

It's All About Jesus

Session 2

March 10, 2024

The Ministry of Jesus

Session Point: Through His miracles and teaching, Jesus pointed us to a relationship with God.

Session Passages: Luke 6:17-23,27-31

Luke 6:17-19

Connection to the Point. Jesus healed those who came to Him for help.

Setting. To show Jesus's authority, Luke recorded two events in the opening verses of Luke 6. In verses 1-5, Jesus's disciples were hungry so they picked heads of grain on the Sabbath and ate them. Jesus told the Pharisees He was the Lord of the Sabbath. In verses 6-11, Jesus healed a man with a paralyzed hand on the Sabbath. The Pharisees began to look for a way to kill Him. In verses 12-16, Luke recorded Jesus's praying all night then choosing His twelve apostles.

Coming down with them (v. 17). Jesus and His apostles had been on a mountain (v. 12). Efforts to specify any particular mountain fall far short of proof. The group came down to a **level place** where people could gather and hear Jesus speak.

Large crowd of his disciples (v. 17). Out of those who followed Jesus, He chose twelve to be His apostles (those sent with a message). After Jesus's crucifixion and resurrection, a group of about 120 disciples met in prayer before the Holy Spirit came on them (Acts 1:15). Luke mentioned three groups present: (1) the apostles, (2) a large crowd of Jesus's disciples, and (3) a great number of other people.

Great number of people (v. 17). Likely this group was made up of people who had heard about Jesus—especially His teaching and healing—and wanted to know more about Him or be healed by Him (v. 18). This event appears early in Jesus's ministry.

Judea and Jerusalem . . . Tyre and Sidon (v. 17). Scholars believe this event occurred in Galilee, likely near Capernaum (7:1). If so, many of the people probably came from Galilee. However, Luke focused on Jesus's coming to provide salvation for everyone who believes. Therefore, he described people in the crowd coming from the south (Judea and Jerusalem) as well as from the north (Tyre and Sidon), revealing that people from all over the area came to Jesus.

They came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases (v. 18). Luke provided two basic reasons people (the Twelve, a large crowd of His disciples, and a great number of people) came to Jesus: (1) to hear Jesus teach and (2) to be healed. Likely these people had heard of what Jesus had been doing and wanted to see Him for themselves. In addition to hearing Jesus, the second reason the large crowd was present was *to be healed of their diseases*. Luke had previously described some of Jesus's healings (4:31-42; 5:12-26). In Jesus's first recorded sermon by Luke, Jesus read from the prophet Isaiah in stating that healing would be part of His mission (4:18-19).

Those tormented by unclean spirits (v. 18). Many Jews believed all sicknesses and diseases were caused by unclean spirits. They falsely interpreted the deuteronomic formula (do good and God will bless you; do bad and He will curse you; Deut. 8:6-20) to the extreme, blaming all bad things on unclean (evil) spirits. *Tormented* indicates how Jews viewed evil spirits. Perhaps the Holy Spirit inspired Luke to include this phrase to highlight

Jesus's power and authority over everything. Even in the realm of unclean spirits, Jesus healed, just like He healed other diseases/sicknesses.

Were made well (v. 18). Jesus didn't distinguish between diseases, healing some but not others, because He is Lord of all. Nothing is beyond His power. Our English word *therapeutic* comes from the Greek word rendered *made well*.

Trying to touch him (v. 19). Sometimes Jesus healed by speaking (Matt. 9:6-7). At other times Jesus healed by touching a person (Luke 13:13) or by a person merely touching His clothes (8:43-48). On some occasions, Jesus even healed from a distance (John 4:50-53).

Because power was coming out from him (v. 19). One of Luke's emphases was the Holy Spirit. Since Jesus healed people with God's power, we recognize all Persons of the Trinity were present: Father, Son, and Spirit. The crowd witnessed that Jesus had this special power/authority to heal them of all types of sicknesses/diseases.

Healing them all (v. 19). The result of Jesus's healing was dramatic. Unlike other healers, Jesus did not merely heal one or two; He healed *them all*. Nothing was too difficult for Jesus. In addition to Jesus's teaching, His healing ministry undoubtedly brought more and more attention to Jesus.

Luke 6:20-23

Connection to the Point. Jesus taught His disciples the path of joy and favor with God.

Sermon on the Plain (vv. 20-49). Scholars have debated the relationship between this sermon and the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7) at least as far back as the third or fourth century AD. Matthew's record of the sermon contains 111 verses; Luke's contains 30 verses (about 25 percent as many verses). The audience for both sermons was Jesus's disciples (but crowds overheard both). Both sermons share some content and each sermon has unique content. Luke incorporated some of Matthew's Sermon on the Mount in other chapters. Both sermons begin in the same way (beatitudes) and end with similar illustrations (applying Jesus's teaching to life). However, Matthew's emphasis is directed more to spiritual matters and Luke's is focused more on social elements. Most likely, Jesus spoke the same or similar words on more than one occasion, and early Christians preserved each account. Finally, the Holy Spirit inspired Matthew to record the Sermon on the Mount and Luke to record the Sermon on the Plain as they appear in our Bibles today.

Looking up at his disciples, he said (v. 20). Although the crowd was present and certainly overheard Him, Jesus's primary audience in both sermons was His disciples (including the Twelve).

Blessed are you (v. 20). The word translated *blessed* is difficult to grasp in English; no single word contains its full meaning. Forms of the Greek word are used fifty times in the Greek New Testament. *Fortunate, happy, blessed, very good, cause to prosper, congratulations, and praised be*, as well as other English words approximate the meaning of the word. Scholars debate whether being blessed comes as a reward directly from God or comes as a result of doing what is right.

Who are poor (v. 20). This is the first of Luke's four beatitudes; Matthew listed nine beatitudes, adding the descriptor "in spirit" to the first one regarding the poor (Matt. 5:3). The poor numbered about 90 percent of the population in New Testament times. They had to depend on God for daily necessities such as food, shelter, and clothing. The government did not look out for their interests. But Jesus was not focused on financial poverty, but poverty of spirit that recognized one's need for Him. Jesus was speaking to His disciples, who had that recognition and thus became extravagantly rich—blessed by being in Jesus's presence.

Kingdom of God is yours (v. 20). Many Jews of Jesus's day looked for God's kingdom to be a restoration of Israel under a Messiah whom they viewed as a military/political king (like David). However, God's kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). The kingdom of God (or "kingdom of heaven" as Matthew called it) is best described as "God's rule in a person's heart," the center of his or her being where decisions are made. Because of this, Jesus declared that the kingdom of God *is yours*. *Is* reflects present possession, not just a future reward.

Blessed are you who are now hungry (v. 21). Luke's second beatitude is the fourth listed by Matthew, who adds the descriptor "for righteousness" to clarify its meaning. Nothing is praiseworthy about physical hunger, but Jesus pronounced as blessed the person hungry for His words (which describes righteousness).

Because you will be filled (v. 21). Only Jesus can fill our deepest needs (Eph. 1:7,14). In John 4, Jesus told the woman at the well how to have her spiritual needs filled.

Blessed are you who weep now (v. 21). Weeping is blessed when it comes from a heart sorrowful for sin. In this beatitude, Jesus pointed to the response we should make regarding our sinfulness that separates us from holy God.

Because you will laugh (v. 21). When the disciples listened to Jesus, their response would be joy rather than sorrow (John 3:29).

Blessed . . . hate . . . exclude . . . insult . . . slander (v. 22). The disciples would experience all four evidences of the devil responding to Jesus's *blessed* presence in the lives of His followers. The closer we live for Christ today, the more we experience these same responses. Persecution now leads to rewards in the future when God's kingdom is fully present and Satan is totally defeated.

Because of the Son of Man (v. 22). The reason Christians are persecuted is the spiritual war between God and all that is anti-God. *The Son of Man* was Jesus's favorite title for Himself and was used over eighty times in the Gospels. Drawing from Old Testament Messianic expectation (Dan. 7:13), this title reflects Jesus's being fully God and fully man (Immanuel; Matt. 1:23).

Rejoice in that day and leap for joy (v. 23). Even in the midst of persecution, Jesus's followers can *rejoice* and *leap for joy* because of their future reward.

Take note — your reward is great in heaven (v. 23). Jesus's followers are citizens of heaven and therefore temporary residents on earth (Phil. 1:27; 3:20). Experiencing God fully in heaven is the greatest reward one can attain.

Their ancestors used to treat the prophets (v. 23). The Old Testament reveals many instances of God's prophets being hated and even killed for their faithfulness in delivering God's message to people.

Luke 6:27-31

Connection to the Point. Jesus taught His disciples the way they were to treat others.

Background for Luke 6:27-31. Following Jesus's healing people of their sicknesses/diseases, Jesus pronounced blessings on those who exhibited four character traits. These traits revealed God's kingdom, His rule in their hearts. Then Jesus also pronounced woes (troubles, afflictions, curses) against those who were self-satisfied. Their behavior demonstrated their refusal to accept Jesus's teachings, particularly those He then described.

But I say to you who listen (v. 27). Jesus turned His attention back toward His disciples and others who would listen. The word *listen* does not merely mean physical hearing; it also means grasping the intended meaning, hearing with the intent to obey. It is what parents mean when they say to children, “Are you listening?”

Love your enemies (v. 27). Jesus followed His general command—to love one’s enemies—with a series of parallel commands on how to put such love into practice. Each of these commands is in the Greek present tense, implying on-going action, a Christian lifestyle. In the Bible, *love* had little to do with emotional fondness. Love in its fullest expression is seen in Jesus, who acted in ways that demonstrated God’s favor. The most perfect example of genuine love is Jesus’s dying on the cross for our sins (1 John 4:10).

Biblical love is best seen in how a person treats others (John 15:13). Jews knew God’s command to love your neighbor (Lev. 19:18); however, they defined a *neighbor* as a fellow Jew (Matt. 5:43). Jesus defined *neighbor* broadly as all humans, even the hated half-breed Samaritans (whom Jesus made hero of His parable; Luke 10:30-37). In 722 BC, when the Assyrians conquered the Northern Kingdom, Israel, they imported foreign, undesirable people from other parts of their empire into that area. When Israelites intermarried with these Gentiles; their descendants became known as Samaritans.

Do what is good to those who hate you (v. 27). In a statement that parallels *love your enemies*, Jesus commanded that His followers do good, specifying the length to which love should be demonstrated: even to those who *hate you*. What Jesus said stood in stark contrast with what other Jewish religious leaders taught. In fact, Jesus contradicted these leaders as He revealed God’s original meaning to what they had misunderstood.

Bless those who curse you (v. 28). Instead of reacting to those who curse you by cursing them—the norm in human nature—Jesus demanded the radical opposite response: to bless them. This response is another way to demonstrate God’s rule in a person’s life, as was further indicated by Paul (Rom. 12:14; 1 Cor. 4:12) and Peter (1 Pet. 3:9).

Pray for those who mistreat you (v. 28). This command parallels the previous phrase. Instead of cursing, Jesus’s followers are to bless and pray for those who mistreat them. This behavior again reveals the actions of the love Jesus commanded His followers to exhibit. God’s love, represented most fully in Jesus, is revealed in the lives of those who truly believe in Him. Our actions testify whether we truly believe in Him (John 14:15; 15:10; 1 John 5:2).

If anyone hits you on the cheek, offer the other also (v. 29). In Jewish society, the injury of a slap on the cheek was more insult than physical harm; but it was a hit to the jaw. Jewish law permitted people to retaliate to an injury in the same way in which they were injured (“eye for eye;” Ex. 21:23-24). This is a further example of the radical love in action that Jesus commanded His followers to exhibit. When we live by the principle of getting even, we are not living by Jesus’s teachings.

If anyone takes away your coat, don’t hold back your shirt either (v. 29). Jesus also addressed this issue in Matthew, where He placed it in the context of a legal setting (Matt. 5:40). Jewish law indicated that a person could be given the outer coat in settlement of a debt, but the borrower was allowed to keep his inner shirt. Jews viewed nakedness as shameful. For Jesus, love in action had no limits; Jesus’s radical love indicated His followers’ actions were to be based on God’s extravagant love and not their personal possessions.

Give to everyone who asks you (v. 30). Jesus taught that love is the guiding principle for giving. In some cases, giving money is not the loving thing to do (giving money to support a drug or alcohol habit). Life—the kind of life Jesus offers—is more than material possessions (Matt. 6:19-34). The kind of life Jesus came to bring is both abundant in the present and in the future (John 10:10; 12:25).

From someone who takes your things, don't ask for them back (v. 30). Rather than seeking justice merely from a human perspective, Jesus's followers must allow God to control retaliation (Rom. 12:17-21). In explaining this verse, Marshall wrote: "Disciples must give freely, even to those who have no legitimate claim upon them; there is no place for the claims of self over against generosity to others (cf. Ps. 37:21; Pr. 21:26)."¹

Just as you want others to do for you (v. 31). In Jewish writings hundreds of years before Christ, we find the negative form of the Golden Rule: "What you hate, do to no one" (Tobit 4:15, a second century BC Jewish religious book). Pagan writers also promoted the negative form of the Golden Rule in some of their writings. Further, the Didache (a Greek word that means "teachings"), a second century church manual states: "The Way of Life is this: "First, thou shalt love the God who made thee, secondly, thy neighbour as thyself; and whatsoever thou wouldst not have done to thyself, do not thou to another."²

Do the same for them (v. 31). In Jesus, we find the positive expression of this principle that governs all human relationships (Matt. 7:12). To the extent we follow Jesus, this will be our guide in all our human relationships.

1. I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text, The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Exeter, UK: Paternoster Press, 1978), 261.

2. *Didache 1:2 The Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Kirsopp Lake, vol. 1, *The Loeb Classical Library* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1912–1913), 309.