

November 25, 2018 Sermon – Luke 6.20-26

(Supplementary Download)

GREAT HOPE FOR 'THE POOR'

1. Jesus, the Son of God, is the Good News!

Our God delights to reveal Himself to us through His Son through His inspired, inerrant Word and by His Spirit. As Pastor Jude has reminded us Luke, moved by the Spirit undertook

to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, 4 that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught. (Lk 1.3b-4). Our God has given us this orderly account as part of His complete Word that we might have certainty concerning what we have been taught!

Throughout God's revelation in Luke we have seen and will see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor 4.6) as Jesus reveals Himself to those who know they desperately need Him and to those who choose to despise and reject Him.

Jesus, infinite, eternal and unchangeable God, laid aside His glory to become like us, except without sin. Jesus healed and did many other miracles to confirm that He is indeed the Messiah, Emmanuel – God with us, and He taught as the One with authority.

Jesus came to - to proclaim good news to the poor ...to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Luke 4.18,19

We see Jesus declaring this Good News – this wonderful, glorious Good News again in Luke 6.20-23 contrasted with a warning in verses 24-26. To set the context I will start at

Vs 17 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, 18 who came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. And those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. 19 And all the crowd sought to touch him, for power came out from him and healed them all.

20 And he lifted up his eyes on 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 shall be satisfied. "Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. 22 "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! 23 Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers 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 shall be hungry. "Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. 26 "Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.

GOOD NEWS FOR THOSE WHO LOOK TO JESUS TO SATISFY THEIR EVERY NEED

THE BIG IDEA: GOOD NEWS FOR THOSE WHO LOOK TO JESUS TO SATISFY THEIR EVERY NEED

2. OUR REAL NEED – TO KNOW THAT EVERY MOMENT WE NEED JESUS

Our every day needs

As we see from vs17-19 there were 'a great crowd of His disciples' (learners, students, followers) and 'a great multitude' of other people who came to Jesus with many needs. Desperate for healing, for wisdom and hope. Amongst His disciples and the crowds would have been people who were checking Jesus out. Perhaps asking: Who is this Jesus? Is He really the Messiah? Can Jesus be trusted? What price would He demand from them if they became His disciples? Within the crowds would have been the curious, and the doubters and those who were actively opposed to Jesus.

We see from v20 that Jesus speaks to His disciples in the midst of the great crowds. He gets their attention: Blessed are you who are poor, who are hungry now, who weep now, when people hate you on account of the Son of Man!

But woe to you: the rich, the well-fed, those who laugh now.

In the Roman world at this time, it is estimated that the wealthy made up approx. 10% of the population and all the rest were the poor. 9 out of 10 people either poor, barely making ends meet, very poor or destitute.

Perhaps these poor people were hearing Jesus and thinking – for they had no love of the rich - that the rich would get what they deserve. They know their poverty – and they hear Jesus say theirs '**is the kingdom of God**'.

Immediately a question should come to mind – does being poor, hungry, or in great sorrow or any other circumstances entitle anyone to claim that God has included them in His kingdom?

We know this is not the case from the immediate context. Even though most of the people were poor, there were disciples and there were the great crowds.

We see in John 3.16 that Jesus plainly declares that it takes more than being poor. We must believe, and it takes more than just believing for the demons believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus says "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." Lk 9.23

We see the same thing today. It is estimated that over 3 billion people live in poverty, defined economically is earning less than \$3 per day, and of those 1.3 billion live in 'extreme poverty' defined as earning less than \$1.25 a day, and of those over 700 million do not regularly get enough food to eat. While there are many poor people who rejoice in Jesus as their Saviour the majority want nothing to do with Jesus. Being materially poor, being hungry, does not guarantee a place in God's kingdom, nor does being poor exclude people from God's kingdom.

Similarly: being rich (that's us – the 20% of the world living on more than \$10 per day), or full, or those who laugh now, or if people speak well of you – does not necessarily exclude us from God's kingdom. Think of the examples of Job, Abraham, David in the OT and in the NT

GOOD NEWS FOR THOSE WHO LOOK TO JESUS TO SATISFY THEIR EVERY NEED

Matthew and Zacchaeus, tax collectors, despised, rejected by their fellow Jews, but welcomed into the kingdom by Jesus. That said,

Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. 24 Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." 25 When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?" 26 But Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." (Matt 19.23-26)

The question behind these verses is – **to whom do you go to satisfy your needs?** Do you look to yourself and/or the people around you, to other 'gods', or do you look to Jesus to satisfy your every need?

This desire to satisfy our needs without God is not new. The very first sin of Adam and Eve was to do it their way to be like God. Ever since then every one of us started out our lives seeking to satisfy our desires in our own ways and without God.

Our greatest need:

God makes it clear that we are sinners like Adam and Eve and that our sin is an infinite offense to God. Why? Our God is our Creator. He is the sustainer of our lives. The breath we take comes from God who gives us breath. Our sin is denying that God is who He said He is, our Creator, and wanting to do life without God, separates us from God. **THIS IS OUR GREATEST NEED.**

He says that "**all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God**, (Rom 3:23) and the "**wages of sin is death**," (Rom 6.23). God tells us that we are weak (utterly helpless), sinners, enemies of God, and it is only Jesus who can pay the penalty of our sin and make us right with God.

Rom 6.6 **For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.**

8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

If this is new to you, my prayer and hope for you is that you will see in your every day needs that you need Jesus and above all that there is a far greater need that you need to deal with, which is your relationship with God. Turn away from your sin and look to Jesus to be your Saviour. He alone can satisfy your every need, but only on His terms. Jesus says

"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matt 11.28,29)

We need Jesus – moment by moment

I speak to you as well, dear fellow believers even as I speak to myself. How often do we, as believers, fall back into trying to satisfy our needs without God, often without realizing that we have fallen back into our 'old self' way of thinking.

Living like: - nobody is going to tell me what to do ("I did it my way")

GOOD NEWS FOR THOSE WHO LOOK TO JESUS TO SATISFY THEIR EVERY NEED

- believing and acting as though we know best what is right and true
- acting like this (fill in the blank) is too small to bother God with – we got this one

perhaps recognizing how broken and messy our lives are, yet how often do we:

- try and hide the mess, to ourselves, to others and even to God (toxic shame)
- follow the worldly ways of self help –
- blame others for our troubles and live defeated lives
- struggle with many things, large or small, and fall into our old way of ‘fixing things’
- look for love in all the wrong places

How often do we slip into believing that we are not good enough for God’s love?

I fell into this trap – again, about a year ago. I want to be better at sharing the Good News of Jesus to my family, friends and those who God brings across my path. I want to honor God with everything I have. Last fall I found myself really questioning whether God could really love someone like me as I felt like such a failure and have felt this way for many years.

Can you see my need, my sin? I was determining what I needed to be for God to love me. And because I was not measuring up to my expectations of what I thought that God required of me I was questioning God’s love for me. I will tell you the rest of the story in a few minutes

How about you? Can you identify with me? Are you feeling like you have to do the Christian life on your own? Do you feel defeated? Do you believe that God cannot love you? Do you dislike or even hate yourself?

Or maybe you feel like Paul, who in Rom 7 wrote: v15 “I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.” And shortly thereafter v24 “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?”

Jesus says: Come ... and I will give you rest. Will you look to Jesus to satisfy your every need?

3. GOD’S WAY – GREAT HOPE

Jesus says (my thanks to the Amplified bible) “blessed ... are you who are poor [in spirit, those devoid of spiritual arrogance, those who regard themselves as insignificant],

WE need to see ourselves as God sees us – not through the lens of our old self which only leads to denial or despair. To see ourselves as God sees us, without fear of condemnation, leads to great hope. God says

1 Cor 1.26-30 not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

This is who we are and as we read the bible we will better see that just like Paul, we are the chief of sinners. God loves us at every moment in our lives just as we are, and God is working at every moment in our lives to conform us to the image of His Son.

GOOD NEWS FOR THOSE WHO LOOK TO JESUS TO SATISFY THEIR EVERY NEED

The rest of my story. As I have worked through my own struggle this year God has brought me back several times to Rom 5-8. In particular helping me to better understand what it means that my **old self was crucified with [Christ] in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, (rendered powerless (CSB)) Rom 6.6**

According to God my old self no longer has power over me. My experience is that way too often I live like my old self does have power. The more I ponder this, the better I see that my old self only lives in my memory and in my habits. My old self has no power over me. We must become more aware of our old ways and then take action in confidence that our God goes with us. This includes taking up God's command to **renew our minds** (Rom 12.2) and **'be imitators of God'** (Eph 5.1). This takes effort and hard work. God knows this. God loves us just as we are, and He will not leave us as we are for He is faithful to complete the good work He has started.]

Through months of bible study and prayer, God led me to understand more deeply that **truly I am more wretched before God than I realized and still God loves me**. He knows my wretchedness, my sinfulness, my weaknesses far better than I know them and He chose to love me. God challenged me to love myself just as I am, just as He loves me.

I discovered the freedom and joy of being a bigger mess than I realized and the need to love myself like God loves us and like we are to love others as described in 1 Cor 13.4-7 – **Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant 5 or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; 6 it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. 7 Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.**

Every time I start to slip into my old way of thinking – God does not love me – I need to joyfully repent for I am denying God's love for me. God makes it very clear that His steadfast love for you and me is higher than the heavens are above the earth, and His steadfast love for you and me is from everlasting to everlasting. (read Ps 103 (ESV))

He loves us right now just as we are and He will keep on loving us just as we are, as He faithfully completes the good work that He started in us. (Phil 1.6)

In these two matters of evangelism and being a good steward, I now lean into God with the confidence that He loves me as I am and He will lead me. This spurs me on to love Jesus more and love my neighbor more, confident that Jesus will give me everything I need!

When we see and embrace that in ourselves we are **poor [in spirit, those devoid of spiritual arrogance, one who is insignificant]** in God's sight He says we are blessed. **[spiritually prosperous, happy, to be admired] ...for the kingdom of God is yours [both now and forever].**

How so? We agree with God that our old self, our old ways of living do not work. What do we gain? We gain Jesus. We gain the Holy Spirit who dwells in us. We gain **his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. (2 Pet 1.4)** We gain the very thing that Adam and Eve wanted, to be like God, when we gain it His way.

Recognize your hunger

Blessed are you who hunger now [for righteousness, actively seeking right standing with God],

GOOD NEWS FOR THOSE WHO LOOK TO JESUS TO SATISFY THEIR EVERY NEED

Developing this hunger for God is helped by knowing our true poverty. Maintaining this sense of hunger for God takes work. A portion from Spurgeon's Nov 23rd Evening Devotional

"Each believer should be thirsting for God ... Many saints are content to live like men in coal mines, who do not see the sun; they eat dust like the serpent when they might taste the ambrosial food of angels; they are content to wear the miner's garb when they might put on King's robes; tears mar their faces when they might anoint them with celestial oil. I am convinced that many a believer pines in a dungeon when he might walk on the palace roof, and view the goodly land and Lebanon. Rise up, oh believer, ... Do not rest any longer satisfied with your dwarfish attainments, but press forward to things more sublime and heavenly. Aspire to a higher, a nobler, a fuller life. Upward to heaven! Nearer to God!"

This is where our relationship with God, especially our time in His Word and in prayer using His Word is so helpful. For the more we see what God rightly demands of us as His children the more we will want to know **His precious and very great promises** and experience that "(His) **grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.**" (2 Cor 12.9)

Jesus says: ²¹ **Blessed [joyful, nourished by God's goodness] for you will be [completely] satisfied.**

Recognize that we will have a daily fight with our 'old man' – our sin

Blessed Are you who weep now [over your sins and repent],

Joyfully repent. I started a journal on Dec 1, 2015 entitled 'Joyful Repentance' to work on my more obvious sins. Three years and 400 pages later I am still going strong, yet I live in joy. **"Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"** leads to **"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."** And all the rest of Rom 8 and beyond that to all the precious and very great promises of God.

Blessed [forgiven, refreshed by God's grace] are for you will laugh [when the burden of sin is lifted].

God knows our every burden, every trial, every temptation

Heb 4.13-16 **And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account. Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**

Our God is perfectly wise. Our God carries us in our burdens and at the right time will deliver us from our burdens – always does what is best working in all things for our good ... to conform us to the image of His Son says to all who look to Jesus to satisfy our every need:

Blessed are you ... for the kingdom of God is yours, you will be satisfied, you will laugh – therefore take up the good fight to live for Christ confident that God gives you everything you need for life and godliness. Rejoice always resting in the steadfast love of our Lord.

GOOD NEWS FOR THOSE WHO LOOK TO JESUS TO SATISFY THEIR EVERY NEED

C. H. Spurgeon Morning and Evening Devotional

November 23 – Evening reading **Go up into the high mountain. Isa 40:9**

Each believer should be thirsting for God, for the living God, and longing to climb the hill of the Lord, and see him face to face. We ought not to rest content in the mists of the valley when the summit of Tabor awaits us. My soul thirsts to drink deep from the cup which is reserved for those who reach the mountain's brow, and bathe their brows in heaven. How pure are the dews of the hills, how fresh is the mountain air, how rich the fare of the dwellers aloft, whose windows look into the New Jerusalem! Many saints are content to live like men in coal mines, who do not see the sun; they eat dust like the serpent when they might taste the ambrosial food of angels; they are content to wear the miner's garb when they might put on King's robes; tears mar their faces when they might anoint them with celestial oil. I am convinced that many a believer pines in a dungeon when he might walk on the palace roof, and view the goodly land and Lebanon. Rise up, oh believer, from your low condition! Cast away your sloth, your lethargy, your coldness, or whatever interferes with your chaste and pure love for Christ, your soul's Husband. Make him the source, the centre, and the circumference of all your soul's range of delight. What enchants you into such folly as to remain in a pit when you may sit on a throne? Do not live in the lowlands of bondage now that mountain liberty is conferred upon you. Do not rest any longer satisfied with your dwarfish attainments, but press forward to things more sublime and heavenly. Aspire to a higher, a nobler, a fuller life. Upward to heaven! Nearer to God!

When wilt thou come unto me, Lord?

Oh come, my Lord most dear!

Come near, come nearer, nearer still,

I'm blest when thou art near.

As C.S. Lewis said

"It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased." **The Weight of Glory**

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Author: Ron Standish 1
Keywords:
Comments:
Creation Date: 11/12/18 10:36:00 AM
Change Number: 32
Last Saved On: 11/23/18 11:14:00 AM
Last Saved By: Ron Standish 1
Total Editing Time: 1,443 Minutes
Last Printed On: 11/25/18 11:46:00 AM
As of Last Complete Printing
Number of Pages: 7
Number of Words: 3,927
Number of Characters: 16,769 (approx.)