



February 13, 2022

Sermon Series

Shining Forth: Seeing Jesus in a New Light

This Week's Big Idea

The Great Reversal

Introduction:

You might be familiar with Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount," but in today's text we have Jesus' "Sermon on the Plain." Instead of speaking "from on high," Jesus is speaking "on the level," and at one point actually "looks up" to his disciples. This teaching comes immediately after Jesus appoints the twelve as apostles and begins with a description--of those who are blessed and those who are missing out--that is radically different than we are used to.

Luke 6:17-26 NRSV

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

²⁰Then he looked up at 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 will be filled.

"Blessed are you who weep now,
for you will laugh.

²²"Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. ²³Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors 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 will be hungry.

"Woe to you who are laughing now,
for you will mourn and weep.

²⁶"Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets."

Bible Conversation

Based on the first few verses, who is Jesus' audience here? Were they people who would hear his words as "good news" or "bad news"?

How might the timing and staging of the story be a way for Luke to communicate Jesus' message to his disciples and us in ways that go beyond words?

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Reflection by Pastor Tim Rotman

Sometimes when I read the Bible, I've noticed a tendency to "move slow" through the passages I understand, and "move fast" through the ones I don't. Beloved readings like those found in John 15 or Psalm 23 give me comfort, and I can savor their promises for days. There are other passages that leave me feeling confused or uncomfortable, and I have noticed that I am tempted to move on from them quickly, so I can return to what is familiar. Jesus' "Blessings & Woes" in Luke 6 can leave me feeling both comforted and uncomfortable, and I suspect that's just the way Jesus planned it.

We find comfort in Jesus' words of blessing by receiving the promise that where we are lacking, God will provide. When we are poor, hungry, or sad these words give us comfort and hope that our circumstances do not define our identity, or God's love and grace for us. These are the reassuring words that we like to dwell on—that we "move slow" through when we encounter them in the Bible.

However, in this same passage Jesus has a harsh warning for those who are rich, content, and happy that makes me remember sinking a little lower in my seat during history class when the teacher was asking a question I was not confident I could answer. After all, compared to most of the world and most of the Christians throughout history, most of us live lives of wealth and comfort. As much as I like to take comfort from Jesus' words of blessing, I do not want to be on the receiving end of Jesus' words of woe.

Perhaps it is important for us to live in the tension between these words of comfort and conviction. There are days in our lives where we may feel in great need of the hope they bring, and there are certainly also days in our lives when we need to be reminded that God is with the poor, hungry, sad, and outcast and wants us to be with them too.

Reflection Conversation

Can you think of a time in your life when these words of Jesus would have brought you comfort? What is it about them that is comforting?

Are there ways that Jesus' words make you uncomfortable? What is it about them that are challenging?

The 1 Question:

Who in your life might be God calling you to become a blessing for them today?

Closing Prayer

God of grace and mercy, thank you for calling us to accompany you in service to the world you so love. May we be and become the blessings others need in their lives, and may we realize the blessing that comes from joining you in service to others

Next Week's Bible Theme and Text:

Sermon Series: Shining Forth: Seeing Jesus in a New Light
Text: Luke 6:27-38

1 week.
1 story.
1 message.

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