

Daily Discipleship

Sixth Sunday after Epiphany (C) – Luke 6:17-26

Imperatives of Discipleship – Be Blessed!

Focus Question: *Knowing you are blessed by God today, how might you bless others?*

word of life

“Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.” Luke 6:20-21 (NRSV)

Read Luke 6:17-26

The beatitudes found in the Sermon of the Mount in Matthew 5:1-11 are probably more familiar than Luke’s shorter version. Take a moment to review Matthew 5:1-11.

1. *How many beatitudes are listed in Matthew and in Luke?*
2. *Compare and contrast the beatitudes in Matthew and Luke.*

In Luke, Jesus had just spent the night on a mountain in prayer before calling the twelve disciples. He came down the mountain with the twelve only to be met with a great multitude of people from all over –Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor. They came because they needed to be healed, and Jesus did just that. He healed all of them. And then Jesus taught them.

3. *In what ways does Jesus heal?*
4. *How might the beatitudes heal a person?*

Jesus blesses those in the crowd who are poor, hungry, and weeping as well as those who are hated because of a connection to himself.

5. *What surprises you about these blessings?*

For each of the blessings, there is a parallel in the woes. Blessed are the poor, woe are the rich; blessed are the hungry, woe are those who are full; blessed are those who weep, woe to those who laugh; and blessed are those followers when they are persecuted, woe to those when all speak well. These words are not some distant blessings and woes, but note the emphasis on *now!* Yet anyone who has been poor, hungry, or grieving might be hard pressed to identify the blessing in those experiences. They ache for the presence of blessing.

6. *Are these blessings and woes for today or some distant future? Why?*
7. *Why didn’t Jesus soften these a bit?*
8. *What makes these beatitudes and woes so difficult for us to read in this century?*

Take time to read Deuteronomy 11:26-28. Note the clear delineation between a blessing and a curse. There is no middle ground. Jesus builds on this tradition and offers God’s words of blessings and woes. These are not suggestions, but they become a present reality and a future hope as Jesus proclaims it.

This favoring of the poor was introduced in Luke’s Gospel in Mary’s song of the Magnificat found in Luke 1:46-56. It is a theme throughout Luke’s Gospel.

9. *What does it mean to be blessed?*
10. *What does it mean to be cursed?*

word *among us*

It took a while for the older man to make a final decision on his purchase. At the cash register, the clerk handed the change to the man and offered him these words, “Be blessed!” The man simply nodded his head and slowly walked away. There was no “Goodbye!” or “Have a nice day!”

“Be blessed!” seems to be catching on as people say their farewells to each other. For some people, it gives them something new to think about as they walk away.

1. *Have you ever heard someone bless you in this manner? How did it feel?*
2. *What might those words mean to someone lonely or in despair?*

The beatitudes in Luke are words of paradox which seem to go against our common experiences of comfort and blessing. They echo themes of comfort and blessing, yet they challenge people and appear to exclude some from being blessed. Jesus apparently favors the poor, hungry and sad. How can this be? It sounds unfair to those with financial means or those who enjoy themselves. Also, Jesus appears critical to those who speak well of a person. Plus it is unclear if he means this blessing is for today or the future.

3. *How is someone who is poor, hungry, mourning, or persecuted blessed today?*
4. *How might that person be blessed in the future?*
5. *Is Jesus serious about the woes? How so?*

William K. McElvaney in his book, Good news is bad news is good news. . . writes “As I get in touch with my own years, I realize that it took me a long time to come to one of the major discoveries of my life: namely, *that God loves me enough to disturb me. . .* for me the gospel has been like a Roto-Rooter, churning through my resistances and turning my presuppositions and priorities upside down.” He describes this as “blessed disturbance” and compares it to the words of the song “Blessed Assurance.”

6. *How has God ever disturbed you out of a comfort level?*
7. *How does God offer you comfort and assurance?*
8. *How does God bless us in the process of disturbing us?*

Blessings come in all different shapes and sizes. Sometimes as we experience tragedy, illness, or difficulty, we learn to count our blessings differently. A kind word or a cup of coffee feels like heaven. Those times when we are stripped bare compel us to no longer take for granted those around us. At least for a while, we savor the moment. The day we are living becomes the gift, a treasure granted to us by God. On this day, we are blessed because God is the one who sustains us by sending the Holy Spirit to comfort us and give us hope. The presence of Christ is felt as the body of Christ extends acts of kindness and love. We are blessed *now*.

9. *Ponder a difficult time when God has blessed you.*
10. *Take a moment to give thanks for God’s blessings.*

Prayer

Gracious God, thank you blessing our lives. Continue to disturb us when we become complacent. Amen

Dig Deeper

Matthew 5:1-11

last word

This week, end each of your conversations with the words, “Be Blessed!”



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