

## Jesus Leveled With His Disciples

Luke 6:17-26

To begin with this morning I would like you to open your Bible to John 20 and some of his closing remarks from the disciple whom Jesus loved.

John 20:30-31

John is attesting to the fact that during the time he and the other disciples walked with Jesus there was insurmountable, innumerable, and undeniable evidence of who Jesus claimed to be through the miracles that Jesus performed. John states that there were many more miracles done by Jesus that were not written about in this gospel account. John 21:25 concludes "Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written."

John makes clear that the miracles that were written, even though many more could have been included, were written to affirm to us "that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the God, and that by believing you may have life in His name."

(John 20:31)

If you were to stand on a busy street corner and randomly select individuals and ask them the simple question of who Jesus is to them, responses would generally fall into one of three categories. There would be those who would deny that Jesus is the Son of God. They may state that He was a good person and did some remarkable things that in the day may have been considered miraculous but if they were put under the microscope of science, they could be refuted through that lens. A great man – Yes, the Son of God – No.

Another group would answer the question affirming that Jesus was not only a great man, but that He in fact was the Son of God giving an intellectual ascent to those claims, but at the end of the day, they themselves do not have any personal

relationship with Him. They either don't see the need for themselves or they believe that there are many different ways to achieve the same end goal of heaven.

The final group would not only affirm that Jesus was a great man having taught and done great things and that He is in fact the Son of God, they would also attest that they have a personal relationship with Him. They believe themselves to be true followers of Jesus through genuine faith that makes them a part of His forever family.

You can boil those three groups down to two: you're either spiritually dead or spiritually alive and only Christ can change you from one to the other and that comes through faith in Him. Jesus had many followers, followers who fit into each of the three categories mentioned above. We have seen them in our study so far in the book of Luke and we will continue to see them through the end. Two weeks ago we considered a passage in which Jesus selected His 12 disciples, those who would pick up His mantle once He departed after His work on earth had been completed.

Today we continue that story in Luke 6:17-26. If you have a Bible with headings, yours might be titled "Sermon on the Plateau." Its parallel passage would be Matthew 5-7 which is the "Sermon on the Mount." There is no little debate as to whether these two passages are the same or whether they stand as separate events. Some scholars believe that this is its own event claiming that Jesus often taught the same lesson on multiple occasions with different crowds and would modify it to fit the audience. They also cite that the location is different. In Matthew, Jesus went up on a mountain while in Luke He went down and stood on a level place.

Like most scholars, though, I believe that the Sermon on Mount and the Sermon on the Plateau are one in the same but recorded by both Matthew and Luke to fit the particular audience they were

writing to. Bear in mind that Matthew's audience was predominantly Jewish, while Luke's audience was predominantly Gentile.

From verse 17 to the end of this chapter Luke writes in a summary fashion the truths conveyed by Jesus in chapters 5-7 of Matthew.

Let's consider then Luke's account of the "Sermon on the Plateau." There are but two points I want to convey in our time together.

Jesus encountered the crowd on their level  
Jesus exhorted the disciples on their living

#### I. JESUS ENCOUNTERED THE CROWD ON THEIR LEVEL – v. 17-19

As we have seen already, everywhere Jesus went crowds were attracted to Him. A growing fan club of people searching Him out not for who He was but because of what He could do for them. We find in our passage that Jesus was coming down the mountain with the twelve men whom He had just selected as His Apostles. Luke tells us He stood on a level place. What this suggests is that as Jesus was coming down from where He and the disciples were and seeing the crowd below Him, He found a level spot from which He could meet with them and for all to hear Him.

Here's something important about Jesus that you already know, but it bears repetition. He is God, but He became man. He knew we couldn't come up to His level so He literally came down to ours.

I like the Gaither song, maybe you know it.

He came down to my level  
When I couldn't get up to His  
With a strong arm He lifted me up  
To show me what livin' is  
He'll come down to your level  
If you'll open up the door  
He wants to make your life worth livin'

That's what He came down for

If you're lookin' for contentment  
In the things that you can see  
You're gonna have some disappointment  
So won't you listen to me, please

Cause I know about a Savior  
He came down to be a man  
And when He left He sent His Spirit  
He made me everything I am

I find that incredibly encouraging, to know that Jesus doesn't expect me to change in order to come to Him, but He came down to my level to show me the way to God. He meets us where we are and then when we meet Jesus the true change begins.

Jesus says "Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30)

In John 6:37 Jesus said that the person who comes to Him, He will never drive away.

If it weren't for God coming down to our level, to meet us where we are, we could never have a relationship with Him and when we come to Him He won't turn us away.

Notice in this passage three group of people. They are always where Jesus is and regardless of their motivation He never turns them away. He is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

First of all there are the disciples, the ones just chosen by Him. They are the ones that He will now devote His time and energy in training and teaching. It is not to the exclusion of others who would follow, but His succession plan that we talked about

is in these 12 men. They are the ones who from time to time will bicker over who is the greatest. They are the ones who at times will run interference between Jesus and others trying to see Him. Jesus would tell them to permit the children to come to Him so that He might minister to them as well. They are the ones who from time to time will need to be reprimanded or need Jesus to give them further instruction on something He just said because they didn't get it.

Along with the 12 we read that there were a great number of disciples there as well. These are the ones who were generally committed to following Jesus even though later on many will choose to follow Him no more or excuse themselves from following because of other obligations.

The third group we read about are those who came from the region of Judea, specifically two places: from Jerusalem itself and from the coastal towns of Tyre and Sidon. It's interesting that among all the towns from which people traveled to see Jesus that Luke would single out the towns of Tyre and Sidon. Let's understand that the coastal region, although part of Palestine was predominantly populated by Gentiles. Writing to a largely Gentile audience then, Luke perhaps wanted to remind them that even Gentiles sought out Jesus. He wasn't only a Jewish Savior. He will not cast away any who come to Him. He drew people from all walks of life. They came from all over to seek out Jesus.

Notice that verse 18 gives us two reasons for their coming to Jesus. The first reason is that they came to hear Him. He taught some amazing things they hadn't heard before. It wasn't laced with a bunch of rules and regulations. It didn't tickle their ears. It was fresh and appealing. Of Him it had been said that He taught with authority, no one ever spoke like Him before.

Of Him the disciples would exclaim that He had the words of life. His teaching was convicting and

challenging. What He said cut through to the heart of the matter and left His hearers thinking about what they needed to do.

The second reason people came to Jesus was because He healed those who were afflicted with some illness or injury and He cast out demons from those affected by such possession. These are just some of the many miracles John spoke about that couldn't all be written down because there were just too many to describe. But all these were done to authenticate who He was and to authenticate that His message was true. If He had the power to heal, He had the power to save. Throngs of people came from all over to hear and to be healed.

Matthew 4:23 – “Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.”

Matthew 7:28 – “When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching,”

Matthew 8:1 – “When Jesus came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him.”

Matthew 12:15 – “Aware of this, Jesus withdrew from that place. A large crowd followed him, and he healed all who were ill.”

Matthew 13:54 – “Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. “Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?” they asked.”

Matthew 14:13 – “When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns.”

Matthew 19:2 – “Large crowds followed him, and he healed them there.”

Matthew 20:29 – “As Jesus and his disciples were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed him.”

Matthew 22:16 – “They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. ‘Teacher,’ they said, “we know that you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren’t swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are.”

And here in our passage, they “had come to hear Him and to be healed of their diseases. Those troubled by evil spirits were cured, and the people all tried to touch Him, because power was coming from Him and healing them all.”

The people who came to see Jesus pressed in on Him, eager to be healed of their physical ailments and all were healed of physical diseases and demon possession, but how many were healed that day of spiritual needs?

Matthew 9:36 tells us that when Jesus saw the multitudes He was moved with compassion on them, because they were fatigued, wandering about, lost like a sheep that has no shepherd. Desperate, despairing, fatigued, fearful they came to Jesus and our passage says that as they came, He healed them all. Oh dear people, that we might have the same compassion for the needy as did Jesus. But if all Jesus did was to come down to heal and teach He could have done that from heaven. He didn’t need to become a man, but He came down to our level to become our sacrifice for sin. That He could not do from heaven. So when God became man in the incarnation through His death He could both save and sanctify.

Jesus encountered the crowd on their level to reach them, to teach them. Jesus then exhorted the disciples on their living.

## II. JESUS EXHORTED THE DISCIPLES ON THEIR LIVING – v. 20-26

These are commonly referred to as the Beatitudes. Matthew lists eight while Luke only includes four. Beatitude is a term denoting blessedness or happiness. It is a state or condition of being in God’s favor and grace. If the person applies the principle there is some benefit that comes with it. If not, there is some loss that results. Beatitudes appear in both the Old and New Testament. Psalm 1:1-6

Notice in our text that with each beatitude there is a corresponding woe. They speak of the condition of the heart and are represented as opposites, different from what the world believes will bring happiness. While these were for the 12, they were said for all to hear who were in His presence.

1. The Poor are Happy – v. 20, 24  
 “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God....But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort.”  
 Luke 16:19-31

Let’s understand right away that Jesus is not speaking about being monetarily poor. There is a deeper, spiritual element that is suggested here. Matthew describes it as being poor in spirit. If material poverty were all that is necessary to achieve spiritual wealth, then we would see more poverty stricken people as a means of achieving spirituality. People like Abraham and Job would have missed the proverbial boat, because they were materially wealthy. So just what is Jesus referring to when He says that the poor will be rewarded with God’s kingdom? Simply put, Jesus is saying that it is better to be poor and follow Jesus than to be rich and follow the world. But I think He is also saying that it is possible to be rich in this world so long as you are poor in spirit. Many people think that to be truly happy in this life you must amass a certain level of wealth in order to be comfortable. Jesus wanted to stress that if you want only temporal happiness gained through wealth, by all means store it up and you may be happy in this life and only in

this life, but if you want to be happy in the life to come then there is a matter of the heart that is important to address. You must be poor in spirit. Luke 12:16-21 (Build more barns, eat, drink)

The word poor as it is used in our passage means to cringe or cower in fear. It is a word that refers to those who are utterly destitute and dependent on others for support. They are on the bottom of the social scale. For them begging is all they can do because of how destitute they are, but begging for them is humiliating, humbling. So the word here is not about being materially poor, but poor in spirit, humble, and speaks about a person who acknowledges their spiritual poverty apart from God. They understand that they are spiritually bankrupt. They realize they have no righteousness of their own and are repentant. The promise to them is that in such a spiritual condition because they acknowledge their spiritual depravity and repent they will become part of the kingdom of God. Though they never become materially rich, God has made them spiritually rich. Theirs is the kingdom of God. It is something with both a present and future blessing. It is a guaranteed benefit. The person who is poor in spirit receives grace, mercy, peace, forgiveness, love, security and so much more. It starts with humility.

David is an example of someone who recognized his spiritual poverty “Be gracious to me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness; according to the greatness of Thy compassion blot out my transgressions...For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.” (Psalm 51:1,3)

Poor in spirit equates to humility as regarding one’s spiritual condition.

The person who is not poor (in spirit) will never be given the kingdom of God. They get their comfort, their ease, their plenty now, but it will all be stripped away in the end. Jesus called them foolish for such a belief, such a choice, such a pursuit.

Jesus lists this beatitude first because humility is essential to experience the other graces of God. It is a basic attitude of the heart. We are reminded in I Peter 5:5-6 that God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. You cannot come to Jesus without first being humble, poor in spirit.

Would you describe yourself as someone who is poor in spirit?

2. The Hungry Are Happy – v. 21a, 25a  
 “Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied...But woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry.”

The second mark of blessedness or happiness is hunger, but not just physical hunger because like being poor people can think that if they go on extended periods of fasting, they can become more spiritual. A Buddhist will fast for ascetic purposes. Fasting for them from luxury foods or from food altogether for a period of time is considered to be of merit to them on their spiritual journey.

Jesus is not talking about a lack of food resulting in physical hunger. Matthew’s account states it more clearly: “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.” It is a call to pursue godliness in our living. Later in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus will make this statement: “But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you,” (Matthew 6:33) referring there to material needs like food and clothing.

David described it this way in Psalm 42:1-2 “As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?”  
 “O God, You are my God, earnestly I seek you: my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water.” (Psalm 63:1)

This beatitude receives its joy and fulfillment in the daily pursuit of God and godly character. Its promise is that they will be satisfied. Do you come to His Word hungry and leave satisfied?

One day Jesus stopped to rest alongside the well of a certain Samaritan town. In the heat of the day a woman of sordid reputation arrived to water her flock. Shunned by the other women of the town because of her adultery, she had but one choice to tend to the needs of her flock and that was to come alone during the day. Jesus asked her for a drink of water and then engaged in a discussion about thirsting for living water. Jesus said that the person who drank from the living water He provided would thirst no more.

Only through what Jesus offers can the hungry soul be satisfied. But those who attempt to satisfy their spiritual hunger with other things will in the end go hungry. We will not be satisfied unless we realize that this hunger can only be satisfied through Jesus.

Would you describe yourself as someone who hungers for righteousness?

This beatitude along with the next has future implications as well.

3. The Sad Are Happy – v. 21b, 24b  
 “Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh... Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep.”

Matthew states it this way: “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.”

It is a bit odd, but Jesus had a point to make about true happiness. The type of mourning that Jesus is speaking about has nothing to do with being sad over difficult events that we find ourselves experiencing from time to time. They aren't the things that get us down in the dumps like bombing a test or losing a loved one or getting some bad news from the doctor. Jesus has another type of

mourning in mind. While Jesus is concerned about the difficulties and hardships we encounter, He means here godly sorrow, sorrow that is over sin.

Paul describes it in his second letter to Corinth. “For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation; but the sorrow of the world produces death. For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you.” (II Corinthians 7:10)

Godly sorrow, the kind of sorrow that is rewarded, is a sorrow over sin that leads to repentance. Too often sorrow only comes if we get caught. But true, godly sorrow is grieved over sin and repents of it. I mourn for my own sin which leads to repentance so I won't do it again or I mourn over the sin of others praying that they will repent of it.

Here is part of Daniel's prayer as he mourns for the nation because of its sin.

“We do not make request of You because we are righteous but because of Your great mercy. O Lord, listen! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hear and act! For Your sake, O my God, do not delay, because Your cry and Your people bear Your Name.” (Daniel 9:18b-19)

II Corinthians 7:10 “Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.”

Godly sorrow is God-centered and is sorrowful over sin and brings repentance. Worldly sorrow is self-centered and only focuses on the consequences of sin.

The Psalmist reminds us that weeping will be but for a short time and then joy comes in the morning. (Psalm 30:5)

For those who mourn over sin, the result is that they will laugh again. But those who laugh now will mourn. They are content with their own self-

righteousness and feel there is no reason to mourn over their sin. Jesus describes in the judgment those who will be cast into the place of weeping and gnashing of teeth because they refused to be sorrowful over sin.

The person who is truly sorrowful over sin and repents will in the end receive forgiveness and joy.

Would you describe yourself as someone who mourns over sin?

#### 4. The Persecuted Are Happy – v. 22-23, 26

“Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their fathers treated the prophets... Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets.”

Paul writes that all who will live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. (II Timothy 3:12) John MacArthur writes that “Persecution is one of the surest and most tangible evidences of salvation. Persecution is not incidental to faithful Christian living but is certain evidence of it.”

It doesn't matter what country we live in, if we are a Christian, the world will find out ways to persecute us and we are seeing a greater boldness of that in our country, a country founded on the principles of the Bible and godly living. From businesses being told they have to check their faith at the door to kids being expelled from school for reading their Bible. Greater persecution is coming to our land on account of our faith.

Hostility, animosity, scorn, hatred, insults. Those are just some of the things that can happen to the person who follows Jesus wholeheartedly. Along with false accusations, there will be both physical

and verbal persecution. That's what Jesus was telling His disciples they could expect in the days ahead. If the disciple is experiencing this then it's a pretty good bet that you are living out the first three. If you seek to live for the approval of Jesus, you can expect to be the target of some kind of antagonism. Jesus says to give a shout of praise on the day you are persecuted, because you are being treated just like the true prophets of God in the Old Testament. Your reward awaits you in heaven. The joy and glory of heaven awaits, a place where there will be no tears, sadness, illness, persecution or death.

On the other hand, if you seek to live for the applause of others, you will get that, but in the end you will not be approved by Jesus. In the end of it all there is tranquility for the one who will follow Jesus, but there is trouble for the one who will forsake Jesus. Persecuted or popular – that's the choice.

Jeremiah 5:30-31

II Timothy 4:3

What Jesus teaches about godly living here seems so foreign to our way of thinking, but then He wants us to experience the eternal happiness of rewards in heaven vs. the temporary joy of earth with no hope of eternal reward. Jesus came down to our level to show us and teach us how to live godly.

If we truly desire to be godly and blessed we:

Will be humble

Will hunger after righteousness

Will mourn over sin

Will be persecuted

True spiritual satisfaction only comes through Him.

What kind of a disciple are you: the called, the curious or the casual? Others can tell the difference.