

Sunday 19th June 2022

Values redefined.

Luke 6:20-26



Last week we started looking at the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount as told in the Gospel of Matthew. The word sermon does not mean the same as it does today. Jesus didn't stand up at a pulpit after having spent days quietly writing His sermon in the library. As a Rabbi would, He sat down and the sermon could well be a compilation of various shorter teachings.

I wonder if you have read the differing version in the Gospel of Luke? The 8 beatitudes in Matthew seem to be less challenging and easier to digest. Because of this the impact can be reduced in our lives. So I thought we should take a look at the beatitudes as told in the Gospel of Luke. Luke also has 8 but they are divided up into 4 beatitudes which deal with the inward, spiritual condition and 4 corresponding woes dealing with the outward condition.

Luke's gospel calls it the Sermon on the Plain as Jesus and His disciples had met higher on the mountain but had come down lower to where the crowd were gathered. The sermon on the plain is shorter, tougher and punchier.

Let's read this together. Luke 6:20-26.

*Looking at his disciples, He said: "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 you when people 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 ancestors treated the prophets.

But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort.

Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry.

Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep.

Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you, for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets.

In the ancient tradition those who were rich were seen as people who were favoured by God – those who were poor were considered unworthy. Imagine the reaction of the crowds when Jesus' words turned it all upside down. But He was just reasserting God's proclamations in the Old Testament of His concern for the poor and needy.

Luke's beatitudes are intense, raw, and inescapable. What happens to you when you look into them – do you see parts of yourself?

There are two groups of people that Jesus speaks to. Those who are poor, hungry, and sad – viewed in the ancient world as outsiders, everyone treats them badly. They would never think of themselves as lucky – yet Jesus says—**you are blessed!**

Then there are those who have money and food and many benefits. They consider themselves the popular ones, they are happy and laugh and everyone likes them because they're easy to get along with. Jesus says – **you are not blessed!**

Which sort of person are you hoping to be?

Jesus looks at the rich and says, "I feel sorry for you guys." This set of beatitudes says that in Jesus' eyes, the reality of the world is the opposite of everything the hearers and we have ever known.

Jesus takes all our assumptions about the world, and politely blows them to pieces. These 4 troubles or woes should shake us up and challenge us to assess who we really are. They should bother us as we read them. They are so unrelenting and demanding. It's the poor that are blessed, not those who consider themselves well liked and well off.

Now we could tone them down a bit to take the sting out, or let these words diagnose us? What if we could let them shape us into the kind of people that Jesus admires? What if we could let them really challenge our ideas of what the good life is really all about and provoke us into letting Jesus teach us about His way of life, His vision of life.

As you look in the mirror this week why not take a few moments and ask yourself a few questions?

"Who am I becoming?" What kinds of things characterize me both inside and out and what dominates your life?

"Who gets to decide who I am becoming?" If I claim to be a disciple of Jesus am I really letting Him determine the vision for my life.

"What about everybody else?" These are challenging the way IU look at others. It is not my ideas of value that really matter - it's what Jesus values that really matters. After all, He is the Master and we are His students who have a lot to learn.