

# Allowing Blessings & Woes to Inform our Worldview

Luke 6:17-26 on April 27, 2025

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*Please read Luke 6:17-26 before going further in this transcript.*

Today's Scripture passage contains a series of blessings and woes.<sup>1</sup>

This word "blessed" can be a little unclear or vague.

- > "Blessed" refers to our lasting spiritual joy and our overall wellbeing.
- > "Blessed" also means recognizing that we've received so much more than we deserve, because due to our sin, what we actually deserve is death and eternal separation from God.
- > "Blessed" is a gift from God, not something we earn; it's given out of the abundance of God's grace.

So if we're a deeply devoted follower of Jesus, then we are more than forgiven, we are blessed beyond compare. God's divine favor shines on us, so we have every reason to rejoice today, and to give Him our everlasting thanks and praise.

Now today's passage also contains words of WOE.

- > "Woe" as in great sorrow and distress.
- > "Woe" also refers to warning; watch out! Watch out that this doesn't describe you!
- > "Woe" also indicates "whoa" spelled W H O A, as in slow down!

Think about what you're doing here, if this sounds like the course you're on.

Today's passage offers us some words of wisdom from Jesus' Himself.

He's explaining these blessings and woes for us, and we'd do well to allow them to inform our worldview. Anyone who considers themselves a deeply devoted follower of Jesus, ought to take these blessings and woes to heart, not just today, during this sermon, but throughout our lifetime.

Luke 6:17 begins, "He [*Jesus*] went down with them [*the Apostles*] and stood on a level place...." This "level place" may very well have been a plateau up in the foothills of Galilee, which is why Bible scholars often refer to today's passage as Jesus' "Sermon on the Plateau." The Beatitudes, which Jesus is about to teach on, have some clear similarities to the Beatitudes that we find in Matthew's Gospel, which is Jesus' famous "Sermon on the Mount." The reason this matters is that if this "level place" is indeed a plateau in the foothills, then Luke may have very well selected

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<sup>1</sup> Verses 20-26 are written in a wisdom motif which contrasts blessings and woes. Blessings for those who chose to live according to God's ways, and woes for the coming judgment on those who chose to live their own way. See Deuteronomy 28, Psalm 1, and the book of Proverbs.

the details for his account, from this very same sermon.<sup>2 3 4 5 6</sup> Of course, it's also possible that this is an entirely different occasion, and Jesus is simply preaching on a similar topic. The fact is, it's quite likely that Jesus, as an itinerant preacher, often repeated these same Kingdom truths many times over, as He traveled to different places all throughout the region. Be that as it may, there's value in comparing what Luke records here in chapter 6, with what Matthew recorded in his chapter 5, so we'll do a little bit of that comparison as we make our way through today's message.

The reason that verse 17 says that Jesus "went *down* with them" is that He was coming down from the mountainside where He'd just spent the night in prayer. On the following morning, on that same mountainside, He'd chosen His 12 apostles, which we learned about a few weeks ago back in verses 12-16.<sup>7</sup> So the "with *them*" in verse 17 is referring to His 12 Apostles.

Luke 6:17-19 goes on... "17 ...A large crowd of his disciples was there and a great number of people from all over Judea, from Jerusalem, and from the coastal region around Tyre and Sidon, 18 who had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. Those troubled by impure spirits were cured, 19 and the people all tried to touch him, because power was coming from him and healing them all." So in addition to the 12 Apostles who were with Jesus, there were a bunch of other disciples there, as well as people at large from throughout the entire region.<sup>8</sup> This was a huge event! People were coming for lots of different reasons: curiosity, healing, having a demon cast out, and most importantly, to hear Jesus' teaching (*which is why you're reading this transcript today*).<sup>9 10</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> "a plateau, which would satisfy both this context and that in Matthew 5:1." *NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 1715 footnote on Luke 6:17.

<sup>3</sup> So the idea here would be that Jesus is likely in a mountainous region, and as He prepares to give His Sermon on the Plateau, He finds a level place where people can spread out to listen. This would provide a place where the ground was a little less rocky and a bit more grassy and comfortable.

<sup>4</sup> "While much of Matthew's Sermon [chapters 5-7] appears in the parallel sermon in Luke 6:17-49, 34 of the verses occur in other contexts in Luke." *NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 1599 footnote on Matthew 5:1-7:29.

<sup>5</sup> "Although this sermon is much shorter than the one in Matthew, they both begin with the Beatitudes and end with the lesson of the builders. Some of Matthew's sermon is found in other portions of Luke (e.g., 11:2-4; 12:22-31,33-34), suggesting that the material may have been given on various occasions in Jesus' preaching." *NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 1715 footnote on Luke 6:20-49.

<sup>6</sup> "The Lukan sermon (30 verses) is much shorter than the sermon in Matthew (107 verses), and much of the material in Matthew's sermon is found elsewhere in Luke." Robert H. Stein, *Luke, vol. 24, The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 197.

<sup>7</sup> "The addition "went down" (6:17) and the setting on a mountain (6:12) tie the preceding account geographically and chronologically to the following sermon "on a level place" (6:17)." Robert H. Stein, *Luke, vol. 24, The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 195.

<sup>8</sup> "Judea' is best understood broadly as the land of the Jews rather than the province of Judea." Robert H. Stein, *Luke, vol. 24, The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 196.

<sup>9</sup> Power was coming from Jesus and healing everyone, but people weren't just coming to be healed and then leaving. They stayed, because they wanted to hear what Jesus had to say. "Luke commented that the purpose of their coming was to hear Jesus (an infinitive of purpose). Thus he placed greater emphasis on Jesus' message. ... By placing "to hear" before "to be healed," Luke stressed the importance of Jesus' preaching ministry over his healing ministry (cf. 5:15)." Robert H. Stein, *Luke, vol. 24, The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 196.

<sup>10</sup> At this point, it might be helpful to take a quick look at a MAP of the region. This large gathering of people came from all over. At this point, Jesus was still ministering up in the northern region of Galilee, but people were coming from as far south as Jerusalem and even further. They were also coming even from the far northwestern coastal areas of places like Tyre and Sidon.

Now, as Jesus begins His Sermon on the Plateau, it's important for us to remember the ministry setting. Not only had He just finished choosing His 12 Apostles, but He'd chosen them during a time when opposition from the Pharisees and teachers of the law was really heating up. We recently looked at Luke 6:11, which says, "But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law were *furious* and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus." It's in this context, of intense anger from Jesus' opponents and plotting to do Him harm, that He'll teach His disciples and the watching crowd about the Kingdom of God. You see, God's Kingdom looked and felt much different than the teachings and practices of the Jewish religious leaders of His day. There were obvious and palpable distinctions between Jesus' teaching on the Kingdom of God, versus the manmade religious kingdom which the Jewish leaders had fabricated by this time in history.

Now today we're just going to look at the beginning of Jesus' sermon, but in the weeks to come, in the rest of chapter 6, we'll see how His message unfolds. Jesus will go on to talk about: loving our enemies, not judging others, a tree and its fruit, and the wise and foolish builders.<sup>11 12 13</sup>

Jesus begins in Luke 6:20, "Looking at his disciples, he said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God."<sup>14</sup> So, even though huge crowds were listening in, Jesus is looking directly at His disciples as He begins His message. When Matthew records this Beatitude about the poor, he clarifies that "poor" means the "poor in spirit," referring to the spiritually humble, and those who understand their desperate need for God. Luke however, just says poor, with no qualification.<sup>15</sup> Now, it could be that for Luke's original audience, they didn't need any qualification. They likely understood that when Jesus referred to the poor, He wasn't only thinking about their finances. Jesus was referring more broadly to their understanding of their own limited resources, whether that be financial, spiritual, or otherwise. But Luke also seems to be emphasizing Jesus' ministry to those with limited financial means, which was common among many of Jesus' 1<sup>st</sup> century followers. Many of them were not only "poor in spirit" and humble enough to see their need for God's grace, but they were also *financially* poor. This helps us realize that Jesus didn't come to make

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<sup>11</sup> "The Beatitudes form the preamble to and the presupposition of the rest of the sermon. ...Disciples may be assured that the choice to enter into this walk will meet with blessing. ...the Beatitudes say...come into God's promises and seek to be this kind of person." Darrell L. Bock, *Luke, Vol. 1, 1:1-9:50*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, 1994, pp. 570-571.

<sup>12</sup> "Are the beatitudes an evangelistic exhortation for salvation or pastoral words of comfort and encouragement, a kind of congratulation, to those who already possess faith? For several reasons they should be understood as the latter." Robert H. Stein, *Luke, vol. 24, The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 199.

<sup>13</sup> All of this is part of Luke's ongoing effort to draw up an orderly account of the things which were fulfilled among them in Jesus' day.

<sup>14</sup> Without a clear understanding of the context here, it would be easy to be confused or to misunderstand what Jesus is saying here. The Kingdom of God is the context for everything Jesus is talking about. Otherwise it might come across to us as nonsense.

<sup>15</sup> "In Matthew's account Jesus speaks of poverty "in spirit" (Mt. 5:3) and hunger "for righteousness" (Mt. 5:6). Luke places a greater emphasis on material poverty as well. Those who are poor tend to look more strongly to God to meet all their needs." *NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 1715 footnote on Luke 6:20-23.

the financially poor, financially rich; He came to proclaim a kingdom beyond this world. So, Jesus' teaching that "Blessed are you who are poor" flies right in the face of today's popular teachings of the Prosperity Gospel. Instead of expecting the blessing of wealth, followers of Jesus can expect to be blessed, right in the midst of their poverty.

Back in Luke 4:18-19 Jesus declared, "18 The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Material poverty and spiritual poverty are closely tied together throughout Scripture, and it's no different throughout Luke's Gospel. Ultimately we know that God cares about our hearts more than any other aspect. So the Good News is indeed good news for those who are financially poor; there's no entrance fee required to enjoy God's Kingdom, so that's great news for people who don't have any money.<sup>16</sup> But having no entrance fee is also great news for people who do have money, because it makes us realize that none of us can buy our way into heaven. The only "entry fee" if you will, is admitting that all of us are completely broke, when it comes to the righteousness that God requires. The Kingdom of God can only be received by those who are willing to admit their own spiritual poverty, by embracing this Kingdom value of being "poor in spirit."<sup>17</sup>

To be clear, as we move through Luke's Gospel, we'll encounter a number of godly people who were both "poor in spirit" and also financially wealthy. For example, last week we talked about Mary Magdalene and some of the other women who supported Jesus' ministry out of their own means. Not to mention Zacheus, who was a wealthy tax collector and also a follower of Jesus. As well as Joseph of Arimathea, who was rich and also became a follower of Jesus, who then provided a tomb for Jesus' burial.<sup>18</sup> So it's important for us to understand that followers of Jesus aren't required to be financially poor, but as we'll see when we get to verse 24, there is a danger in being wealthy. Jesus' words here in Luke 6 are a warning to those of us with wealth, even middle-class wealth. We need to carefully consider how our worldview of wealth has impacted our ability to remain poor in spirit, and our need to receive comfort from our Lord, and not from our material wealth.

In verse 20 Jesus tells His followers, "for yours is the kingdom of God." My Study Bible helps define this Kingdom for us: The Kingdom of God refers to "the establishment of God's rule in the hearts and lives of his people, the overcoming of all the forces of evil, the removal from the world of all the

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<sup>16</sup> Nobody likes being broke. This makes me think of this silly video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U9pl8OSDSKQ>

<sup>17</sup> Having worldly wealth means absolutely nothing in the Kingdom of God.

<sup>18</sup> See Luke 7:1-10; 8:3; 19:1-10; 23:50-56; Matthew 27:57.

consequences of sin – including death and all that diminishes life – and the creation of a new order of righteousness and peace.”<sup>19</sup> We experience many of these blessings in our lives today, but only in part, because there’s a now/not yet aspect to God’s Kingdom. We will one day experience these blessings in their fullness, when Jesus returns at His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming and makes all things new.<sup>20</sup>

Luke 6:21-22 goes on, “21 Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. 22 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.” Verse 21 qualifies both the hunger and weeping with the temporal qualification of “now.”<sup>21</sup> This highlights how Luke seems to be including physical hunger here, along with our understanding of hungering for righteousness. In other words, Jesus’ followers were experiencing real need, and heartfelt sorrow, in the here and now, but things will not remain this way. These longings will be satisfied, and these tears will be wiped away. Verse 22 then goes on to talk about how following Jesus leads to being hated, excluded, insulted, and rejected. And Jesus unabashedly declares that all of this, is due to their association with Him; with Jesus, the Son of Man.<sup>22 23 24 25</sup>

In John 15:18-19 Jesus warns His followers, “18 If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. 19 If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.” Boy oh boy Pastor Jerry, the Kingdom of God sounds a bit rough. If this is what it’s like for people in God’s Kingdom, I’m not sure I want to be one of them: poor, hungry, weeping, mistreated. I mean, honestly, who would ever want to subscribe to a worldview like that? Who would ever want to be part of a Christian movement like that? Well, you might be surprised; actually, quite a few of us have decided to follow Jesus, even though it comes at great

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<sup>19</sup> *NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 1593 footnote on Luke 3:2.

<sup>20</sup> Even so, as we discussed last week on Easter Sunday: Jesus’ resurrection offers us new life in the here and now, as well as a future and final resurrection yet to come.

<sup>21</sup> All of us know what’s it’s like to be hungry, and then to have that hunger satisfied. We know what’s it’s like to go between the emotional extremes of weeping and laughing. This is common to our human condition, and Jesus understands these things, because He became fully human.

<sup>22</sup> This is a common title that Jesus used to refer to Himself.

<sup>23</sup> New Testament scholar Robert Stein gives some helpful commentary here: When verse 22 says, ‘when they exclude you,’ Luke’s original audience would have likely been thinking about how they’d been expelled from the Jewish synagogue because of their faith in Jesus. “When Luke wrote his Gospel, Jewish Christians had already been expelled from the synagogue, and he may have been alluding to this here.” Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, vol. 24, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 202.

<sup>24</sup> And when verse 22 says, ‘and reject your name as evil’ it would have been in keeping with the growing Jewish disdain for Christians, which eventually led to prayers by orthodox Jews who asked the Lord to blot out the names of Jewish Christians from God’s Book of Life. “This may...allude to ...the Jewish prayer...Dated around A.D. 85, it reads: “For the renegades let there be no hope, and may the arrogant kingdom soon be rooted out in our days, and the...Nazarenes [Christians] and the...[heretics] perish as in a moment and be blotted out from the book of life and with the righteous may they not be inscribed. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who humbles the arrogant.” Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, vol. 24, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 203.

<sup>25</sup> Now I don’t know the details of the various persecutions that each one of us here today have gone through, but clearly following Jesus comes with a cost. Being part of God’s Kingdom does not exclude us from suffering, at least not until we get to the new heaven and earth. Many of us have suffered, and we’ll continue to suffer varying levels of insult and rejection due to our faith in Jesus.

personal cost. Jesus' Kingdom priorities have become our priorities (or at least they're becoming our priorities), and we're learning day by day to value what He values. And we're also learning to avoid falling for the trap of valuing the things that this world tells us we should value.<sup>26</sup> You see, the longer we follow Jesus, and enjoy the blessings of doing God's will, the more the things of this earth grow strangely dim. The old song Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus comes to mind: "And the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace."<sup>27</sup>

Jesus then instructs His followers with these words in Luke 6:23: "Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their ancestors treated the prophets." REJOICE! You're in good company, the company of God's faithful Old Testament prophets. If we read through the Old Testament, we can easily find plenty of examples of times when God's earthly spokespeople were persecuted and rejected by the Israelites.<sup>28</sup> <sup>29</sup> The point of this comparison is that if we're being treated in a similarly negative way to how these godly servants were treated, then we're in good company. The reality of the struggles we encounter in following Jesus ought not to discourage us, or dissuade us from following Him, but rather, those struggles should be the very thing that inspire us to press on; it's a sign that we're on the right track. 1 Peter 4:16 cheers us on: "...if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name."<sup>30</sup>

This phrase at the beginning of verse 23, "in that day," points us back to the verse we just looked at.<sup>31</sup> So verse 23 is a call to rejoice in the days when we suffer for the name of Jesus. In fact, Jesus instructs His followers to "leap for joy." Now, perhaps you noticed the picture of the little guy on the front of today's bulletin? When is the last time you leapt for joy? "Pastor Jerry, we're Scandinavian, we don't leap!" (I actually did an AI overview this week and it confirmed it: Scandinavians don't leap.) Well, if that's true, then we may have a problem here, because Jesus' clear instruction is for His followers to rejoice and leap because great is our reward in heaven! When

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<sup>26</sup> Consider 1 Peter 4:1-4.

<sup>27</sup> Consider Psalm 123:1-4.

<sup>28</sup> See 2 Chronicles 24:20-21; Nehemiah 9:26; and Jeremiah 37:15-16.

<sup>29</sup> "There are two ways of interpreting this verse. Believers should rejoice (1) because they will share God's kingdom with the prophets or (2) because their persecution assures them that they are indeed God's people; for God's people, the prophets, have suffered similarly. The latter interpretation is to be preferred due to the parallel in Luke 6:26." Robert H. Stein, *Luke, vol. 24, The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 203-204.

<sup>30</sup> Robert Stein summarizes it this way: "Therefore the beatitudes should not be read as words of condemnation—"You are not blessed unless you perfectly fulfill these beatitudes..."—but rather as words of encouragement: You who believe in Jesus—i.e., you who are the poor, the hungry, the weeping, the hated—blessed are you. God's kingdom belongs to you..." His quotation continues, "...God will indeed comfort you and wipe away every tear. This, of course, does not mean that the beatitudes possess no hortatory significance. Words of comfort and encouragement do challenge believers to greater zeal and commitment, for they know that their labor in the Lord is not in vain (1 Cor 15:58). Yet the primary goal of the beatitudes is to encourage the disciples by telling them of the blessedness of the eschatological consummation that awaits them. Luke's readers were not to be deceived by the present appearance of things. The "now" may at times have been discouraging, but the "then" would more than make up for this." Robert H. Stein, *Luke, vol. 24, The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 199.

<sup>31</sup> "In that day" refers to the times or occasions spoken of in the previous verse." Robert H. Stein, *Luke, vol. 24, The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 203. However, some scholars believe that "in that day" may also refer to "the day of judgment" *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 2083 footnote on Luke 6:23.

we're mistreated because we're following Jesus, the proper *theological* response... is to leap! Woowho!!!<sup>32</sup>

Jesus' message now moves from blessings and rejoicing to a warning in the form of four woes.<sup>33</sup> Luke 6:24-26 concludes, "24 But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort. 25 Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep. 26 Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you, for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets." Unlike the list of Beatitudes in Matthew's Gospel, Luke now contrasts each of these blessings with a list of "woes." Verses 24-26, are a point by point, contrasting echo of verses 20-22. It's essentially contrasting two worldviews: a Kingdom of God worldview and a Kingdom of Self worldview.<sup>34</sup> Much like the word "poor" can be equated with the "humble" and the "poor in spirit" back in verse 20, so also the word "rich" can be equated with the "arrogant" and the "proud" in verse 24.<sup>35</sup> It's not the riches themselves that are the problem; it's the attitude and worldview that often develops within those of us who have these riches.<sup>36 37</sup>

To be clear, just because somebody's rich, that doesn't automatically mean they're not one of God's Kingdom people. And in a similar vein, just because someone's poor, that doesn't automatically mean that they are one of God's Kingdom people.<sup>38 39</sup>

In verse 24, the riches aren't the problem, but finding comfort in them is. In verse 25, being well fed isn't wrong, nor is laughing, but in the context of

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<sup>32</sup> Acts 5:41 says, "The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing [WHY?] because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name." What Name? What name do you think? The name of Jesus! See Acts 5:40 as well. See also Matthew 5:12.

<sup>33</sup> Consider Isaiah 65:13-14.

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**Verse 20: Poor now; full Kingdom comforts later.**

Verse 24: Rich now; no comfort later.

**Verse 21: Hunger now; satisfied later.**

Verse 25: Well fed now; hunger later.

**Verse 21: Weep now; laugh later.**

Verse 25: Laugh now; mourn and weep later.

**Verse 22: Mistreated now; because you're linked with Jesus.**

Verse 26: Treated well now; because you're linked with the false prophets.

<sup>35</sup> We see this pattern throughout Scripture.

<sup>36</sup> For example, read the parable about the rich man in Luke 12:16-21 who stored up all of his grain for himself, but wasn't rich toward God. And consider 1 Timothy 6:10, which says that the love of money is the root of all KINDS of evil, but the money itself isn't what's evil. Deuteronomy 8:17 warns, "You may say to yourself, 'My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.'" Being rich can cause us to lose our appreciation and reverence for God and eventually lead us to turn away from Him.

<sup>37</sup> Robert Stein says it well: "We find in this section a major Lukan emphasis on the great reversal the kingdom brings. ... Blessings await the poor, who hunger, weep, and are hated; for God's kingdom belongs to them, and God will one day wipe away each tear. This momentary ("now") affliction will soon give way to glory. ... On the other hand for the arrogant rich, who are now satiated, there is a fourfold woe. For Luke's readers, this should encourage them not to lose heart, but to continue with greater resolve to live with eternity's values in view...." His quotation continues "...Whereas the coming of God's kingdom brings with it a partial realization of these blessings, believers understand that the ultimate filling and laughter spoken of in the beatitudes is "not yet" and awaits the consummation of the kingdom that belongs to them. In these verses Luke also sought to warn of the dangers of riches and to exhort his readers to make judicious use of their possessions." Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, vol. 24, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 205.

<sup>38</sup> I also appreciated something I read by New Testament scholar Darrell Bock this week: "One should be careful not to take these generalized beatitudes and absolutize them, as if one's bank account or social status automatically determines one's spiritual state." Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, Vol. 1, 1:1-9:50, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, 1994, p. 559.

<sup>39</sup> So, they weren't blessed for being financially poor, they were blessed due to their association with Jesus.

Jesus' sermon, finding our reward in the pleasures of this world, will keep us from finding our reward in heaven.<sup>40</sup> In verse 26, if everyone speaks well of us, and if we're not experiencing even the slightest twinge of persecution, it may very well reveal that we're living to please people rather than to please God. This puts us in the unenviable company of the false prophets, which, to say the least, is not the company we want to be in.<sup>41 42</sup>

Friend, Jesus' Sermon on the Plateau is an opportunity for us to assess whether these blessings and woes truly inform our Christian worldview. They're more than a set of instructions for godly living; they're a call to embrace God's values and priorities. And as we continue to meditate on these blessings and woes this week, they're also a reminder that we can't be this kind of Kingdom people without help from our King. (We need God's Spirit to mold us and make us more like Jesus.)

Jesus' Sermon on the Plateau is also an encouragement for His followers to persevere in their faith; it's a good thing when our devotion to Jesus costs us something. It's ok when our association with Him makes us unpopular by the world's standards. For those of us who are following Jesus, the Kingdom of God is ours, and we have a good reason to rejoice and to leap for joy, for great is our reward.

Later on in Luke 12:29-32 Jesus tells His followers: "29 And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. 30 For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. 31 But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. 32 Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom."

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<sup>40</sup> If we're well fed because we're satisfied with the things of this world, then we're missing God's Kingdom priorities. If we're laughing during a time when we should be mourning and weeping, then we need to reevaluate if we're paying attention to the things of God, if we're prioritizing the things which are on His heart, the priorities of His Kingdom. Consider Luke 16:19-25, especially verse 25, "But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony.'"

<sup>41</sup> Pleasing people often comes at the expense of the truth. But pleasing God, and standing fast for His truth, often comes at the personal expense of our comfort and our luxury of being well-liked. In 1 Samuel 15, the Lord rejects Saul as king of Israel because Saul decided to please the people rather than God. After trying to make excuses and lie about what he did, it becomes clear that rather than the complete destruction that God commanded, Saul allowed the army to spare the best of the sheep and the cattle. 1 Samuel 15:24 says, "Then Saul said to Samuel, 'I have sinned. I violated the LORD's command and your instructions. I was afraid of the men and so I gave in to them.'"

<sup>42</sup> 2 Timothy 3:12 says, "In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." See also verses 13-17.