

The Gospel According to Luke
November 18, 2018
Reading: Matthew 5:2-11

Sermon #23
Luke 6:20-26

Destined For Heaven Or Hell?

Blessed and Woe Defined

Please open your Bibles to Luke chapter 6. It is a blessing that I need to study and learn all week long in order to come on Sunday morning and preach from God's Word of truth and hopefully impact our lives. We have come to the passage in Luke chapter 6 beginning at verse 20 and from here to the end of the chapter is a wonderful sermon by our Lord Jesus that we may learn much from. This sermon is also recorded in Matthew chapters 5 to 7 and we know this sermon by the name, "Sermon on the Mount". Luke's account is shorter than Matthew's though they bring the same message. As we work through this wonderful sermon we will need to make comparisons between Luke and Matthew to shed light on what Jesus is teaching. It would be beneficial for you to read ahead through the end of chapter 6 of Luke and read chapters 5 to 7 of Matthew.

This sermon is about salvation. In fact, it is one of the most definitive sermons that Jesus preached. He identifies who is saved and who is not. This sermon defines who is going to heaven and who is going to hell. Jesus is not speaking of who is religious but who is saved. It is not about who is living an ethical life or even a religious life but it is about who has a relationship with God. Therefore, it is a critical sermon. There are variations between Matthew and Luke's accounts and there are reasons for this. Jesus actually preached it in Aramaic but both Matthew and Luke wrote it in Greek, so they possibly translated an Aramaic word using different synonyms in the Greek. After all Matthew is

Jewish and Luke was a Greek or some believe a Hellenic Jew from Antioch. These two men were raised up in 2 very different cultural and social and economic traditions. We need to take the time to understand these differences in order to understand what Jesus taught. We are studying a sermon given in Aramaic translated into Greek and retranslated in English.

It is also true that neither Matthew nor Luke give us Jesus' full sermon. I can read Luke's version of it in about 4 minutes. I can read Matthew's version in about 11 minutes. I feel confident that Jesus did not preach for only 4 to 11 minutes. Luke and Matthew give us a condensed summary with precise statements, but it is an abridged version of Jesus' complete sermon. It is not everything Jesus said.

For example, even in the Beatitudes, which are the blessings given by Jesus in his Sermon on the Mount, there are variations, but the answer to this is simple. In the process of Jesus' preaching, which could have lasted from an hour to hours, because he could hold a crowd riveted for hours as his truth penetrated their minds and souls, and as he taught he would have revisited important ideas. In John 6 with the feeding of the 5000 Jesus taught throughout the day and took a break to feed the people. There was no media and people were taught to listen for extended periods of time. No one expected everything to be resolved in a 30-minute TV show. Joyce and I experienced the ability for people to sit and listen and be with each other for hours when we were in Papua New Guinea, Pakistan and Sudan. Jesus would have preached and possibly cycled back through the truths of His sermon in order to give emphasis to important ideas and this could lend itself to the variances in Matthew and Luke that we see in their lists of the Beatitudes - Matthew gives 9 and Luke gives 4. I am convinced that Matthew and Luke are recording the same sermon, although it is reasonable to think that Jesus

preached essentially the same sermon, the Sermon on the Mount, in a number of other places as he traveled. People in the different areas he traveled needed the same truths.

The crowds grew in size and people followed Jesus because he spoke with authority that had never been experienced. He had such authority that nothing that Jesus taught was subject to debate or discussion or argument. The Jewish leaders in general did not argue with his teachings, but with his claim to be the Messiah. At the end of this sermon Matthew confirms that people were in awe of Jesus' teachings writing, "when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching,²⁹ for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes." (Matthew 7:28-29) We see this even in John's gospel account when the Pharisees had sent the temple guards to arrest Jesus and they returned empty handed and the Pharisees said to the guards, "Why did you not bring him?"⁴⁶ The officers answered, "No one ever spoke like this man!" (John 7:45-46) The Pharisees were blinded by the hard hearts, desire for control and power as Jesus later made clear saying, "You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies." (John 8:44) The common people had no positions of authority and power to protect and they heard Jesus and it penetrated their minds, hearts and souls.

The beginning of the Sermon on the Mount is our focus this morning, reading beginning with Luke 6:20, "And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said: 'Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.'²¹ Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.'²² 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! ²³ Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets. ²⁴ But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. ²⁵ Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. ²⁶ Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.’ ” (Luke 6:20-26 ESV) The Beatitudes or blessings recorded here seem foolish to many, for from a human perspective how can poverty, hunger, sorrow and rejection be the source of blessings, peace, joy and honoring God? Jesus was calling people to think “outside of the box” after centuries of teaching that was erroneous. Sadly most could not make this shift. The same is true today – most people cannot let go of the world to see God’s salvation and truth of eternity.

Remember there are 3 groups with Jesus; the chosen 12 who he would train as his apostles, the “great crowd” of disciples listening and learning from his teaching, and the “great multitude” of the curious. Luke records Jesus began with “he lifted up his eyes on his disciples.” This shows the Sermon on the Mount was primarily focused on the 12 for it was these men who would teach Christ’s gospel and plant his Church. Jesus gives the Beatitudes defining 4 blessings and curses. Four blessing given to the righteous and 4 curses for the wicked or unsaved that seem backwards from the world’s perspective.

Who Are The Blessed

Jesus begins, “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.” What does this mean? Who are the poor and what does he mean by “who are poor”? Poor or *Ptochos* in the Greek means to be a beggar or to be improvised and to be entirely dependent on others for support, but in addition *Ptochos* comes

from the verbs *ptosso* and *pipto*, which means to cringe and cower in fear. The Bible certainly teaches the principle of caring and providing for the financially and materially poor and those who submit to Christ do have an awe or fear as in respect of Christ. In fact a righteous man asked the Lord in Proverbs, “Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, ⁹lest I be full and deny you and say, ‘Who is the LORD?’ or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God.” (Proverbs 30:8-9) The man was asking for the Lord to meet his needs – not more and not less. However, from Matthew we know Jesus was not teaching about those materially poor. Matthew records Jesus saying, “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” (Matthew 5:3) Jesus is saying that those who recognize that they are spiritually bankrupt and live in spiritual poverty, no matter what their material wealth or poverty, they knew they must seek God in their spiritual bankruptcy and know everything was dependent upon God’s love and grace and mercy. As observed in that attitude of the repentant tax collector, taught by Jesus, “But 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.” (Luke 18:13) Jesus is teaching we must recognize that we are sinners who are spiritually bankrupted in order to seek God and the salvation he gives to those who are repentant.

Further Jesus says in verse 20 “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.” Notice Jesus says, “yours is the kingdom of God.” The word “is” is a present verb showing that the kingdom of God is not just in the future, when one enters heaven, but is to be experienced now - here on earth. I hope you see how this applies to you and in your living you life as a child of God saved through Christ – you are to live the kingdom now.

Jesus continues with the 2nd mark of blessing - hunger. Reading verse 21, “**Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied.**” This hunger is not from the lack of food, but as Matthew points out the hunger is the result from a lack of righteousness in one life. Righteousness is all consuming longing for a relationship with God that molds and changes one. The Psalmist said it this way, “**As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. ² My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?**” (Psalm 42:1-2) As a saved child of God we seek God as one dying of thirst seeks water with all their strength. Living for the honor of God and in the presence of God becomes the driving force in ones life. King David wrote, “**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.**” (Psalm 63:1) Jesus says those who have such a hunger for God, whose souls thirsts for God, whose flesh faints to be in the presence of God “**shall be satisfied.**” The satisfaction Jesus speaks of using the definition of the Greek word literally means to eat one’s fill or to be completely satiated. When one desires and hungers for God so completely they know what King David wrote of, “**The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want**” in Psalm 23:1. This complete hunger for the Lord means one is fully feeding upon God and His Word and He is all we want, and one no longer looks to the world to be satisfied. The world brings only temporary pleasure. This was a lesson for the apostles for they would be tested as they walked in faith serving the Lord, preaching the gospel of Good News and planting his church.

From hunger Jesus moved to the 3rd Beatitude, “**Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.**” When we come to the end of ourselves and surrender to Christ we know our spiritual bankruptcy and our lack of righteousness. I do not know about you, but I was so overwhelmed when Jesus brought me to the end of

myself and regenerated my soul that I broke down and wept because of the salvation Christ had granted me. The holes in my heart punched through it by the pain of living in this world were filled with God's love, grace and mercy. My heart healed and I was full of joy. I experienced the words of King David, "Sing praises to the LORD, O you his saints, and give thanks to his holy name. ⁵For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning." (Psalm 30:4-5) Jesus knew the 12 had to be prepared for the road of suffering, which includes weeping, but they would have peace and joy and though they would be martyred they would be able to laugh because of their eternal joy. We can laugh in the face of the obstacles the world places before us if we are broken before a holy God and fully give our lives to Jesus.

The final beatitude found in verse 22, "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!" This is the most paradoxical of the 4 and most incomprehensible to people of the world. The first 3 beatitudes are how repentant sinners are able to view themselves in Christ. However, here the 4th is how the world sees a repentant sinner. The Lord says the world sees followers of Christ and they hate them because they no longer belong to the world. The world excludes believers and wants to isolate them. The world will revile or insult and despise believers because their lifestyles show the difference between being saved and living righteously and those who are lost to God and embrace the world and its evil. The world does not want to face or admit its sin and the evil it does – so the world tries to falsely accuse those who desire righteousness instead of evil. This is why the world loves to expose fallen Christians and especially Christian leaders. They try and convince everyone that the pastor who commits adultery is the way

all pastors are and is the norm for those who claim Christ. They enjoy exposing the priest who abused children and the leadership that hid the abuse – so they can tell the world this is what it means to call oneself Christian. True Christians are appalled by such behavior. What it teaches is this – when we do not hold the Word of God as sacred and when we do not hold each other to the standard of the Word it can only lead to trouble. This is why at Canyon Bible we believe in plurality of elder leadership and the proper accountability. This is why we are seeing a separation taking place between those who hold a high view of God’s Word and those who are actively changing the Word of God to their own desire. This is the separation that is taking place between the “broad church” and the “remnant church”. This last beatitude reads, **“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!”** You are blessed when your life is lived **“on account of the Son of Man!”** You are not blessed when you defy God, when you sin against God because this shows you are not of God but of the world. To change the Word of God is to sin against God.

When you chose righteousness then you live in a way that honors God and the kingdom of God is your birthright. Verse 23 reads, **“Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.”** A righteous saved sinner can rejoice in suffering just as the suffering prophets of old for great is their and our reward in heaven. The apostles of Christ suffered much for the gospel and they were willing to do so because they clearly knew what their reward in heaven was. How about you? Do you understand if you justly suffer for the cause of Christ it is a reason to **“leap for joy”**? Those who are truly saved and are repentant before their holy God are blessed in ways the world cannot see. However, those who were once unrepentant

sinner but are now saved by God's grace know what it was like to be separated from God – they remember who they were before Christ saved them.

Who Are The Cursed

Jesus now turns his attention to those who are lost. Reading at verse 24, “But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. ²⁵ Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. ²⁶ Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.” Jesus begins with a strong conjunction “But” this shows the strong contrast to the blessings of believers and to the pronouncement of woes to those who reject Jesus as the Christ. The word “woe” means, according to the Tyndale Bible Dictionary – *An exclamation denoting pain or displeasure and less frequently, it occurs as a noun denoting a disaster or calamity.* So Jesus is not just saying that those who reject him will experience problems, but by their rejection they are condemned the disaster and calamity of hell.

The 1st woe to aimed at the materially rich. To be rich in and of itself is not a sin, a number of the Old Testament patriarchs were materially wealthy. Jesus is speaking of those who use their wealth for pleasure and to gain power. They think their worldly success is evidence of God's blessing, if they believe in some god. They have little to no concern for the poor. Remember earlier I used the tax collector in Luke 18:13 “But 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!’ ” He humbled himself before God. But also remember there was another man in the same story Jesus spoke of who is an example of the rich that Jesus is speaking of here in the 1st woe. There was also “The 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. ¹² I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ ” (Luke 18:11-12) He is self-promoting, he has gained his position of status and power and he is anything but humble before God. He has gained his comfort in this world at the expense of eternity with God. He has traded the comfort of a handful of years, maybe as many as 80 to 90 here on earth for eternal torment in hell.

The 2nd woe is in verse 25 “Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry.” This speaks to the wealthy that are conceited in their abilities – the have worked to obtain the comforts of this world and have no spiritual hunger. Does this not describe the wealthy of Israel but also the average American? They use their material wealth for their own purposes without regard for the poor or the needs of the church. They do not know hunger here on earth but will be eternally spiritually hungry in hell. In hell they will know there is a God and Jesus is the Savior, but they will never be satisfied spiritually, they will never be in God’s presence. This in and of itself this is bad enough but then add to this eternal torment and it just gets worst.

The 3rd is “Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.” People believe their achievements here on earth will bring them eternal happiness. Without a relationship with God the Father through Jesus, God the Son the laughter and happiness of this world is fleeting. True believers have joy, even in adversity; while the unbeliever may find happiness they do not know the joy of the Lord. The happiness of the world is not lasting for in hell there will be eternal mourning. In Jesus parable about his 2nd coming he said, “The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know ⁵¹ and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be

weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matthew 24:50-51) Jesus is coming back and most will not be ready and they will be cast into hell where they will mourn and weep.

The final warning is found in verse 26, **“Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.”** Look at the people who the world worships. They are just like the false prophets who tickled people ears, pandered to the egos and promised the wealth of the world instead of the treasure of heaven. The prophet Jeremiah said, **“An appalling and horrible thing has happened in the land: ³¹ the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule at their direction; my people love to have it so, but what will you do when the end comes?”** (Jeremiah 5:30-31) This was true at the time of Christ and it is true today. Those who embrace the teachings of false prophets of religion, politics and commerce will share in the doom of these false prophets eternally in hell.

There are only 2 types of people in this world: Christ’s true followers who are spiritually poor, hungry for God and his truth, and rejected by the world – they cry out to God for his pardon and mercy through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ because they know they are spiritually bankrupt without Christ and submit to him and his Holy Spirit they are eternally blessed. In contrast those who cling to the world; they see themselves as spiritually righteous by their own efforts, materially rich, happy with the things of this world and accepted by the world, but they are in truth cursed with eternal poverty, emptiness, sorrow and the judgment of hell.

The question before us this morning is are we of the great multitude of the curious or are we modern apostles of Christ, fully submitted to him and obedient to live for him and sharing his gospel of salvation? How will you live this day and

the rest of your life? My prayer for myself and for each of you is for us to live in such a way the Lord will say, “Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.” (Matthew 25:21) Amen and amen!