

## **021322 Luke 6:17-26 "Blessing"**

Who in this world hates blessings? The expression "blessed are you" was not the first to be used by Jesus. In fact, in the Old Testament, there are countless stories about blessings.

For example, Jeremiah 17:7 says, "Blessed are those who trust in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD." It continues, "They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green." (Jeremiah 17:8) This expression is very similar to Psalm 1:3, "They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper."

According to Genesis 1, do you know what the first thing God did when God created humankind? God blessed them. Genesis 1:27-28 says, "So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.'"

Today, through the Gospel of Luke, Jesus is also talking about blessings, and the kingdom of God is at the center of it.

There was a farmer who made his living by selling watermelons throughout the neighborhood by truck. One day, he was selling watermelons just like any other day, but it wasn't selling particularly well. By evening, the truck was still full of watermelons and he was not able to sell any. The farmer was disappointed, so he packed up his stuff and headed home. He even ignored the traffic signal and went over the speed limit. Then, a police car followed him with the sirens on. Foolishly, the farmer thought he could out speed the police so he drove faster. After about 20 minutes of the chase, the farmer came to his senses and stopped

his truck at a shoulder. As the police officer got out of the car, he ran towards the farmer and said "Sir! Can I get a watermelon?"

The reason the police officer chased the farmer was not because of the speeding but because he needed a watermelon. Of course, it sounds funny, but this made me think. The reason Jesus Christ came to this earth and died on the cross for us was not because He was trying to point out all of our sins, but He came to give us eternal life. "For God so loved the world that He gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16). Our sins were too big that Jesus had to die for us on the cross; however, through his suffering, sacrifice, death and resurrection Jesus Christ freed us from the powers of sin and death. As we live our lives as Christians, we should not make assumptions and misunderstand the love of God that we become farther away from Jesus. Instead, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ that we may be healed, challenged, and repent through the Word of God and live our lives soaking in God's grace every day.

Commonly known as the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapter 5 thru 7, for Luke it is the Sermon on a Plain. Jesus came down from the mountain to speak to the people gathered on the plain and there he restated the covenant between God and God's people.

In Matthew Chapter 5, Jesus gave His disciples the teachings that we know to be the Beatitudes (eight blessings). The first blessing is, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God." Blessed life begins by owning the kingdom of God.

The last blessing is, "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of God." So the Beatitudes begin and end with the possession of the kingdom of God. No matter how much we have in the world, if we do not own the kingdom of God, then we are not blessed in Jesus' term.

On the other hand, the passage in Luke consists of the four blessings and the four woes. Luke, the author of the Gospel of Luke, liked to use contrasting words and expressions. The blessings and cursings clearly differentiate the two central participants in Luke's gospel. For example, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance." (5:31-32) The blessings and woes identify those who are welcomed as members of the kingdom of God and those who stand outside.

The so-called blessed people in the Gospels today are not those who are materially poor and physically hungry. This is because even those who are materially poor may not long for the kingdom of God, and conversely, there are people who are materially rich but use it for the kingdom of God and to love our neighbors.

Let us meditate on the expression in the Gospel of Matthew in more detail. Jesus proclaimed in Matthew 5: "Blessed are those who are hungry and thirsty for righteousness, for they will be full." Are you hungry and thirsty for righteousness? I'm sure you're hungry for lunch, but are you hungry and thirsty for righteousness? What does that mean?

To be hungry and thirsty for righteousness is to realize that you lack righteousness but sins! If righteousness is already filled in us, we are not hungry and thirsty. Aren't we living in a time when it is burdensome to talk about sin in the Church today? Do I need the blood of Jesus' cross when I do not realize that I am a sinner who lacks "righteousness" in me?

Just as when we search for food and water when we become hungry and thirsty, when we realize that we lack righteousness and desire it, God promised that God would give it to us. That righteousness is the power of the blood of the cross of Jesus Christ, as the Bible testifies! Paul said, "Therefore no one will be declared

righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin. But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe" (Romans 3: 20-22).

One commentator on Luke 6:17-26 writes, "'Blessed' (makarios) does not simply describe a state of happiness or bliss. Rather, it refers in a theological sense to one's standing before God (Deut. 33:29; Pss. 1:1; 40:4)."

Some of you may remember I preached about repentance before. Repentance (metanoia) means "turning around," "turning to God". You see, Makarios and metanoia are quite related. Blessedness and repentance are quite related. Both words carry the meaning of "before God."

Just like in the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15, the prodigal son returned to his father. Instead of chasing and scolding his second son, the father waited for him, hugged him, and welcomed him as a precious being.

Dear beloved sisters and brothers in Christ Jesus, I ask you again. Are you hungry and thirsty for righteousness? Do you need God's righteousness now and today? Can you stand without God's grace? As you reflect on the blessings and woes in Luke's Gospel and on the use of the word "blessed" or "blessing", how does this meaning of "blessed" contrast with contemporary uses of this word? I hope and pray that there is at least one change you can make in your own life before God that would bring you into closer accord with Jesus' understanding of blessedness. Fairfield Grace, May God's grace, peace, goodness, and mercy be with you and your family, and your business, and your studies, and with the lives of your children. Amen.