



# GRACE

REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH

SOLI † DEO † GLORIA

## THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

### *The Beatitudes*

Sermon Notes

**Luke 6:20-26**

**March 4, 2012**

<sup>20</sup> And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said:

“Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

<sup>21</sup> “Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied.

“Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.

<sup>22</sup> “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! <sup>23</sup> Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.

<sup>24</sup> “But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.

<sup>25</sup> “Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry.

“Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.

<sup>26</sup> “Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.

- During the first five centuries of the early Christian Church, various teachings arose which denied several of the fundamental doctrines of the faith.
  - Such heresies included Arianism in the fourth century which taught that Son of God was a created being, and therefore, essentially subordinate (less than) to the Father.
  - Another heresy was Monophysitism, which denied the two distinct natures of Christ.
  - Still another heresy of the ancient Church was modalism which denied the three distinct, coequal and **coeternal** Persons of the Trinity.
- However, one of the most subtle, yet destructive heresies of the past two thousand years is perhaps more common today than ever. Although this “heresy” does not have a name, its fundamental premise and teaching is all-too-familiar: Jesus was a great teacher.

- Adherents to this belief often call themselves “Christians” and even attend Church, pray, and occasionally read their Bibles. Yet, when asked, “Is Jesus Christ the only Son of God, and the only true means of salvation?” they would reply with a strong and passionate, “No.”
  - The reason this belief system is so dangerous is that it contains enough truth to “seem” or “feel” Christian, but fails to embrace the very heart of biblical truth.
  - It is as though followers of this system are like those describe in Hebrews 6:4-6: they have “tasted” many of the blessings of the historic Christian faith and they have observed God’s goodness and grace. Yet, they fail to embrace the One True and Living God and Jesus Christ as Savior.
  - They are, in a sense, “inoculated” from the Gospel of Christ.
    - Theologian F.F. Bruce clearly articulates this truth. He writes, “People are frequently immunized against a disease by being inoculated with a mild form of it, or with a related but milder disease. And in the spiritual realm experience suggests that it is possible to be ‘immunized’ against Christianity by being inoculated with something which, for the time being, looks so like the real thing that it is generally mistaken for it.”
  - Sadly, today being “religious,” even “Christian” is not only acceptable in our country, but is to some degree very “American.”
  - And when asked what it means to be a “Christian,” most will reply that it means that they follow the teachings of Jesus – one of the “great teachers” in history.
  - To hold Jesus in high regard is, indeed, a good thing, the American culture will tell us. That is, just as long as you hold the teachings of Ghandi, Buddha, and Muhammad in the same high regard.
  - Furthermore, when asked what the teachings of Jesus are to which they adhere, they often refer His teachings recorded in the Beatitudes.
  - And just as Jesus is seen as a “great teacher,” the Beatitudes are viewed as a great “code of ethics.” That is, we need to treat the poor with respect, become meek and even passive in our approach to life and conflict, and feed the poor.
  - In an attempt to remain “politically correct” politicians will even quote from the Beatitudes.
- However, as we will see today, the Beatitudes have little to do with what is known today as the “social gospel.” Even more, the “blessings” of the Beatitudes have nothing to do with non-believers.

- In fact, the Beatitudes appear to “worldly” eyes as merely a call for social justice. However, through the eyes of faith they teach a deeper, eternal, spiritual reality regarding the Kingdom of God Himself.

**I. The Blessings**

- a. The Poor Will Inherit the Kingdom**
- b. The Hungry Will Be Satisfied**
- c. The Weeping Will Laugh**
- d. The Persecuted Will Rejoice**

**II. The Woes**

- a. The Rich Have Received Consolation**
- b. The Full Will Be Hungry**
- c. The Laughing Will Mourn**
- d. The Praised Are Like the False Prophets**

<b>I. The Blessings</b>
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- Luke opens his account of the Beatitudes by stating that He lifted up His eyes on His disciples and began to speak.
- He will begin with four blessings and then four “woes.” Each of the “woes” corresponds to the four previous blessings.
- By speaking of “blessings” and “woes” Jesus draws the disciples’ (and the contemporary readers’) attention to the reality that we either live a life that is “godly” or a life that is “worldly.”
- What Jesus is doing is teaching how the Kingdom of God is fundamentally different to the kingdom of man.
  - Michael Wilcock wrote that the purpose of Jesus in the Beatitudes is to teach His disciples to “prize what the world calls pitiable, and suspect what the world thinks desirable.”
  - In so doing, the true Christian transcends the entrapments and entanglements of this world such that he or she is able to engage the world, being “in it, but not of it.”
- Before we examine the four “blessings” it is important to note that the word “Blessing” does not truly carry with it the modern-day connotation of “happy.” Although this is how some translates render the word, “happy” too often indicates one of our ever-changing emotional states that is typically dependent upon our immediate circumstances.

- “Blessed” on the other hand refers more to the Christian’s position and state before God. In other words, Christians such as those described in the Beatitudes are truly “blessed,” whether they *feel* it or not. Therefore, a more appropriate word may be “favored.” That is, those Christians who embody the Beatitudes are *favored* before God.

<p><b>a. The Poor Will Inherit the Kingdom</b></p>
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- In the first of the Beatitudes of Christ recorded here in Luke, Jesus says:

***“Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God”***

- It is important to understand what Jesus is *not* saying here.
  - He is not blessing poverty in itself. In fact, many individuals live in poverty as a consequence to their own personal actions. According to the Scriptures, poverty may actually be a “curse”:

<sup>8</sup> Remove far from me falsehood and lying;  
 give me neither poverty nor riches;  
 feed me with the food that is needful for me,  
<sup>9</sup> lest 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

- Also, Christ is not speaking to everyone. That is, the context of the Beatitudes is that He is speaking of followers of Christ.
- The words of Jesus here echo His words in the Capernaum synagogue, recorded in Luke 4:18-19:

<sup>18</sup> *‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
 because he has anointed me  
 to proclaim good news to the poor.  
 He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives  
 and recovering of sight to the blind,  
 to set at liberty those who are oppressed,  
<sup>19</sup> to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.’*

- In fact, when Jesus says that He came ***“to proclaim good news to the poor”*** in Luke 4:18 (a quote from the prophet Isaiah), He used the same word for “poor” as He does here in the Beatitudes.
  - The word translated “poor” is the Greek word *ptochos*, which means “to cringe,” “to shrink back,” or “to cower.”

John MacArthur, writes the word “conveys the idea of a beggar cringing in the shadows, cowering in shame...[it] describes those in extreme deprivation who are reduced to begging, such as the beggar Lazarus (16:2).”

- In Matthew’s account of the Beatitudes, he actually Jesus as saying, “Blessed are the poor *in spirit*” (Matthew 5:3), which gives further insight into what Jesus is saying here.
- Those who are spiritually poor are those who see themselves in desperation of the salvation to be found in Christ alone. The “poor” are those who recognize their own depravity, “moral bankruptcy,” and understand that their righteous deeds are like “filthy garments” (literally, a “feminine cloth”) before God (Isaiah 64:6).
- Isaiah scholar Alec Motyer writes that the biblical use of poor refers to “the downtrodden and disadvantaged, helpless in themselves and at the mercy of powerful people and adverse circumstances.”
- Those who are “poor” are not the self-deprecating, self-righteous individuals who speak boldly of their great humility.
  - Unlike “the poor” the self-sufficient (in the first century it was the “religious establishment”) do not see themselves in desperate need of a Savior. They are too proud to humble themselves.
  - Rather, the “poor” spoken of here are those who are authentically “humble and contrite in spirit” (Isaiah 66:2).
  - They are brokenhearted and “crushed in spirit”

Psalm 51:17: “<sup>17</sup>The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.”

- Economically poor are not those who are primarily spoken of here, but often times, because of their financial poverty and lowly physical circumstances, they are the ones who recognize most readily their need for salvation (1 Corinthians 1:26-29).

Darrell Bock writes, “Their material deprivation often translates into spiritual sensitivity, humility, and responsiveness to god’s message of hope. The message is offered to them and they tend to be the most responsive to it.”

- **Jesus came to meet every need of those who know of their need for God and His sufficiency and grace.**

Philip Ryken writes, “...Jesus said he had good news for the poor so they would know the grace of God. Usually the poor get overlooked, but Jesus said the gospel was for them as much as for

anyone else. This was not a way of excluding anyone (not even the rich), but of including everyone (even the poor).”

Normal Geldenhuys writes that the blessing of God’s kingdom is for believers “who do not seek their wealth and life in earthly things, but who acknowledge their own poverty and come to Him to seek real life. Where outward poverty leads anyone to realize his utter dependence on God and to walk humbly with his Lord, such a person will be blessed – in measure even in this life, and more abundantly in the next, he may expect rich and glorious fullness of spiritual life and joy.”

Psalm 40:17: “<sup>17</sup> As for me, I am poor and needy,  
but the Lord takes thought for me.  
You are my help and my deliverer;  
do not delay, O my God!”

- Notice, as well, that Jesus does not say, “Yours *will be* the kingdom,” but rather, “Yours *is* the kingdom.”
- That is, we are given a taste of the heavenly blessings now, but will know them fully one day.

<b>b. The Hungry Will Be Satisfied</b>
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- The next “Blessing” stems from the first.

<sup>21</sup> ***“Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied.***

- Indeed, “hunger” typically accompanies “poverty.”
- Therefore, in the context of this passage, Jesus is not necessarily “blessing” those who are impoverished in this world, homeless, and have little to eat (although, once again, this is how the world will often interpret this passage).
- Rather, He is speaking of those who know their spiritual poverty and hunger and thirst for God and God alone.
- They are like the Psalmist who declares:

Psalm 42:1-2: “As a deer pants for flowing streams,  
so pants my soul for you, O God.

<sup>2</sup> My soul thirsts for God,  
for the living God.

When shall I come and appear before God?”

- And:

Psalm 63:1: “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.”

- Commentator Leohnard Goppelt writes, “The hungry are men who both outwardly and inwardly are painfully deficient in the things essential to life as God meant it to be, and who, since they cannot help themselves, turn to God on the basis of His promise. These men, and these alone, find God’s help in Jesus. They are not an existing social or religious group... They are believers who seek help from Jesus because of their own helplessness.”
- Jesus then states regarding the hungry, **you shall be satisfied**.
  - When we seek to find our satisfaction in the world, we find ourselves running on the proverbial “hamster wheel,” for we **never find satisfaction**.
  - Let us understand: **It is possible – and is often the case – to be *full* but not satisfied**. This is the case with so many things in life, such as food.
  - For, it is only in Christ that our souls are truly satisfied.
  - The image here is that of sitting at the Lord’s banquet table and being fully satisfied as the child of the King (which, of course we are as followers of Christ – joint-heirs with Him!). [Recall the story of Mephibosheth].

Isaiah 25:6: “<sup>6</sup> On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples  
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine,  
of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.”

Isaiah 49:8-10:

“<sup>8</sup> Thus says the LORD:  
“In a time of favor I have answered you;  
in a day of salvation I have helped you;  
I will keep you and give you  
as a covenant to the people,  
to establish the land,  
to apportion the desolate heritages,  
<sup>9</sup> saying to the prisoners, ‘Come out,’  
to those who are in darkness, ‘Appear.’  
They shall feed along the ways;  
on all bare heights shall be their pasture;  
<sup>10</sup> they shall not hunger or thirst,  
neither scorching wind nor sun shall strike them,  
for he who has pity on them will lead them,  
and by springs of water will guide them.”

### c. The Weeping Will Laugh

- Next, the Jesus says:

*“Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.”*

- Once again, from poverty stems hunger and weeping.
- The idea here is that the individual is weeping as a result of living in a fallen world.
- Darrell Bock comments:  
“The Old Testament background for weeping pictures a person in mourning for a variety of reasons, but primarily for the suffering of painful injustice in a world where God’s people are pressured, persecuted, and exiled, just as the prophets were.”
- As Christians, we often feel this way. We weep because of the struggles of living in a world so tainted by sin. We long for the day of Christ’s return.
- But Christ encourages us: **“for you shall laugh.”**
  - It is critical to understand, here, that the laughter spoken of is not a “comical” laughter, as if he is speaking of something “funny” or humorous.
  - In the Old Testament, laughter was synonymous with “joy.”
  - So just as Jesus said to His disciples in John 16:20: <sup>20</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy.”
  - And it is only through the Cross that our suffering will be turned into joy.
  - And this is what faith is: seizing now what is promised in the future. We know we weep now, but we know also that one day every tear will be wiped away. Therefore, we press on.

### d. The Persecuted Will Rejoice

- Finally, we read:

<sup>22</sup> *“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!”* <sup>23</sup> *Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.*



- Here, Jesus is making it clear that the world will reject His disciples, and all followers of Christ.
- The reason they will persecute us is that we are associated with Him.
- They rejected Christ and we are associated with Him. Therefore, we must expect suffering in this world.
- However, this is not just persecution; it is **(1) hatred; (2) exclusion; and (3) slander.**
  - That is, they will hate us, because of Christ.
  - They will exclude us and separate themselves from us, because of Christ.
  - And they will call us evil because of Christ.
- The important phrase here is, “**on account of the Son of Man.**”
  - We are often treated badly **because of things we do...our own actions.** We need to be careful that we understand that the persecution spoken of here is **on account of the Son of Man**, not *on account of our own abrasive and offensive actions.*
  - Consider the words of the Apostle Peter:

1 Peter 4:14-16: “<sup>14</sup> If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. <sup>15</sup> But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. <sup>16</sup> Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.”

- May our hearts be as the apostles’ were in Acts 5:41, when they were beaten by the Sanhedrin:

“<sup>41</sup> Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.”

- The twentieth century German pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer who was hanged by the Nazis during World War II, once wrote:

“Suffering [for the sake of Christ], then, is the badge of true discipleship. The disciple is not above his master...that is why Luther reckoned suffering among the marks of the true church, and one of the memoranda drawn up in preparation for the Augsburg Confession similarly defines the church as the community of those “who are persecuted and martyred for the Gospel’s sake,”...Discipleship means allegiance to the suffering Christ, and it is therefore not at all surprising that Christians should be called upon to suffer. In fact, it is a joy and a token of His grace.”

- As a summary of these four “blessings,” J.C. Ryles comments:

“We must take good heed that we do not misunderstand our Lord’s meaning, when we read these expressions. We must not for a moment suppose that the mere fact of being poor, and hungry, and sorrowful, and hated by man, will entitle any one to lay claim to an interest in Christ’s blessing. The poverty here spoken of, is a poverty accompanied by grace. The want is a want entailed by faithful adherence to Jesus. The afflictions are the afflictions of the Gospel. The persecution is persecution for the Son of Man’s sake.”

- It is encouraging, though, to think that when we do suffer for the sake of Christ, we are in the company of the prophets of old who have gone before us.

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## II. The Woes

- Now, Christ turns to His “Woes.”
- The context here is not that of a “Curse.” That is, He is not saying, “Cursed are the rich...” But, rather, “Woe to the rich...”
  - a. When Christ says, “Woe to the...” it carries with it the connotation of: “**How terrible...**” or “**How sad are the rich...**” or “**How pitiful...**”
  - b. In other words, those he speaks of here, contrary to the world’s standards, are the ones that are to be pitied.
- It is also important for us to see that each of the “woes” corresponds directly to one of the “blessings.” Again, Jesus is turning the world’s system on its head.

### a. The Rich Have Received Consolation

- Christ’s first “woe” addresses the “rich”:

<sup>24</sup>“**But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.**”

- Tragically, this is case of so many people today who claim, “I am rich, I have prospered...I need nothing.”
- Consider the words to the Church at Laodicea:

Revelation 3:17: “<sup>14</sup>And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: ‘The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God’s creation. <sup>15</sup> know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! <sup>16</sup>So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. <sup>17</sup> **For you say, I am rich, I have**

**prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. “**

- Just as Jesus was not “blessing” poverty in itself, so He does not “condemn” wealth in itself.
- **What He is saying is, “How sad it is for those who are rich and do not know their need for God...”**
- Normal Geldenhuys states that our Lord is speaking of those individuals who “seek their life and happiness only or primarily in material things, who do not realize their souls’ need and do not acknowledge their dependence on God.”
- Jesus says, “...you have received your consolation.”
  - **In the Greek, this verbal phrase is the same used for commercial transaction and means, “Paid in Full.”**
  - In other words, the reason why Christ pronounces “woes” on the “rich” is because they have received **all that they will ever get.**
  - In other words, it is like He is saying, “Enjoy it now, because that is all you will get.”
  - This is why our Lord says, in Matthew 16:26: “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?”
- I think of the celebrities today and how so many of them are plagued with personal, relational, and emotional problems. Further, when one sees how celebrities, who are past “their prime,” continue to strive to regain past “glory,” it is a pitiful sight, indeed.
- There are countless stories of wealthy men and women who lived lavished lifestyles only to see them crumble within a few years – riches to rags. And this is only a foretaste of the tragedy that will befall the rich.
- **They have aligned themselves with this world, which is only growing old and will one day pass away. May we, indeed, align ourselves with the eternal King of Heaven, in whose hands are riches unknown!**
- Consider the inscription on the grave of Thomas Lowes, who is buried in Holyrood Abbey in Edinburgh, Scotland:

“One instance among thousands of the uncertainty of human life and the instability of earthly possessions and enjoyments. Born to ample property, he for several years experienced a distressing reverse of fortune, and no sooner was he restored to his former affluence than it pleased Divine Providence to withdraw this together with his life. **READER**, be thou taught by this to seek those riches which never can fail and those pleasers which are at God’s right hand forevermore: the gracious gift of God, and to be enjoyed through faith in **JESUS CHRIST** our Saviour.”

### **a. The Full Will Be Hungry**

<sup>25</sup> *“Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry.*

- This certainly does not refer to physical hungry, primarily.
- Our Lord is here saying that “woe” to you seek to be satisfied with what this world has to offer, for soon you will be in great want.
- Consider the German nation in 1939. Hitler had, five years previously declared: “At the risk of appearing to talk nonsense I tell you that the National Socialist movement will go on for 1,000 years! ... Don't forget how people laughed at me 15 years ago when I declared that one day I would govern Germany. They laugh now, just as foolishly, when I declare that I shall remain in power!” Many believed him.
- Tragically, millions aligned themselves with Hitler, “taking their bets on him.” Yet, in 1945, it became clear that his “kingdom” would not only collapse, but would be shamed and humiliated.
- In the same way, we align ourselves with this world to our own shame and humiliation. It may seem the “wise” thing to do now, but it would be just as foolish to do this than it would have been to ally ourselves with Hitler’s Germany in 1939. May we ally ourselves with the everlasting Kingdom. May we seek to be filled on the things of Christ and His Kingdom!
- May we never seek the endless pursuit of finding satisfaction here on earth.

**Few things in life are more tragic than when we receive exactly what we believe will bring satisfaction, and we find ourselves emptier than we have ever been.**

### **b. The Laughing Will Mourn**

- Jesus then says,

*“Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.*

- The “laughter” spoken of here is that of mockery, ridicule, and arrogance.

- One of this country’s most well-known comedians is Bill Maher, who once said, “Let’s face it; God has a big ego problem. Why do we always have to worship him?”
- **This is, most certainly, what Christ is speaking of here.** We must make no mistake about it, God will not be mocked. Therefore, as self-sufficient and flippant as many are now, they will mourn and weep one day.
- What is, perhaps the most tragic is that Bill Maher simply verbalized what many, if not most, Americans feel.

### c. The Praised Are Like the False Prophets

- Finally, our Lord says,

<sup>26</sup> *“Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.*

- Israel often embraced those men who told them what they wanted to hear.
  - Paul referred to this as “tickling of the ears.”
  - Yet, Jesus warns against it. As we are sinful people, we need to constantly be called to come out from our sin and embrace Christ. However, the world hates this message.
  - As J.C. Ryles declares, “To be universally popular is a most unsatisfactory symptom, and one of which minister of Christ would always be afraid. It may well make him doubt whether he is faithfully doing his duty, and honestly declaring all the counsel of God.”
  - May we seek the applause of heaven and the glory of God.
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- And may we pray that the Lord would uproot us from the entanglements and trappings of this world that our focus may be on the Kingdom of Christ and the rewards to be found in Him alone!
  - Read [Isaiah 25:6-9](#).