

Sermon for the Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany of Our Lord

Luke 6:17-26

Blessed By Jesus

Grace, peace, and mercy from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our gospel for this day begins with Jesus coming down from a mountain where He had been praying all night to a level place with a great crowd of disciples. This is not a throw away phrase. It has purpose. It tells us Jesus, the Son of God, who is begotten from God the Father Almighty, maker of Heaven and Earth, comes down to the people, to reside with them. Jesus, Christ the King comes down from heaven to be with us. We have a King whom we worship goes out among the people to minister to them by teaching, healing, and allowing himself to be touched by those who desire wellness and healing. "And all in the crowd were trying to touch Him, for power come out of Him and healed all of them." Jesus does this like no other king. This is very incarnational ministry that is happening here in this gospel for the day.

He comes down to the people, with a great crowd of his disciples. These people whom Luke calls disciples have been following Jesus. The twelve whom Luke calls Apostles are in this group too. All the people again are hungry for the Word of God just like we heard in last week's gospel. Like today, here at Bethany we disciples come to hear the Word of God, to have our faith nourished by this Word, be healed by His forgiveness, and to receive hope to live our lives this week, to be the arms, legs, and voice of Jesus to others. And go assured that Jesus goes with us this everywhere we go.

Disciples also live in a way that would please Jesus, not because we hope that He would bless us, because He has already blessed us. This discipleship life is lived in gratitude for what God has done for us through Jesus. This is what our worship is all about, a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to God.

Then Jesus looked up at His disciples. Now we really want to listen to what Jesus has to say. "Blessed are you." These are statements fact in the present, right now. Nothing about the future in these blessings. Nothing conditional either. "If I am good, He will bless me." Jesus says to us, "Blessed are you."

Jesus says, "Blessed are you poor, you who are hungry now, you who weep, and when people hate you and revile you, exclude you and defame you on account of the Son of Man."

What does it mean to be blessed by Jesus? Is it going to make rich, or well fed, or happy, or popular and accepted by others? This is the way the world sees blessings. Wealthy, well fed, happy all the time, popular and accepted. I confess this is how I count my blessings.

So, Jesus is calling us see our blessing through the eyes of the Kingdom of God. To be blessed by Jesus means to be called by the gospel and have His name written all over your life. That your

name is brought before His Father and Jesus saying, here is one you sent me to die for, so that we will live in the eternal presence of God after we are called from this earth.

To be blessed by Jesus means that He is working everything that happens to you for your good while you are still in this world according to His purpose for you. To preserve you in the one true faith until you depart this earth and enter into His eternal peace. To be blessed by Jesus means He with you in your trials and afflictions and all will be made right in the end when He comes to judge the quick and the dead. The Blessing of our Lord have nothing to do with circumstances of life.

Disciples believe this even when circumstance tell us the opposite. Being a disciple means it could cost us some of those blessing we love to count, riches, well fed, constant happiness, and acceptance. It causes one to lose a place on the team because he or she is in catechism classes at the same time the coach has called a mandatory practice. Or having others laugh at you because you refuse to take part in their sinful escapades. That is the way it was in the early church. Counting our blessing according to the worldly ways is what we are always tempted to do.

Then Jesus continues: "But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. 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, Woe to you when people speak well of you, for that is what their descendants did to the false prophets."

If truth be known these blessings and woes are spoken to His disciples too. We too heard them all today, both the good and the bad. That is not the way it is with God. We listen to the Word of God, and with kingdom eyes God turns things upside down.

How many times have we forsaken the call to discipleship for the sake of money? Or walked in the counsel of the wicked for some forbidden food instead of the Word of God? Or set aside discipleship for the sake acceptance and popularity of the wrong crowd? How easily the world lures us into the things that take us away from God.

The point is this. We do not need to look at our outward circumstance to confirm that Jesus blesses us. In other words, blessed is the one whose faith is not in material things, or in one's good works, or what you do or do not do, or what happens or what does not happen to Him. You are blessed because your faith is based on the Word of God and in the One who declares you Blessed Jesus Christ.

Blessed is the one who puts their faith and trust in what happened to Jesus God's Son.

Jesus is the one who was rich but became poor for our sake so that in His poverty we might become rich in His life.

Jesus is the one who hungered so that we might know that man does not live by bread alone but by every word that come from the mouth of God.

Jesus is the one who was despised and rejected by man so that we could be accepted and have our relationship with God the Father restored. On the cross Jesus became cursed for you and me. Then on the third day Jesus rose from the dead to set us free from our captivity to sin and blesses us with the new life of being called His disciples.

The gift unwrapped for us today is Jesus the one who blesses us.

So, Blessed are you poor, with nothing but to call your own except Jesus, for yours is the kingdom of God.

Blessed are you who are hungry now, for the Word of God feeds us and it has the authority to do what it says it will do and will satisfy you.

Blessed are you who weep now because of the times you gave into wicked ways and the temptations of the world, for you will laugh because the devil and all His fallen angels will be defeated once and for all by our Lord.

Blessed are you who when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son Man. That is because they Jesus see alive in you. For you are bearing witness to the world that you are a follower of Jesus. And you can count that to the highest honor and rejoice. It was a true for those who came before us, it true for you today, and it your blessed hope all the way to when God calls you into your heaven home.

Now may the peace of God that passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.