



The unfolding of your words gives light.

To Seek and to Save

An Exposition of the Gospel of Luke

²⁰And turning His gaze toward His disciples^a, He *began* to say, “Blessed *are you who are poor*, for yours is the kingdom of God^b. ²¹Blessed *are you who hunger now*, for you shall be satisfied^c. Blessed *are you who weep now*, for you shall laugh^d. ²²Blessed are you when men hate you^e, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man^f. ²³Be glad in that day and leap *for joy*, for behold, your reward is great in heaven^g. For in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets^h. ²⁴But woe to you who are rich, for you are receiving your comfort in fullⁱ. ²⁵Woe to you who are well-fed now, for you shall be hungry^j. Woe to

^a 6:20 **turning His gaze toward His disciples.** The language Luke used to describe Jesus’ eyes includes the word that means “to lift up.” Almost exclusively in its 19 New Testament uses it speaks of lifting up body parts like eyes, hands, heads, voices and a heel. This was intentional eye contact. Theirs was to listen.

^b 6:20 **Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.** The kingdom theme in Luke’s gospel (*basileia* is used 44 times in Luke) describes the rule of God over men, specifically the rule of God over men’s hearts. It is both a present reality and a future hope. It is an invisible kingdom on the move and it carries a message.

Notice the present tense here. This is a kingdom in existence right now and the poor fit in because attachment to wealth is a barrier for those who wish to enter.

^c 6:21 **Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied.** When Israel was in the wilderness, they knew that the only way they would eat would be for God to supply their daily manna. Those who have an appetite for more than the bread available here (Matthew says “hunger and thirst after righteousness”) will find a feast.

Jesus fasted and told the devil that man also lives by the word of God.

^d 6:21 **Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.** This is a world of death, decay and loss, but the rule of Jesus transcends it. The people of God cling to things that last. Solomon said this:

It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, because that is the end of every man, and the living takes it to heart. Sorrow is better than laughter, For when a face is sad a heart may be happy. The mind of the wise is in the house of mourning, while the mind of fools is in the house of pleasure. Ecclesiastes 7:2-4

^e 6:22 **Blessed are you when men hate you.** Jesus said later that this hatred would be directed at Him. Just as the mockers cried out for Jesus to be crucified, we very naturally hate Jesus. Do you doubt that? What do you do naturally when you have your serious character flaws pointed out? Only by grace do you accept the assault humbly and with repentance.

^f 6:22 **ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man.** Few people have experienced this kind of rejection. Jesus did.

^g 6:23 **Be glad in that day and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven.** Imagine leaping for joy on *that* kind of day.

^h 6:23 **in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets.** Stephen spoke the same way when he asked, “Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute?” (Acts 7:52).

ⁱ 6:24 **woe to you who are rich, for you are receiving your comfort in full.** How do you suppose Jesus spoke these words? James, the half brother of Jesus, must have been present when this sermon was given. He speaks similar words to the unsaved capitalist (James 5:1-6).

^j 6:25 **Woe to you who are well-fed now, for you shall be hungry.** Remember Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16).

The Gospel of Luke
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you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep^a. ²⁶Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for their fathers used to treat the false prophets in the same way^b.^c

^a 6:25 **Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.** When your joy is defined by temporal pleasures, your joy will not last.

^b 6:26 **Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for their fathers used to treat the false prophets in the same way.** This statement calls to mind the now-humorous account of Israel's King Ahab and his hatred of the prophet Micaiah (1 Kings 22:1-40). It is futile to live for the favor of men.

^c 6:20-26 This text through the end of the chapter is likely a portion of the same sermon Matthew recorded (Matthew 5-7), though some call it a distinct address. Compare the beatitudes in each text.

One of the mistakes the interpreter can make while studying the beatitudes is to turn them into commands. These are not commands, but statements of fact. They are the fruit of those who have tasted the kingdom that is not of this world. The blessedness of the kingdom of this world is found in money, good food, entertainment and friends. Think how much of our lives are invested in storing up material possessions, eating, finding pleasant distractions and courting the favor of people.

So some would take this to mean that in order to get favor from God you need to take a vow of poverty, fast often, get rid of your television and live like a hermit. The point is not that you perform your way into God's kingdom but that you learn to pity those for whom money, good food, entertainment and friends define their lives. When Paul prophesied that in the last days men would be lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, his words certainly included the day in which we live.

When you lack what the world worships, remember these essentials for the kingdom of God:

1. When you lack material things, take comfort that you are in the best position to find wealth that lasts.
2. When you are hungry, take comfort that there are actually things more satisfying than food.
3. When you are mourning, take comfort that this life is very short.
4. When you are unpopular, take comfort that God knows what the best rewards are.

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