

SERMON FOR FEBRUARY 17, 2019
TEXT: LUKE 6:17-26
THEME: SEEKING GOD'S BLESSING

¹⁷ And he came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, ¹⁸ who came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. And those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. ¹⁹ And all the crowd sought to touch him, for power came out from him and healed them all.

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.

In the name of Jesus:

This past week millions of people celebrated Valentines Day. Many take care to choose the specific Valentine for the one they love so that it will convey how the person feels about their Valentine. If a husband gives his wife flowers, a box of chocolates, or a practical gift, that gift communicates how he feels about his wife. But if the gift isn't chosen with care or any thoughtfulness, then the question becomes one of whether or not the person is just giving the gift because it is what is expected of them.

In our text for today, we see Jesus teaching the people who come to Him what it really means to be blessed by God. This is called the Sermon on the Plain, similar

to the Sermon on the Mount, but it is at a different location and in a different setting. Here in this Sermon on the Plain Jesus explains what it really means to be blessed by God. Luke records what happened: “a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, ¹⁸ who came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. And those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. ¹⁹ And all the crowd sought to touch him, for power came out from him and healed them all.”

Many came to Jesus seeking Jesus to bless them with a physical gift, the healing of a variety of diseases. And Jesus turned no one away. Luke doesn't record whether or not those who came to Jesus had faith in Him, all he says is that they came seeking Jesus to be cured of their diseases or to be cleansed of unclean spirits. And no matter their motive, Jesus healed them all.

But is that all there is to being blessed by God? Physical blessings? God cause the rain to fall on the just and the unjust. He gives daily bread to the believer and non-believer alike. We can't tell whether or not your blessed or cursed on the appearance of receiving physical blessings. If that is all there is, or if that is the standard, meaning that we are blessed if we have more good things happen to us, or if things go our way, well, then, we live in a state of confusion, not knowing if God loves us or not, if we base His love on what we have or what we don't have.

Sadly, that is how many measure God's love and blessings today, solely on the merits of what they possess. You have heard people say that they are blessed. But what are they talking about? They are blessed because they got things they didn't deserve, or they are blessed because things worked out for them. When a person

today says that they are blessed, they usually are referring to the blessedness of getting things.

If we are to put our faith in the blessed state of God on the basis of what we possess in an earthly way, then we are to be the most miserable of creatures. Woe to you, says our Lord, if your blessings consist only of things in this life. Just listen to what Luke records: 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 is here teaching us not to put our faith in earthly things. Not to base our live or the state of blessedness in our life is the things of this world. Why? Because when we do, then these things become our god rather than having our trust in the One True God. When we seek God’s blessings and measure such blessings on the basis of the stuff we have in our lives, we are then worshipping the creation instead of the Creator. We are fearing, loving and trusting in the blessings instead of trusting in the One who blesses. This is why Jesus says woe to you who are rich, for if you place your trust in your riches, you will get what you want in this life but lose your life in the next. Doesn’t Jesus say that it is harder for a rich man to enter heaven than it is to get a camel through the eye of a needle? Jesus says that you can’t serve God and money. You can’t seek solely seek God’s earthly blessings at the expense of losing God’s eternal blessings.

That is why Jesus warns us to not put our faith in our temporal blessings, because as we all too well know, these blessings can be here today and gone

tomorrow. For example, look at the life of a worker who now is unemployed. Those who worked for Kroger at the bakery in Columbus might have said that they were blessed because they had a job. And they in one sense were blessed, but when the bakery closed, and the workers lost their jobs, does that then mean that they are no longer blessed by God? This is the point that Jesus is making, blessings from God are not just physical, true blessings from God last eternally.

And what are those blessings? Listen to our Lord: “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.”

The blessings of Jesus came to those who sought out Jesus. Those who were afflicted with demons, those who were weakened by disease, those who were with incurable illnesses sought out Jesus and Jesus healed them. Now, the opposite is also the case in that His healing hand did not touch those who did not seek out Jesus. But to all who did seek out Jesus, Jesus healed them. Those who were too proud to seek out Jesus’ healing touch were not healed. Those who were too busy to come to Jesus were not healed. Yet Jesus was merciful to all, He turned no one away; all that Jesus offered was given as a free gift, and to all who were open to receiving Jesus’ gift received what Jesus gave.

Do you desire to be blessed by Jesus? Do you want to receive what Jesus is offering? Then you must empty yourself. You must come to Jesus in need. This is what Jesus means when He says that blessed are the poor for they shall receive the Kingdom of God. If you have no need for Jesus, then you will not receive what Jesus gives. If you do not hunger, you don't have need for food. If you are not thirsty, then you have no need to have your thirst quenched. Jesus comes and offers to you His blessings, but you only can receive them if you have a need.

If this seems so backwards, well it is, at least to our normal way of understanding. In society, we think that we are blessed when we get what we work for or deserve. But Jesus says that the blessed are the poor, the hungry, those who weep. The blessed are the ones who are hated for the sake of Jesus, excluded, reviled, and spurned for His name. It doesn't seem like anyone is blessed if you are in need. But Jesus says just the opposite. Blessings from God come to those who are poor, hungry, thirsty, excluded, and mocked for the sake of Christ.

Just look at whom Jesus called to be His disciples. Those who followed Him were not the rich and famous, were not the high and mighty, in fact, they were numbered among the least. His mother, Mary, was a teenager, a nobody from nowhere, but God reached out to her and used her as His instrument. Last week we saw in the calling of Peter to follow Jesus, Peter's response was to ask Jesus to leave Him alone, because He was a sinner. But that is why Jesus came. He came to those in need of a Savior. He came to save sinners.

After Jesus called Matthew to follow Him Luke records that the Pharisees asked Jesus about those who He called to follow Him. They said: "Why do you eat

and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" ³¹ And Jesus answered them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ³² I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." You don't need a doctor if you are well. Conversely, you do need a doctor if you are sick. You don't need a Savior if you are perfect, you don't need God to forgive you or show you mercy or bless you if you don't believe in God or if you don't realize that you need God and His blessings. It's when you realize that you are a sinner, a no good, poor, rotten, miserable sinner that you come to recognize that you need Jesus. And when you realize you need Jesus, then in faith you can receive God's blessings of forgiveness, life, love, and peace.

Do you seek God's blessing? Do you want God's blessing? Then realize that your life is empty and nothing without God. The person who sighs and says that my life is so empty is one who is ready to receive the gifts of God in Jesus. We are nothing but poor beggars, every one of us, who have our hands stretched out to God daily pleading for His blessing. And He blesses, by trusting in His Son Jesus, who is our wisdom and source of life.

God says:" Come now, let us reason together, though your sins be a scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool." You are indeed blessed by God when you confess yours sins to God and ask for forgiveness for the sake of His Son. For if you confess your sins He is faithful and just and will forgive you all of your sins, and cleanse you from all unrighteousness. So seek God's blessing by admitting your sinfulness. Live under His blessing by receiving the forgiveness that Jesus has won for you on the cross. And then share God's blessings by telling others about Jesus. Seek first the kingdom

of God and His righteousness, for blessings come from Jesus to those who are poor in spirit for to you belong the Kingdom of God.

Amen