

Luke 6:17-26 A new perspective

- We have jumped a few verses from where we left off last week
 - During those verses
 - Jesus spent a whole night in prayer
 - Asking the father for strength against a growing opposition from the Pharisees that ultimately leads to his death
 - Guidance on who to appoint as apostles.
 - Jesus had by this point many disciples but 12 were going to be appointed as apostle
 - Disciple – a follower
 - Apostle – sent one. They were given authority by Jesus and power from Jesus to spread the gospel.
 - Jesus appoints his 12
 - We get told the names of the 12.
 - Interesting to note they were ordinary men
 - 7 were fishermen
 - One a tax collector
 - The other 4 unknown occupation
 - They each had different personalities, but Jesus called them to be with Him, to learn from Him and then to go out for Him.
 - Ordinary people who were used by Jesus.
 - There is hope for us.
 - He heals all
 - Before he preaches this great sermon, He takes the time to show His power but also His compassion.
 - It displayed to the Apostles what their newly given job was
 - He heals all as power was coming from Him.
- That then brings us to today's verses.
 - The most famous sermon in history
 - We find similar verses in Matthew
 - Some claim it's the same sermon Matthew and Luke record, others claim it's the same message but preached at two different places.
 - If I preached this sermon next week it would have the same overall message but would sound slightly different.
 - Likewise, whether this is the same sermon that Matthew records or not, both convey the same message.
- What is that message?
 - It's a message that shows the character God expects of a follower of Jesus, a character that comes from a very different, in fact opposite, perspective than the world comes from.
 - This is the thing about Jesus and why He is so challenging
 - He didn't come to add to conventional religious views but to replace them altogether.

- That's what makes Jesus teaching so amazing and its why over and over again people question where Jesus gets the authority in His teaching from.
 - Because it's totally different to anything they have heard before.
 - Jesus doesn't add His 2 cents to what they already believe
 - He dismantles and replaces everything we're taught to believe by the world and that might be naturally within us.
 - He flips the world order on its head as we will see this morning.
- Just look at what Jesus says – READ v20-26
 - Since when did poverty, hunger, sorrow and rejection become a blessing?
 - And when did wealth, a full stomach, joy and being loved become a problem?
 - In every success story you come across, whether in a film, book, or a life story the key component is a move from poverty, hunger, sorrow, rejection to wealth, well fed, joy and love.
 - ISN'T IT?
 - That's the direction we expect a success story to move
 - But Jesus says no
 - It goes the other way!
 - Everything in us from our experience screams no at this.
 - But remember Jesus teaching comes with power and authority
 - Which means when He speaks it's not Jesus making good suggestions, but He is letting us know how it is.
 - Jesus is not hoping, wishing and praying what he says it true; He is stating it how it is.
- In these verses we see 4 blessings and 4 woes, and each is a direct contrast.
 - Blessing 1 contrasts woe 1 and so on.
 - Now Jesus at this point is directing this teaching at the disciples, believers, but there is a whole crowd listening which would include non-believers, so this teaching is for everyone.
 - But here is a question to bear in mind as we work through this
 - If Jesus is saying with authority "This is who is blessed, and this is who is cursed" a scale is created and so where do we fit on that scale?
 - Jesus is for everyone but where am I with Jesus?
 - Some may be at one end or the other, but most are probably somewhere in the middle.

Contrast 1 – blessed are the poor, woe to the rich.

- Let's clear up one thing right at the start
 - God does not hand out salvation based on economic status or material wealth
 - Salvation is by faith alone in Christ alone.

- There are many Christians who are poor and many who are financially rich.
- So, what is Jesus talking about here – rich and poor
 - That’s where Matthews gospel helps us
 - It tells us that it's the poor in spirit
- This moves us past external economics and into talking about the state of the heart.
- So what Jesus is saying here is blessed, happy, transformed is the man who understands
 - that he is spiritually bankrupt
 - that he has nothing that he can give to God to barter for God’s favour
 - that he can do nothing to earn right standing or forgiveness from God.
- This is what being poor in heart means
 - no matter how many religious activities you are involved in
 - no matter how good your moral code is
 - no matter how clean your life is
 - God owes you nothing.
- Maybe some find that hard to take because you think that God should be pleased with all your ‘work’ but he isn't.
 - That’s why he sent his son to die for you.
- Salvation is a free gift that you can do nothing to earn!
- Jesus said “I came to preach good news – to who? – the poor!
 - Not the financially poor but those who were poor in spirit and realised they could do nothing to make themselves right with God and that their brokenness and wickedness separates them from God.
- And now the Pharisees’ anger starts to make sense doesn’t it
 - They are the picture-perfect image of those who are rich
 - They believed they were so clean and were earning Gods favour left right and centre through their humanistic good deeds and religious discipline.
 - But Jesus says no.
 - You are getting no where
 - Woe to you.
- The response to this teaching is either wrath and fury, like the pharisees, or humble acceptance of our standing before God without Jesus.
 - If you are the latter Jesus says the kingdom of heaven is yours
 - What a reward!

Contrast 2 – blessed are the hungry they will be satisfied, woe to the well fed they will be hungry.

- Now these statements through the sermon build on each other.
- Just as Jesus wasn’t talking about material wealth in the last one, he is not talking about food here.
 - All these statements point to the heart characteristics of a person.
- And again Matthew 5 helps us out
 - Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.
 - Righteousness is right standing with God
- So, the progression is this
 - Blessed are those who realise they can’t fix themselves and work their own way back to God but humbly come to him

- Then blessed are those who desire and hunger, to be right with God
 - Those who long for forgiveness
 - Are hungry to be close to God again.
 - Desire reconciliation with their maker
- Jesus makes some bold statements, and these are certainly some of them
 - He is saying you can't make yourself right but come to God in your broken mess and he will not only accept you but fix you.
 - The church should be a place where it is okay to not be okay!
 - It is a place where broken people come to meet God and be changed by God.
 - God in his grace will show you where you are broken and give you the strength to change.
 - That's what hungering for righteousness means
 - It means desiring to become more like God every moment of every day and taking steps to do that.
 - Seek help from Christians around you
 - Find accountability partners.
 - Spend time in God's word
 - God puts his spirit in you and gives you the ability to change but you have to do your part.
 - God doesn't want us to just stay in the poor in spirit mode that's why these statements are progressive.
 - Don't just realise you are far from God with no way of getting yourself to him but do something about it.
 - Hunger for righteousness.
 - If you are willing and desire to be changed, God will transform you.
- So what's the contrasting woe here?
 - Woe to those who are full. With what?
 - Go back to last week's sermon and the need for rest, sabbath
 - We fill our lives with so much that we never realise what we are truly hungry for
 - It's like giving Isaac sweets on the way home from preschool and then wondering why he doesn't eat his dinner.
 - We have to work hard to make space in our day to become hungry for the right thing.
 - Woe to you who think you have it figured out and are filling up on religious junk and missing the best food.
 - Woe to you who think you have your path to righteousness figured out.

Contrast 3 – blessed are you who weep now for you shall laugh, woe to you who laugh now for you shall weep.

- So, our progression again – blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are those who hunger for righteousness and now blessed are those who mourn.
- The obvious question is mourn what?
 - Mourn the fact that they are bankrupt (poor in spirit) and hungry.
- This mourning is repentance.
 - It is those who mourn over their sin rather than just ignore it and crack on with life.
 - It's those who at times feel overwhelmed by the sin in their lives and the grief they have caused God as a result of their sin.
 - That what this mourning is.
- This true morning of sin though doesn't leave us in a place of guilt and despair.
 - It acknowledges that you have done wrong against a Holy God
 - Which then leads to repentance
 - Which leads to transformation as the repentance invites God into your life to help clean you up.
 - God is a merciful, forgiving God of amazing grace so when we come repentant of our sin, we leave forgiven and free.
- Ecclesiastes says “only a fool laughs when he is on fire”
 - That is who this woe is pointed towards
 - People who realise that they are a long way from God with no way to get themselves to him but just carry on the way they are living.
 - The put on a brave face and pretend it's all fine when they know it's not.
- Blessed is the man who sees his sin and cries out for help, woe to the man who pretends it's not there.

Contrast 4 – blessed are you when people hate and exclude you, woe to you when everyone loves you

- Now if you have ever been hated or excluded you will know this statement is the flip opposite of the world.
 - We love to be loved and hate to be hated/excluded
 - I think excluding is worse than hate
 - Remember at school when teams were picked, and you were the last one standing there!
 - Awful, awful feeling.
- But let's be careful to note why people hate and exclude you
 - It's because of Jesus
 - If you are just a nasty person and people do it to you that doesn't count
 - This is exclusion and hatred because of your belief in Jesus
 - Happened to me in a hockey team.
 - Occasionally happens to me when I tell people I am a pastor.
- Jesus is saying blessed are you when you have been so transformed by God at work in your life that people hate and exclude you because of me.
 - Our lives as Christians should be distinct and visible to the world and in our culture it's very easy to stand out for Jesus such that people know you are a Christian.

- So, find joy when it happens to you because it proves God is at work in your life transforming you.
- For the woe we need to remember this is primarily aimed at believers
 - What Jesus is saying is that if everyone speaks well of you, if you are loved by everyone, then like a false prophet you have lost the truth and you are not distinct for Christ.
 - People love you but you live a lie, so they don't love the true you.
 - We don't seek to offend by the gospel but if you truly live it out it will offend non-believers because it tells them how they are living is wrong.
 - But it also points them to a loving God.

Conclusion

- What a different perspective on life we have seen this morning.
 - "Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Blessed are those who mourn. Blessed are those who are persecuted.
 - But woe is you, cursed are you who are rich, you who are full, you who laugh while you're on fire, you who are loved by everyone."
- Do you see what Jesus is trying to do?
 - He is showing you the difference between how the world works and how God's kingdom works.
 - He's trying to get you outside of how you think the universe works and get you into how it does.
- So, here's the question I started with: you've got to answer it now.
 - Where are you?
 - Not where's your family, where's the church
 - where are you?