



Luke 6:21

21 Blessed are you who hunger now,
for you will be satisfied.
Blessed are you who weep now,
for you will laugh.

Reflection

Human nature has not changed a great deal down throughout the centuries. In the ancient world, those who were rich, were looked upon with envy as those who'd been blessed by the gods. Material wealth

held great honour and with it the promise of security, safety, happiness, well-being and the very best life had to offer. And so people in the first century sought wealth and prosperity, much as we do today. The passing parade and catch-cry of the culture of ancient and modern life tells us time and time again,

‘Blessed are the rich, for they have it all, and they have it now. Theirs is the kingdom of the world.’

And the deepest desires of our own hearts confirm the felt-truth of these sentiments. Our sinful natures want us to be kings, sitting at the centre of our own kingdoms in this world, drawing comfort, security, meaning and happiness from the status and wealth that we’ve attained. But Jesus

is the only rightful king. And his message to his those who would truly follow him is radically different, because the kingdom of God is radically counter-cultural when compared to the kingdom of this world.

Jesus begins training his followers in earnest with his address in Luke 6 that has come to be known as his ‘Sermon on the Level Place’, a likely precursor to his later and fuller Sermon on the Mount. Jesus begins shockingly,

‘Blessed are you who are poor,
for yours is the kingdom of God.

And he continues in today’s passage in similar vein.

Blessed are you who hunger now,

for you will be satisfied.
Blessed are you who weep now,
for you will laugh.

Robert Louis Stevenson once wrote in his diary with somewhat of a surprised air, 'I've been to church today and am not depressed.' And with preaching like this who came blame him! Poverty, hunger and weeping in the place of wealth, satisfied appetites and laughter. What is going on here? Matthew's sermon on the mount spiritualizes these references – blessed are the spiritually poor, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness – but Luke leaves poverty, hunger and tears unqualified. How can it be said that God is blessing or will bless those who are poor, hungry and in mourning? Surely the opposite is self-evidently true?

Perhaps the answers lies in part in the way that struggling to make ends meet, being uncertain of where your next meal is coming from, and mourning sin's effects in our world strips back our self-reliance and reminds us that in everything we are dependant on the mercy of God. Wealth and feasting and laughter with friends are blessings from God but so often he is absent from our hearts in moments like these. But those relying day to day on his provision, those in prayer for their next meal, those hurting and asking God, 'Why has this happened to me?' will experience, Jesus promises, God's blessing. They will be satisfied, they will laugh with joy, they will receive his blessing when they fully grasp through these moments of trial the depth of God's love and the certainty of the far

better future that he has in store for them.

There is a certain seriousness that is appropriate in the life of a Christian. Proverbs 17:22 says that 'A cheerful heart is good medicine' and ours is a joy and peace that transcends all understanding (Phil 4:7). There is a lightness and a peace in Christians that becomes evident as the truth of the gospel sinks in and God's Spirit begins to shape our lives. But equally there is a seriousness. We do not laugh lightly at the things our world laughs at. Life does not consist of eating and drinking because tomorrow we die. Tomorrow we are judged, and those who die outside of Christ will go into eternal darkness. This is cause for weeping.

Blessed are you who weep now,

We are called to weep over lost souls, over people who will go to eternal darkness without Christ. We are to weep over the world's misery, over the injustice that falls on so many helpless people, over the unfairness that victimizes the weak, over child abuse, over battered women, over adultery, over divorce, over betrayals, over mental illness and depression, over rejection, over loneliness, over those who laugh now but who, unless they turn to Christ, will suffer God's condemnation forever.¹

One day we will laugh when Jesus fully and finally sets our world right again, when Jesus wipes every tear from every eye and there is no more death, mourning, crying or pain because the old order

1 . Kent Hughes, Luke: That You May Know the Truth (Preaching the word; Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2015), 226.

of things has passed away. But for now,

‘Blessed are you who are poor,
for yours is the kingdom of God.

Blessed are you who hunger now,
for you will be satisfied.

Blessed are you who weep now,
for you will laugh.

Blessed are those who live day to day in utter reliance on the grace of God. Blessed are those who aren't comfortably ensconced in the superficial, temporary blessings of our world but are yearning for deeper riches, greater satisfaction, and a joy that will last into all eternity.

Think & Pray

Pray that you and I both wouldn't settle

for anything less. May we recognise both our poverty in ourselves and our richness in Jesus Christ. May we hunger and thirst for his righteousness and not sate ourselves with the trivial. May we weep at what God weeps at when he looks down on our world. And do our utmost to take his blessings to those who are suffering and in pain. And may we long for the coming of the new heavens and the new earth when we will know eternal joy and laughter in him.

But for this day that the Lord has given us, why not turn your mind to consider the misery of our world? Think of the injustice that falls on so many helpless people, the unfairness that victimizes the weak, the poor and the oppressed. Consider soberly the global trade in human trafficking

and how many women and children are abused by men, often from within their own household. Consider the scourge of mental illness, anxiety and depression at near epidemic levels; adultery, divorce, rejection, loneliness, young men and women with the world seemingly at their feet taking their own lives. Look on our world with God's eyes this morning, mourn with him at sin's effects and pray for our world today. Pray that the only solution to the misery and mess that surrounds us – the gospel of Jesus Christ – would be both the light of your life and the gift of your life to those living in the darkness that so often characterizes our world. May we be God's blessing to the poor, the hungry and those who weep. May their grief be turned to joy when they come to him.