

Luke's Account of Christ's Sermon on the Mount

Luke 6:17-36

*Luke 6:17-26: And He came down with them and stood on a level place with a crowd of His disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear Him and be healed of their diseases, **18** as well as those who were tormented with unclean spirits. And they were healed. **19** And the whole multitude sought to touch Him, for power went out from Him and healed them all. **20** Then He lifted up His eyes toward His disciples, and said: "Blessed are you poor, For yours is the kingdom of God. **21** Blessed are you who hunger now, For you shall be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, For you shall laugh. **22** Blessed are you when men hate you, And when they exclude you, And revile you, and cast out your name as evil, For the Son of Man's sake. **23** Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven, For in like manner 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, For you shall hunger. Woe to you who laugh now, For you shall mourn and weep. **26** Woe to you when all men speak well of you, For so did their fathers to the false prophets.*

Background Notes

In Matthew 5, 6, and 7, we have our Lord's well-known Sermon on the Mount. It's called the Sermon on the Mount because Matthew 5:1 says "And seeing the multitudes He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated, His disciples came to Him, and He opened His mouth and talked to them..." And the sermon follows. From the context, we know that the mountain was in the Galilee area, but the specific mountain is not identified. A "traditional" Mount of Beatitudes is located on the northwest side of the Sea of Galilee, but don't know if this site is authentic.

In Luke 6, beginning with verse 17, we have what many Christians believe is Luke's abbreviated account of the Lord's Sermon on the Mount. However, because of some significant differences, many believe that it is a different sermon, possibly given in a different location. Obviously the Lord would have preached more than one message about the Kingdom, and these sermons would have had similar content, and even the same illustrations. The most significant difference in Luke 6 compared to Matthew's account is that verse 17 here says that this sermon was given on a level place, and does not mention a mountain. However, this "level place" might have been a plateau on the mountain, and maybe the Lord moved further up the mountain when He addressed the disciples. We don't know for sure.

In reference to the content of the sermon itself, the most significant difference is that the account in Luke 6 has blessings and woes, whereas Matthew's account has only blessings. This is a good indication that these two separate sermons were given on two different occasions. They have some similar content, which is not at all unlikely.

Doctrinal Points

1. Kingdom living involves blessings and woes.

In this sermon, four blessings are given, and four woes are given (v20-26). Notice that the four blessings and four woes are parallel in the order in which they are given. Blessed are you who are poor, (v20), woe to you who are rich, (v24); blessed are you who hunger now (v21), woe to you who are well fed now (v25); blessed are you who weep now (v21), woe to you who laugh now (v25); blessed are you when men hate you (v22), woe to you when all men speak well of you (v26).

Notice that the sermon is addressed to the disciples specifically (v20), not the multitude in general, even though some in the multitude were listening. It was not given as a gospel message then, and it is not a gospel message today. It was given to those who were already following Jesus, and who were already preparing for the Kingdom that the Lord announced was at hand. As an application today, this sermon is not a gospel message to the unsaved. It is a message to believers about righteous living and lifestyle.

Notice, by the way, that to be “poor” in verse 20 is not just to be poor in spirit as in Matthew 5:3, because “poor” here is definitely contrasted with “rich” in verse 24.

What about the “woes”? How do they apply? In context, many of the followers of Jesus then (and today) were not fully committed. They loved the Lord, and they believed that He was the Messiah, and they followed Him - but they were not *fully* committed. Evidently they wanted to keep their wealth, and still have the praise of the world, and still live the life of pleasure and laughter. The Lord said that these halfway disciples would suffer loss when the Kingdom is set up on earth. In context, this is not speaking of hell for the unbeliever, but loss for the believer when the Kingdom is set up.

This is just as true today because the earthly Kingdom (that the Lord announced was at hand) has not yet been set up here on this earth. The reason why it has been delayed is that the Lord and His Kingdom were rejected at that time. It is yet to be set up on this earth. However, the earthly Kingdom of our Lord Jesus *will* be set up when the Lord returns, and all believers will be part of that Kingdom. The Lord was not speaking about the Church here, but about the future earthly

Kingdom of our Lord when Christ returns. Fully committed Christians who have suffered for the King are blessed now, and they will be rewarded then. Halfway disciples who have just lived the good life for the moment have their reward now, and will suffer loss of reward then.

Let's ask ourselves - are we living with the Kingdom in mind? Kingdom living involves blessings and woes.

2. Kingdom living demands love and mercy.

*Luke 6:27-36: "But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, **28** bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. **29** To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either. **30** Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back. **31** And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise. **32** "But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. **33** And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. **34** And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. **35** But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. **36** Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.*

The commands to love your enemies, and turn the other cheek, and give to those who take from you - these commands were not given to nations as national defense policy, and they were not given at the expense of other biblical principles such as bringing law-breakers to justice. These are the moral qualities that should characterize those who have chosen to follow Jesus, the rejected King, and are willing to suffer for His sake as they wait for His return. Then His Kingdom will fully be established on this earth.

The love that is mentioned in these verses is not romantic love or the natural love that a mother has for a child. It is a kind of love that does not come naturally. This is the *agape* type of love that is the mark of the Christian. It is the denial of self in the interest of another person. It is only this God-given kind of love that enables a believer to fulfill the directives that we just read.

The love and mercy demanded here go the extra mile, and go beyond what is expected. As the Lord Jesus said, even unbelievers love and share and lend in their own circles, but Christians are called to higher standards. Kingdom living demands love and mercy.

Practical Application

1. Don't judge motives!

Verse 37: "*Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.*" Is this statement in contradiction with other Scriptures that indicate that we **are** to judge? Should governments not judge law-breakers, or church leaders judge immorality, or parents judge and discipline children? No, this is not a contradiction. We are to judge **behavior**, but we are **not** to judge **motives**. Only God can see the heart and

judge motives. If we start judging people's motives, we're bound to wrongly condemn and be unforgiving. So don't judge motives.

2. Don't give grudgingly!

Verse 38: *"Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."* The picture here is of a farmer using the front of his garment as a "bowl," both to sow the seed and then reap the grain. You don't reap much grain if you don't sow much seed, but if you sow generously, you will reap so much your garment can't hold it all!

It's the same in matters of the Kingdom. We determine the amount of kingdom return by this standard: *"for the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."* Let me ask you, how much are you giving of your time and your abilities and your money? That amount will determine your reward and your role in our Lord's future Kingdom here on this earth. So don't give grudgingly!

3. Don't get too popular!

Verse 26: *"Woe to you when all men speak well of you."* This certainly has an application for preachers today. A minister of God's Word today should be very alarmed if everyone loves his preaching and teaching, because it may mean he's not preaching and teaching the **whole** Word of God. It may mean that he's only preaching and teaching the parts that people want to hear. In fact, the Lord mentioned that it was the *false* prophets who were popular.

Notice, however – in verse 26, the Lord was not just addressing preachers and teachers - He was speaking to all believers. Something is wrong if we are too popular in this world. The Lord indicated in John 15:18 that the world will hate believers as it hated Him. 1 John 3:13 says that we should not be surprised in the world hates us. So, if we believers are too popular, it may mean that we're watering down the truth, both in what we say and how we live. It may mean that we've accepted the world system of values and attitudes! So - don't get too popular.