



## Week 6

### Day 1 – Luke 6:20-23

Then he looked up at his disciples and said:

“Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled.

Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.

Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.”

### Understanding the Passage:

The Sermon on the Plain begins and ends with the same material as the Sermon on the Mount. As Reverend Horton said in this week’s video, Luke is probably recording a different instance of Jesus preaching than Matthew did, but Jesus was sharing similar truths.

In addition to the variances in material, there are two contextual things that differentiate the sermons. The sermon in Matthew was preached only to the disciples, whereas the sermon in Luke was preached to the disciples and followers. In addition, the sermon in Matthew was given on a mountain (ref. week 1 video for more details). The sermon in Luke was given on a “level place,” also known as a plain. Luke’s gospel has a preferential option for the poor, so it makes sense that it would put everyone on the same physical plane.

This is demonstrated in the content of the sermon as well: for the author of Matthew, the matter is spiritual (“Blessed are the poor in spirit” and “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness”) whereas Luke simply records “Blessed are you who are poor” and “Blessed are you who hunger now.” His concern is rooted deeply in the physical reality of mankind because he knows that has a bearing on a person’s spiritual capacity. There is room for both of these truths to exist concurrently, because those who need spiritual restoration and those who need economic restoration will both find it in the Kingdom of God.

The Sermon, as recorded in Luke, shows us that our vision of success – which is almost uniformly about power, popularity, and wealth – is not aligned with God’s vision of success.

### **Questions for Discussion and Reflection:**

1. What is your definition of blessing? What does the scripture suggest is the definition of blessing?
2. How often do you measure yourself based on the world's understanding of success rather than of God's?
3. How does it change your understanding of the beatitudes to hear them speaking to physical issues rather than solely spiritual ones?

### **Day 2 – Luke 6:24-26**

“But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.

Woe to you who are full now for you will be hungry.

Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep.

Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.”

### **Understanding the Passage:**

This sermon was preached to “a great multitude of people out of all Judaea and Jerusalem, and from the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon.” All of these places are centers of power – Judea is the capital region, Jerusalem is the capital city, Sidon is a financial center where lots of trade happened, and Tyre is where the Temple Shekel was minted. Clearly, this is an economically advantaged group to whom Jesus is aiming this message. Starting with the woes “to you who are rich” is an in-your-face statement.

The Greek word translated as “woe” is *ouai* doesn't have a close connotation with “cursed” or “unhappy,” which is how we often interpret it. Rather, it is actually closer to the word “yikes.” It's meant to be a heads up to people – a warning that they are straying from the path of God. Jesus is essentially saying “Look out!” to people who are rich, who are full, and who are without a care.

So why should they look out? What is there to be worried about? Those who trust in their riches instead of in Jesus have already received their reward. The comfort they feel on earth when they look at their E\*Trade account is the only reward they will have and they will only have that comfort in this life. Those who place their trust in God rather than a number in their bank account will be comforted no matter how the number in the account fluctuates.

Jesus also says, “Yikes! Those of you who are well-liked should watch out because you're probably not well-liked for the right reason.” There are dozens of reputation management companies that exist for the sole purpose of shaping perceptions or removing negative personal and company descriptions from internet searches. This means you can pay someone to push a positive opinion of you instead of doing the hard work of earning that reputation. If we are persecuted because we are acting in line with Jesus' teachings, then we are better off than if we're doing things that make us well-liked by the world.

### **Questions for Discussion and Reflection:**

1. When you think about your personal finances, can you see why Jesus might say it would be a blessing to be poor and a woe to be rich?
2. Why is it hard to be rich and be a Christian? How can you protect yourself from the danger that being rich can bring?
3. What kinds of things are American Christians persecuted for these days? Have those things stopped you from sharing your faith?

### **Day 3 – Luke 6:27-36**

“But I say to you that listen, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. Do to others as you would have them do to you.

If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”

#### **Understanding the Passage:**

This is “tough love” of the highest order. Not because it is tough on enemies, but because it is truly tough to live out. It requires us to express love in a way that is more than what most of us are willing to express to someone we love deeply, like a spouse, when we feel wronged or betrayed. The good news is that Jesus doesn’t command us to love our enemies and then leave us to work out how to do it. He gives us three action steps to take: do good rather than retaliate, speak kindly of them no matter how they speak of you, and pray for them.

Will doing these things garner the same effect as waving a magic wand? Maybe. But truthfully, there is a good chance that you will not see an immediate change in your enemy. You will, however, see an immediate change in yourself. In his book *Boundaries*, Dr. Henry Cloud wrote, “Boundaries define... what is me and what is not me.” Ultimately, we cannot be responsible for the behavior of anyone else, but we have an important responsibility to behave in a certain way ourselves. As Christ-followers, we are called to extend radical grace (even when we feel like we can only do it through clenched teeth) because it is a mark of our faith. They will know we are Christians by our love...especially because it is so counter-cultural that it cannot help but stop people in their tracks.

#### **Questions for Discussion and Reflection:**

1. Do you have an enemy that you need to pray for? What has been standing in your way? Offer that to God in a prayer right now and commit to praying about it every day.
2. What do you think it means to be merciful, just as God is merciful?
3. Can you think of a time when someone else has extended mercy to you recently?

### **Day 4 – Luke 6:37-45**

“Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.”

He also told them a parable: “Can a blind person guide a blind person? Will not both fall into a pit? A disciple is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully qualified will be like the teacher. Why do you see the speck in your neighbor’s eye, but do not notice the log in

your own eye? Or how can you say to your neighbor, 'Friend, let me take out the speck in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor's eye.

No good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit; for each tree is known by its own fruit. Figs are not gathered from thorns, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. The good person out of the good treasure of the heart produces good, and the evil person out of evil treasure produces evil; for it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks."

### **Understanding the Passage:**

You can gain insight into your relationship with God by taking an inventory of the way you judge people. Your judgements of others are based on your own experience rather than the full knowledge that God has of each of our lives. Our judgements of others stand as a barrier to deepening our relationship with God because instead of turning us towards God, they turn us away from God and focus our attention elsewhere.

If you treat others based on what you believe they deserve, you're essentially telling God that you want God to treat you based on what **you** deserve.

In the passage about the blind leading the blind, we are reminded that we become like those with whom we surround ourselves. When we surround ourselves with people who are at the same level as us, or below us, and we attempt to follow them, then we lower ourselves to them rather than raising them up to our level. If you're trying to become a better tennis player, you would not spend your time practicing against someone that is less skilled than you are. No, you would find someone who is a stronger player than you and you would practice against them until you are as good as they are. Then you would find someone even stronger and begin to practice against that person.

### **Questions for Discussion and Reflection:**

1. Why is it that we are instructed to look at our own lives before judging others? What does that accomplish?
2. Can you see the influence of people in your life who you should not be following? How can you change that?

### **Day 5 – Luke 6:46-49**

"Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I tell you? I will show you what someone is like who comes to me, hears my words, and acts on them. That one is like a man building a house, who dug deeply and laid the foundation on rock; when a flood arose, the river burst against that house but could not shake it, because it had been well built. But the one who hears and does not act is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the river burst against it, immediately it fell, and great was the ruin of that house."

### **Understanding the Passage:**

It is easy to dismiss the builder who built his house on ground without a foundation as lazy – and maybe there are folks who forego building on a foundation out of laziness – but the truth of the matter is that both men were doing the hard labor of building. One was not lazily watching while the other built the home.

The same can apply to us in our lives, no matter how much “work” we are doing. We can spin our wheels and get nowhere if we are not building on a foundation of obedience. Obedience doesn’t mean talking about how much we love God but not submitting to God’s authority. If we “talk the talk” but don’t “walk the walk,” then our words are in vain.

On the other hand, allowing Jesus to be the Lord of our life means that our behavior will change and we will act on Jesus’ words. In the 4<sup>th</sup> century, John Chrysostom wrote, “In every matter, then, will you consider that the word alone, unaccompanied by any act, is invalid and untrustworthy, but that the act alone is both trustworthy and true, even if no word precedes it?”

### **Questions for Discussion and Reflection:**

1. What floods are testing your foundations right now?
2. Why is it tempting to build your house on something other than your faith in God?
3. Do you hear **and** act on Jesus’ words? Write down some examples of ways you have acted on Jesus’ words in the past few weeks.

### **Video Questions:**

1. Compare the Sermon the Mount to the Sermon on the Plain. Did you find one more convicting or applicable than the other? Why?
2. How does hunger now lead to being satisfied later?
3. Do you think the blessings and woes apply to the spiritual realm and the afterlife or do they apply in this life as well?
4. How can you practice unconditional love of your enemies? What does that look like in real-life application?
5. What should we do when we notice a friend struggling with sin? Is it our place to tell them? If so, how should we approach it?
6. What are some of the specks we focus on and the planks we tend to miss?
7. What kind of fruit are you bearing in your life? Where is it most evident?
8. What is coming out of your mouth? What does it indicate about your heart?
9. Based on the parable of the foundations, do you think there is a difference between loving Jesus and making Jesus your Lord?
10. What is the key lesson you will take away from the Sermon on the Mount and Sermon on the Plain?