

## Defining Discipleship: *The Marks* Luke 6:17-26

**Introduction:** There are certain things in life that follows the script. My kids getting sick on their birthday, excitement at the beginning of every Dodger season, and the Giants winning the World Series next year all follow the same line.

There are other areas that flip the script: Dropping an atomic bomb in Japan during WWII, finding out Darth Vader was actually Luke's father, and coming to grips with the fact that Barry Bonds actually used HGH changed what we thought we knew. We are facing them in force in this broader family: miscarriages, unexpected and unknown medical issues, deaths in families, and many others make it FEEL like God is not with us, yet He has never been closer. It seems incongruous to our thinking that God is there and good when things are difficult. Yet, God never works on our time frame, with our wisdom, or in our economy.

As we approach one of Jesus' most famous sermons, He absolutely flips the script on the crowd, and gives them the exact opposite of what they expect. In doing this, He defines what it means to follow Him truly, and lays down a dividing line of His kingdom and every other.

### **The Setting of the Sermon (Luke 6:17-19):**

*"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, who came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. And those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. And all the crowd sought to touch Him, for power came out from Him and healed them all."*

### **Jesus displayed:**

Jesus consistently showed the same things up until this point, and leading to His sermon, one can see these very clearly.

- **Authority of Divinity** - He showed that He was no mere man but God very God by displaying miraculous power
- **Power in both word and deed** - That power was seen not just in word (which captivated the crowds and caused people to travel great distances to hear), but also in deed, as He continued to heal diseases and cure those with demonic oppressors. His power and authority was on display, and it drew huge crowds to see and hear Him. The text says that power was coming out of Him in a way that people simply had to touch Him and they would be cured.
- **Compassion** - Unlike any other, Jesus was full of power but also full of compassion. Yes, His power over disease validated His message and Messiahship, but He also cared deeply for people who were stuck in their sins as well as pain from their maladies. The text says that

### **Jesus spoke to:**

The crowds that gathered were not only massive (multitudes), but they came from all over to hear Him. Its possible for Jesus to have stood on a plain that had natural acoustics (with a hill behind) as people stood/sat in an arch around Him. He could easily have spoken to hundreds or thousands without the use of artificial amplification.

- **Apostles** - He had just appointed the 12, and these always made up His primary audience, as He was training them for a time when He would not be with them

- **Disciples** - This made up a large group of regular followers, and made up a group of varying levels of understanding and commitment. We know that some of these would leave Him as it got more difficult to follow (see John 6:66). In this sermon as recorded in Matthew Jesus Himself said His actual followers would be relatively small (Matt. 7:14)
- **Crowds** - This was a large group that were **intrigued** by Jesus or simply wanted healing. They were composed of people all over the land and even extended up the Northern coast (Tyre and Sidon), which were mainly Gentile places that were known for vast pagan practices.

Jesus spoke and appealed to the narrow and the broad, both those that would continue to follow and those who would reject. NOTICE that Jesus was willing to interact and heal those that He knew would NOT follow Him to the end. That is the definition and demonstration of **love, mercy, and compassion**.

NOTE: We are working from the premise that this and Matthew's recording of the sermon were given at the same time. Each recorded different parts, and neither recorded the entirety of the sermon. The themes and concepts were undoubtedly repeated in other teachings and sermons, and this was probably a much larger sermon than the combined length of both accounts.

### The Purpose of the Sermon:

- **No middle ground in discipleship**

*The meaning of "Blessed"* - The word means "happy" and one in a beneficial position with God. This happiness is a result of a divinely given salvation so that the statement of blessing is one predicting salvation.<sup>1</sup>

*The meaning of "Woe"* - A "woe" was not simply a suggestion or a warning of something that would be less preferable, it was a weighty warning. It was an expression of pity for those who stand under divine judgment.<sup>2</sup> This means someone was in the worst, most undesirable condition, which would be under judgment.

*The bookends of the sermon* - The end of the sermon was a call to act on what Jesus had said, with one group acting faithfully and withstanding a storm, while the other had no foundation and led to ruin (Luke 6:46-49). This sermon was not about how to act right, it was a vivid definition of following Him, and what it means to do so. Failure to listen and respond would leave one in a woeful position and in ruin. There are only two possible groups to fall into: **disciples of Christ and those under judgment**. This sermon was not a feel good, moralistic pep talk, but one literally of life and death.

- **The payoff of discipleship is primarily future with secondary privilege in the present**

What we are looking for, longing after, and waiting patiently for as followers of Christ is not a time when the world finally gets it and things get straightened out (this is why we know that *government* itself does not hold the answer nor is it what we hope in). We await a time when the **King will return** and make things right. That is why we live this life like strangers, aliens, and foreign citizens. Yes we get to enjoy the Lord here and experience the beauty of God's creation, but we do so as a shadow of the reality to come. Our bent and longing is future, knowing that this world, this body, this place will one day be restored to its original intent and beauty.

<sup>1</sup> | Howard Marshall, *New International Greek New Testament*, p. 248

<sup>2</sup> Marshall, p. 255.

- **What a disciple looks like**

In loving our enemies (6:27-36), forgiving and judging properly (6:37-42), and the fruit produced in us (6:43-35). In other words, what Jesus is laying out is not simply an ethic of His Kingdom, but what being a true follower will mean in our life.

### I. **The Blessings for Desperate Disciples (20-23)**

**Luke 6:20-23** 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.

#### A. **Poverty's payoff**

Luke applies the first of his blessings to *the poor*. Some have concluded that Luke is speaking to the physically and actual poor, that this is a promise to those who are poverty stricken in this life. We hold that Jesus is actually speaking to those who know of their *spiritual poverty and bankrupt condition of their soul*. There are several reasons for this:

1. Matthew records this blessing to those who are "poor in spirit", not simply to the poor.
2. Luke 4:18 says that Jesus came to proclaim good news to the poor, along with the captive, blind, and oppressed. It is clear that He was referring to spiritual conditions there, not simply physical
3. Nowhere in scripture is poverty itself a means of righteousness, or is being rich itself a negative. In fact, Proverbs records that extreme poverty would be a detriment to bringing God glory:

**Proverbs 30:8-9** 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.

God makes rich and poor (1 Sam. 2:7). Riches can be a blessing from God, but they can also be a curse (see Mark 10:25). Poverty could be a result of God's choice or of bad character, but it in itself is not a better condition to be in.

The driving point here is blessing comes to those who realize their deep need of salvation. It is in this condition and mindset alone that someone can truly become a follower or disciple of Jesus. Poverty means and brokenness over sin, humility based on our own weakness and need, and desperation in the realization of the inability to save oneself.

The **blessing** received is the only **present tense** promise, for theirs **is** the kingdom of God. This means that what we receive in the present is the knowledge, the hope of what is to come. We are made to be fellow heirs (Rom. 8:17) of a promise to come. We get a taste of those promises to come through the work of the Holy Spirit in us, which brings things like righteousness, joy, and peace (Rom. 14:17), but the actualization is still future.

#### B. **Hunger's satisfaction**

Hunger then, is not simply a lack of food in this life, but the deep longing of our soul to be accepted by God. We are simply beggars in this life until our eyes are opened to the reality that in Christ we can have access to the Father, in whom we find satisfaction. This is the essence of several Psalms:

**Psalm 42:1-2 TO THE CHOIRMASTER. A MASKIL OF THE SONS OF KORAH.** 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?

God is the answer to our greatest desires (Psalm 37:4), satisfies our deep thirst (Psalm 63:1), and always delivers (Psalm 23:1; Psalm 107:1-9). Our hope of the future is that we will see Jesus and worship God forever, but we can also be satisfied when we hunger after Him now. John Piper has said that hungering for God is actually a means of glorifying Him, "*God is most glorified when we are most satisfied in Him.*" Our hunger comes when we realize that God is the answer to all of our questions, the solution to our greatest problems, and the ultimate joy of our heart. This is exactly what the woman at the well discovered (John 4), that Jesus is the inexhaustible well of eternal water.

### C. Weeping's laughter

We all weep because this world is broken, but God allows some to understand why that is. We weep now because of the eternally damaging results of sin. Sin has affected our relationship with God in that it left Him only one recourse, and that was to hold us under judgment. The world itself groans over the fact that it is broken under the weight of sin (Romans 8:18-25). We weep now because sin not only affects us but those that we love in this world, captivating hearts and blinding them from the reality of God, salvation, and joy. Even after the point of salvation, we continue to weep (James 4:9-10) as we feel the great depth of sins affects.

The time of laughter will come, however. Though we can have joy now (Psalm 30:5) but that God will turn our mourning into dancing (Jer. 31:13) and our weeping to a mantle of praise (Isa. 61:2-3). In other words, our true joyful praise will come in the future when Jesus sets everything right, when God fulfills all His promises, and brings us into His presence forever.

### D. Hatred's reward

The final blessing is the fact that followers of Jesus will be **hated, excluded, reviled, and spurned**. Now we need to make sure we read the whole sentence, because it is for a specific reason that this will happen: **on account of the Son of Man**. In other words, the reason for the hatred is because of our following Jesus, not our own obnoxious or lazy behavior. If you are fired from a job because you underperformed, or if your neighbor is ticked at you because people in your Bible study park in front of his driveway, that IS NOT being persecuted for Christ, it is simply because you brought it on. But the truth is, all of us who truly live for Christ will be persecuted (2 Tim. 3:12). This is because Jesus was persecuted even though He never sinned, and if they did it to Him, it will be done to us (John 15:20). This is exactly what we are heading into in the next decades where Christianity is no longer seen in the same way it has, and actually threatens the worldview of others.

Jesus says something odd at this point: He says to **rejoice when this happens, and to leap for joy. What??!!** This is one of the most counterintuitive statements ever made. Leap for joy when people hate you. Seems way out of our normal way of thinking. But this is exactly what we saw in the early church when the apostles were **beaten** and charged to cease speaking in the name of Jesus. They left **rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name of Jesus** (Acts 5:40-41)! What gave them the ability?

Jesus offers two motivations for rejoicing when we suffer:

- **Our future reward** - This tests our view of this life vs. the life to come. We understand that what's going on around us is more than just what we can see (2 Cor. 4:17-18). We also

understand that we will stand before God one day as He examines our life and metes out what we have done in our body, either good or evil (2 Cor. 5:10). There is reward for faithfulness, the prize being God and His glory, and the location will be the eternal state of heaven.

- **Our noble company** - We follow the example of the prophets of the OT (James 5:10), who proclaimed the truth and were not only rejected, but were put to death. Persecution is not new, but we stand with those who were unwilling to compromise, who are willing to believe there is something better to come, and face suffering with hope (Heb. 11:37-40).

These are the marks of those who are true disciples, who know they are poor, hungry, they weep, and will be hated. But these are also those who are found to be happy and blessed, because these are those who can taste salvation.

## II. **The Woes of the Doing Just Fine's (24-26)**

**Luke 6:24-26** "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.

### A. **Riches deficiency**

It's clear that the woes provide the opposite reality and response. This is a description of those who not only are living for the moment, who are seeking their life in this world, but also those who believe they can do it on their own.

The rich here are not those who have extra money (good thing, too, because on a global scale we are all rich in Simi Valley), but those who believe they have done enough to obtain salvation. They will stand before God one day and look to themselves as a reason why God should accept them. Those that are rich that way in this life have already received their reward, and it is temporal and fleeting.

### B. **Satisfaction's starvation**

Those who are full now are those that don't seek after God for satisfaction but seek after anything BUT God. Their reward is that they get it in this life, but are left to hunger in the next.

### C. **Laughter's lament**

These believe they have it figured out in this life, have attained the secret meaning of the universe, and can't understand why anyone would have to yield to a man named Jesus. They are full of themselves, smugly confident in their own ability to figure the mystery of life. They will only face weeping and gnashing in the future.

### D. **Applause's annihilation**

The last woe is to those who speak to be popular, to tickle people's ears, and to lead them away from God, knowing that people will always love this kind of message (Jer. 5:30-31; 2 Tim. 4:3-5). Those that believe they can be saved without Christ will face the same fate as the false prophets of the OT.

Each of these four can be encapsulated by Jesus' parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector:

**Luke 18:11-12** He also told this parable to some who **trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt.** "Two men went up into the temple to pray, **one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.** 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. <sup>12</sup> I fast twice a week; I give

tithes of all that I get. 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**" I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other. ***For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.***"

This story ends with the opposite conclusion that it started with. The tax collector was a known and proven sinner, but he knew he was and thus needed God's help. The Pharisee believed in his own goodness, and being self-satisfied, thumbed his nose at this sinful man. However, though he was 'righteous' in the eyes of man, he would be disappointed in the last day since he did not stand justified.

The conclusion of this first part of Jesus' sermon is clear: **there are only two ways, one is following Jesus, foregoing the ease of this life for the promise of the next. The other finds glory in this life, but does not need Jesus. That life ends in disappointment, because it ends in judgment. Which life do you choose?**

#### **Concluding Thoughts and Questions:**

- Why is it so difficult to have a future reward mentality? What is it about our own sin in this world that makes this difficult? What would be different about our attitude, desires, and actions in this world if we lived out realities like Colossians 3:1-4? How do we cultivate this?
- Why is it so hard to admit our weakness and need? What does it look like to live consistently being "poor" in spirit?
- What things do we run after for satisfaction (not just sinful but even good things we put above God?)
- What areas do you think we will be hated, excluded, reviled, and spurned in our culture? What ways do we prepare for this?
- These 4 areas of blessing are what makes up a disciple. What would be different in our marriage and church if we all lived this out? What would a "gospel" culture look like?