteousness to come
- But as Christians, we don't have to wait until Christ's return to see that righteousness at least in part
 - We can see it in ourselves by the power of the Holy Spirit
 - Even now, as we wait for Christ's return, He has begun a work in us to make us more righteous – sanctification
- So the paradox here again is that those who hunger now for the true righteousness that Christ brings...
 - They will be the only ones who experience true righteousness in eternity
- Third, Christ says blessed are those who weep now, for they will laugh
 - Why would weeping now guarantee laughter later?
 - And looking at the woe, why would laughing now guarantee weeping later?
 - Well, we know we're talking about spiritual issues now, and therefore we're talking about a spiritual sorrow

- Like the kind Paul mentions

[2Cor. 7:9](#) I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to *the point of* repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to *the will of* God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us.

[2Cor. 7:10](#) For the sorrow that is according to *the will of* God produces a repentance without regret, *leading* to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.

- There is a worldly sorrow
 - A regret at making mistakes, a sorrow over sin's consequences
 - But that's not godly sorrow
- Godly sorrow is the sadness brought by the HS convicting us of our sins
 - And those who experience godly sorrow now, who literally weep and feel conviction over their sins are the ones being saved
 - And as such, they are the ones God is preparing to enter eternity, where

[Rev. 21:4](#) and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or **pain**; the first things have passed away."

- Finally, Jesus says that we are to consider ourselves blessed – spiritually happy – when men hate us, insult us or separate themselves from us - in the name of the Son
 - Another paradox
 - How can any of us truly feel blessed when we suffer those things
 - When your child comes home from school or the park or a friend's house crying because they were mocked or excluded on the basis of their faith, what parent can honestly say they feel happy about that?
 - When you lose a promotion or the good assignment because your faith is an obstacle, do you feel blessed?
 - And I'm not talking about suffering because of our own mistakes
 - The next time you get hauled into traffic court and receive a stiff fine for speeding, you can't stand up before the judge and say "At least my reward in heaven will be great.

- We're talking about persecution here, not prosecution
 - But the sad truth is today in America is that only a few Christians can even relate to the idea of being persecuted for their faith
 - And it's not because our country is so accepting to Christians, though it is more so than many
 - And in S. Texas is better than many other places, to be sure
 - But honestly, the real issue is not how much the world accepts Christians, the problem is how few Christians actually stand out from the world
 - If we really led a Christ-like life in all we did and said, would we have as many friends?
 - Would we be as accepted?
 - And I'm not talking about running around making our faith known by casting harsh judgments on others and offending everyone we meet – Jesus actually deals with that problem later in this chapter
 - Nor am I talking about being stoned or burned at the stake before we consider ourselves hated
 - It's usually more subtle than that in today's world
 - Halloween example...
- But when that happens, Jesus says we can rejoice a little more
 - Why? He says because the prophets themselves were persecuted. Huh?
 - Jesus is illustrating that men and women of God – people willing to make a public show of their faith – will always be persecuted
 - And then when the world hates you because of Christ, they are unknowingly testifying that you are a child of God

[John 15:18](#) ¶ “If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before *it hated* you.
[John 15:19](#) “If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.

- Can you see the joy in that?

- How often do we experience moments of doubt about whether we are truly saved or whether we can really trust in God's promises of eternity
 - Jesus says, when you experience persecution at the hand of ungodly men on account of Christ, you have all the proof you need
 - Because if you were of their world, they would not persecute you – they simply wouldn't agree
 - But instead they persecute you because you stand as a testimony of their unrighteousness
- And in that difference, you have reason to rejoice,
- But as the final woe explains, when the world embraces you
 - When it loves your teaching
 - When it agrees with all you say
 - Woe to you
 - Like the Pharisees, who gained the praises of men
 - Who comfortable friends with the idol worshipping Roman empire as easily as they did the corrupt and self-serving Jewish Sanhedrin
 - Like the false teachers of our day who tickle men's ears with promises of wealth, power and eternally good health
 - These men are like the false prophets of the old
 - And their increasing fame and popularity among the world at large is all the warning they need to know they are in trouble
- So, Jesus begins his preparation of the disciples by challenging their understanding of righteousness
 - Obviously, the disciples were going to encounter all these things in a material sense as well: poverty, hunger, sadness, hatred

- But spiritually, Jesus wanted them to understand that their focus needed to begin shifting to eternal issues – to a focus on true righteousness and godliness – and on their source: Jesus Christ
- So let that be our reminder for today as well
 - Let's leave here today focused – refocused – on things eternal
 - With a confidence in our spiritual riches, not obsessed with the materialism of this world
 - Let's walk out of here with a hunger for righteousness, for living a Christ-like life and for His Word
 - Let's continually weep over our sin look forward to a day when we will laugh in the joy of an eternity without sin
 - And let's expect but not worry over the hatred that may come our way, for it came to our savior in the same way for our sake
 - Take it as proof that we are children of the living God