

Bible Study Guide: Week of 2-7-2022

1. Read through the passage below
2. Read my notes and commentary
3. Read the questions at the end and ponder or discuss with others

Pastor Andrew

Luke 6:17-26

¹⁷[Jesus] 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.

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Just before this passage Jesus chose 12 of his disciples to designate as apostles. The Greek (*Apostolos*) means those who are sent out. This selection process took place on top of a mountain (i.e. a hillside along the Sea of Galilee). After this process, Jesus and those whom he chose as apostles came back down the mountain to a “level place”—a plain. Unlike Matthew, who set this sermon of Jesus on a mountain, Luke says Jesus came down the mountain in order to teach. While Matthew’s version calls to mind the giving of the law to Moses and the people on Mt. Sinai, Luke’s version brings to mind the great leveling that Luke (and Isaiah) said would come before the day of the Lord (see Luke 1; Isaiah 40). Also significant here is that people have come not just from Judea and Jerusalem (the Jewish areas), but also from Tyre and Sidon in modern-day Lebanon. This highlights Luke’s emphasis on Jesus as a light to the nations, not just to Israel.

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Luke’s version of the Sermon on the Plain is recognizable as similar to the Beatitudes (or blessings) from the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, but the differences are striking. Whereas Matthew’s version has Jesus lifting up the poor in spirit and those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, Luke has Jesus blessing the literal poor and hungry. Here also, rather than addressing the crowds as in Matthew 5, Jesus is speaking directly to the disciples—the 12, plus all those others who have followed him. Of course, the crowds could overhear, but specifically Jesus’ words are targeted at those who would follow Jesus, not as general truths for the whole world. The effect is to set up a contrast from the world’s typical viewpoint on blessedness. In the eyes of the world, one is blessed by being rich, well-fed, happy, and popular. In Jesus’ kingdom, however, it seems one will be blessed or favored by God or fortunate when one is poor, hungry, sad, and reviled. God’s blessedness transcends the world’s narrow categories and one’s earthly comforts are not to be seen or relied upon as marks of blessedness. Rather, one is blessed when one trusts entirely in Jesus.

Discussion/Reflection Questions:

- 1. How do you think the first hearers of Jesus or of Luke's gospel would have heard these words of Jesus? As words of comfort or challenge?**
- 2. Do these words comfort or challenge you? Or both? Why?**
- 3. What are the marks or signs of blessedness that we look for today? How do these contrast with the marks of blessedness Jesus lifts up here?**