

Luke 6

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[0 : 00] Let's pray together. Father, hallowed be your name in the preaching of your word.

As the truth, the content, the intent of your word is exposed, we ask, Father, that you would receive glory, the glory that you deserve, the glory that is rightfully yours, the glory that you will not share with another, for no other is worthy.

Father, honor yourself, hallow your name, glorify the Lord Jesus as we turn to hear him now through the agency of your infallible word.

We ask it in his name. Amen. I recently heard of a lady who was known for having something of a sharp and cutting tongue.

If this lady heard something in conversation that she didn't like, something she didn't agree with, she would just cut people down and essentially bury them with her words.

[1 : 22] Well, this lady eventually became a Christian, but struggled a great deal with responding to people differently, responding to people as a believer with grace.

And eventually she confessed to her pastor, church leader, I know it's wrong, but that's just who I am. Well, is that true?

Is it true that we inherit bad character in the same way that we inherit things like hair color? Is being proud really just the same as being tall?

Or is being cruel just the same as being shy? Well, I'm currently taking Murphy of the Evangelical Church through Luke's gospel. And we find ourselves in the sixth chapter looking at the greatest sermon preached by the greatest man in human history.

If you have your Bible, please reopen it to that place. And as I already mentioned, right before the preaching of the Sermon on the Plain, our Lord Jesus spent the night in prayer to his father.

[2 : 31] He chose 12 apostles after that night in prayer, descends the hill with them to preach on a plain to an enormous crowd made of his disciples, his newly elected apostles, and mostly a crowd of curious onlookers.

And it was in that moment where our Lord Jesus spoke to the crowd and said, blessed are you, speaking to his disciples, blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

The poor referring there to those who are aware of their need before God. He goes on, blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied.

Again, referring to the spiritually needy. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.

Referring to those who are painfully aware of their need before God, their shortcomings and failings before God.

God, blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you, and insult you, and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man.

[3 : 44] Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven, for that is how their ancestors treated the prophets.

Now today, we're going to be looking at what Jesus says next, and many of us will know that what comes next alters the tone dramatically to what we have just read.

Right after pronouncing those four blessings on the crowd, Jesus goes on to pronounce four woes. Woe being a word used to communicate anguish.

It's a word that sums up a sense of pain and terror for the disaster that's about to come upon a person.

But notice this this morning. Jesus is still speaking to his disciples. There's nothing in the passage that would make you believe that Jesus blesses his disciples and then turns to the unbelievers to pronounce woes on them.

[4 : 52] And so what's going on in the passage? Well, here it is. Even though those four woes refer to and relate to non-Christians, that is unbelievers, they're spoken to his disciples so as to say to them, don't be like this.

Woe to those who, etc., etc., so you as my disciples refrain from becoming like them. And we see that clearly.

Look at verse 26. Woe to you and everyone speaks well of you, for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets. Jesus says non-Christians have always loved false prophets because they tell them what they want to hear.

And so when non-Christians love you in the same way and for the same reason, something has gone terribly wrong. So watch out.

And so just as a person can't make the excuse, well, I know I do this, but that's just who I am. Jesus says, just because you're my disciples doesn't mean to say you're in danger of being enticed and lured away by the standards, the values of the world.

[6 : 14] And so the great thing, the great honor that I have this morning in preaching this text is preaching a message that is relevant for everyone. There's something here for everybody.

If you're a Christian, Jesus is pleading with you not to go the way of the world. And if you're here and you're not a Christian, Jesus in this passage is exposing the reality of the standards of the world and he's exposing the danger that comes with embracing that kind of worldview.

And he invites you today to be part of a different kingdom. There's something here for everyone.

And so let's read the passage just three verses this morning, verses 24 to 26.

But woe to you who are rich for you have already received your comfort. Woe to you who are well fed now for you will go hungry.

Woe to you excuse me who laugh now for you will mourn and weep. Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets.

[7 : 34] Number one, woe to the rich. Verse 24. Now it's crucial to point out here in this passage that the four woes that Jesus speaks here, the four woes that we're looking at mirror the four blessings that Jesus pronounces in the verses prior.

Jesus says, blessed are you who are poor for to you belongs the kingdom of God. And here, verse 24, woe to you who are rich for you have already received your comfort.

And just as in verse 20 the rich that rather the poor in verse 20 refers to the spiritually in need. It doesn't refer so much to the materially affluent.

it refers to those whose boast, whose confidence is in the things of this world. The mindset of this world, the priorities, the philosophy, the ideology of this world.

And for many that may well be summed up in things like money. but oftentimes it's more subtle than that.

[8 : 48] Oftentimes it's things like status, prestige, it's appearance, it's being esteemed. And Jesus says, those who are lavished with the things of this world have already received all of their comfort.

and it's so fascinating that when you look into that word received there in the original language it refers to the signing of a receipt.

Why is a receipt given? Well it's to tell you that nothing else is on the way. Pay up, there's nothing else coming. And Jesus says, those who are lavished, those who are rich in the things of this world, the mindset of this world, the boast of this world, the receipt has been signed.

The receipt has been received. It's all given in full. Do you remember the parable that Jesus told to illustrate this very point, the point he's making here?

We know it today as the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. We're told that this rich man feasted sumptuously.

[10 : 07] He ate well, he lived well, he drank well. And yet at the end of his drive was slumped a poor man, Lazarus.

The two men died and the rich man was exposed for being rich in the things of this world, rich in the way that Jesus is referring to here in our passage.

and the poor man was exposed for being poor in the way that Jesus speaks of in the sermon on the plain here. The rich man was condemned, sentenced to hell while Lazarus was welcomed in to unending glory.

hence Jesus' question, what good is it to gain the world and then forfeit your soul?

You see, the problem for so many of us today is that we don't see properly. We don't see the worthlessness of all that is earthly and we don't see the value of the things of God.

[11 : 33] Instead, we see everything back to front and inside out, upside down. We're prone to boast in the worthless things of the world and all the while overlook the pearls of great price.

And so it should come as no surprise to us that Jesus shakes us up this morning in saying, woe to those who are considered blessed and blessed are those who are considered to be cursed.

This passage is a wake-up passage to each and every one of us. Jesus is seeking to enable us to see properly, to give us the perspective of heaven, the perspective of eternity.

Some of you, you hear the word rich, woe to the rich, and you think, oh, well, that's fine. I'm not loaded. I'm not really rich and so Jesus has no word of woe to me.

But again, this isn't about material, earthly riches. It's about which currency you're worshipping with. It's about what you value.

[13 : 05] It's about the treasure in your heart. Listen to these words spoken of a man who saw the right kind of treasure.

Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.

He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth, greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt for he was looking to the reward.

Here's my question to each and every one of us this morning. Which reward are you looking to?

The kind of riches that Jesus abominates here or the true riches of knowing Christ?

Those of you here this morning who perhaps are not yet Christians, who couldn't raise your hand and say, yeah, I am a follower of Jesus.

[14 : 10] Well, I pray that this sermon will be the means by which you start to see clearly the confidence in things, the confidence in stuff and status and sex and the rest is seen for what it is, fleeting and all the while everything that you consider to be boring and irrelevant starts to become, starts to look like the most precious thing you've ever seen in your life.

Woe to those who are loaded in the things of this world for they have already received the comfort it. Well, second, woe to the full.

Look at verse 25. Woe to you who are well fed now for you will go hungry. And just as it is the materially rich who have their stomachs full, Jesus says, those who are rich in the things of this world will be content or well fed in the things of this world.

Have you ever been confused as you spoke to a genuinely happy non-Christian? Jesus says, you shouldn't be.

We've all experienced this, haven't we? We've done our evangelism this way, haven't we? We've approached non-Christians and we've said to them something along the lines of, listen, I can tell you the answer to your misery.

[15 : 45] And they're like, I'm not miserable. I'm really happy. And we're just like, sure, sure you are, but deep down, you're miserable. And they're like, deep down, I'm absolutely fine.

And we're just like, okay, sure, but late at night when no one's watching, you're miserable. And they're just like, I love my life late at night. You know, we think because we've all seen the superior joys of knowing Jesus and we've seen sin for what it is.

We just assume non-Christians walk around with this sense of misery as though they're just walking around singing, I still haven't found what I'm looking for by you too, constantly, 24-7.

But Jesus is saying, those who are rich in the things of this world are those who have their bellies full. Who doesn't enjoy having their belly filled with food that they love?

And that's why we read Psalm 73 earlier. Asaph was looking around in his day and he was looking at all the wicked and he said, their bodies are fat and sleek.

[16 : 57] They have no hunger pangs. They have no worries. They strut through the earth carefree until I went into the sanctuary of God.

But the same is true today, isn't it? It's the rich of this world people that are by and large content with the things of this world.

And Jesus says that shouldn't surprise you. But Jesus says here, woe to those who are filled with the things of this world.

Jesus says, when the kingdom comes, there is going to be a cosmic reversal. The tables of the cosmos are going to turn.

And for those who are filled up with the things of this world now, they will one day then be empty. Because everything that gives them joy now is going to be used for the fire.

[18:09] But for all of those who are seeing through the things of this world, Jesus says, you will know contentment when I pull out the seat at the marriage supper of the Lamb with your name on the table, and I call you by name to feast with me through all eternity.

For all eternity, God's people, those who have hungered and thirsted for righteousness will feast with Christ.

And this is really the point at which in preparation for this message that I was reminded of the story that I heard about the professor from Stanford University who took the ten children and told them you can have two marshmallows now if you keep this one for 15 minutes.

The professor that checked back with these people 20 years later and saw that those who waited were generally speaking more content.

But those who couldn't wait seemed to have a sort of chaos about their lives and everything was a bit out of control. And if we put that on something of a cosmic scale we're almost close to what Jesus is talking about here that the point is eternity is going to be infinitely better for those who are looking to the reward.

[19:47] Now it's really at this point in the message that I need to clarify what I'm absolutely not saying. Some of you perhaps are mistaking what I'm saying for this.

You're thinking I'm saying that Christianity is essentially bland. It's lame. It's just boring. But if you stick it out eventually it's all going to be worth it in the end.

But not at all. Jesus said I have come to give them life and life to the full. The psalmist said in your presence is fullness of joy and in your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

The apostle Paul said I count everything I used to love as loss for the surpassing worth of knowing Christ my Lord. You just put all that together and what do you get?

Fullness of joy, pleasure, the surpassing worth of knowing Christ and an abundant life. There's nothing bland about that but here is the point.

[21:02] There are times at which settling for the things of this world is just more convenient. It's just easier to go with what's available in the here and now.

Every one of us knows it's easier not to exercise. Every single one of us knows it's easier to just pay for junk food and not have to carefully craft balanced meals each and every day.

But can you really compare the feeling of slouching around with the feeling of vitality and health and freshness?

Jesus says woe to those who settle for the things of this world and gorge themselves fill themselves with what's available because you won't taste the real joy of heaven.

You won't know the eternal rest. But those who hunger and thirst for righteousness now will most certainly forever.

[22:16] So I'm asking every single person in this room, what are you going to order? That which Jesus will serve then or that which the world serves now?

Well next, woe to the mockers. Look at verse 25. Woe to you who laugh now for you will mourn and weep.

Now the original word there for laughter really refers to a condescending, almost cruel, sadistic, mocking laughter. It's the laughter of persecution, the laughter of the world against God's people. And the picture is of a person so settled in the things of this world, they're mocking everyone that would consider the alternative. imperative. And we're on the receiving end of that so often, aren't we?

The most influential people in the world that have these great followings, the VIPs, the people, the actors, the rock stars, everyone, everyone on the who's who list seems to promote all that is contrary to the gospel.

[23:32] And so when you're the only Christian in your workplace tomorrow morning, you share the gospel faithfully with unbelievers and they look at you as if to say, yeah, but you and whose army?

You're all by yourself. I'm in the majority, you're in the minority. But when one kingdom rises, another kingdom must fall.

And right now, the ruler of this world, Satan himself, is referred to as the small g god of this world. And his kingdom is well established. We're all born into it and few there are that escape it.

And we hear the taunts of that kingdom almost daily, don't we? We hear the gloating, the mockery. [24 : 38] But when Jesus ushers in his kingdom, all the gloating, all the mockery, all the pointing of the finger, all the cruelty will be silenced and turned on its head, when every knee bows and every mouth confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

And for those of us who have believed that Jesus lived and died and rose in our place for our sin, we will never hear the sound of mockery again, because it will be drowned with the sound of the laughter of joy.

So listen, Christian, do not let the mockery of this world make you lose your footing as you march to glory.

Don't be tempted to abandon the journey and join the mockers because it's all going to be turned upside down. But for those of you who do laugh, for those of you who do mock, Jesus says here as clearly today as he said back then, woe to you, your laughter will turn to mourning, your mockery will turn to weeping.

Fourth and lastly, woe to the praised. Look at verse 26, woe to you, when everyone speaks well of you, for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets.

[26 : 28] We've heard Jesus say woe to those who mock you and yet here Jesus is speaking into the exact opposite scenario. Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you.

And the commentators have sort of agreed that there's a reference here, an implicit reference to the history of the kings of Israel, who would summon just the right prophet to tell them just what they wanted to hear.

The corrupt prophets, the false prophets, those who would just tell the kings what they needed to hear depending on the price. prophets. And Jesus says those who did such things, Jesus says the ancestors of unbelievers, they loved false prophets because they affirmed people right where they were.

They never confronted sin or pointed out error or false teaching or false thinking. And everyone thought well of them except God.

and everyone loves a flatterer today, don't they? Aren't you and I so much more prone to believe a compliment over and above a criticism?

[27 : 44] We love affirmation, but almost every day, as disciples of Jesus Christ, you are tempted to compromise the truth for the sake of the acceptance of men.

You will have no doubt seen many of those interviews with famous pastors on TV and the question is asked by the secular host, so do you believe that Jesus is the only way to heaven?

And at that question the smile begins to freeze a little bit and the pastor sort of ends up saying something like, well for me Jesus is the best way.

And he doesn't really answer the question and he gets away with being known as a Christian but not one of those Christians and gets to sort of wiggle out of being mocked by the world and persecuted by fallen men.

But here's the bottom line today, either you will hear well done from men or well done from God.

And it is all a question of who you love the most.

[28 : 57] I want to sum up this entire message by saying this, Christian, to be poor in spirit is better by father than to be rich in the things of this world.

Why? Because in Christ your inheritance is the universe. A Christian to hunger and thirst for righteousness is better by father than to gorge on what this world has to offer.

Why? Because Christ's broken body and shed blood never leaves you wanting. Christian weeping is better than mocking because God will wipe away every tear as we enter into the joy of our master.

Christian, it is better to be hated by the world than to be loved by the world. Because to be hated by fallen men is to be loved by the exalted God.

And if you're here and you would say to me today, Hugh, I'd still rather have eternal misery for the comfort of the world right now. I'd rather starve for eternity to have the junk food of worldliness now.

[30 : 14] I'd rather weep throughout eternity to have my empty laughter now. I'd rather eternal rejection to have affirmation now. I would simply say this, you are welcome to your eternity.

But I plead with you this morning to ask God for the gift of the perspective of heaven. To see the here and now in light of what will be then.

all of this, Asaph said, seemed to me a wearisome task until I entered the sanctuary of God.

And there I discerned their end. Meeting with the eternal God puts the presence into perspective. Have you met with him? His name is Jesus Christ and he stands to meet with you individually this morning.

[31 : 28] Have you met him? Will you go to him? That's the question. Will we stand to sing our closing hymn? him?

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