

So, we're up to chapter 6 of the Gospel of Luke. And it's Luke's version of what's known as the Sermon on the Mount. The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5,6, &7) and it is (without a doubt) the greatest sermon ever preached.

Luke's version is somewhat shorter, and sometimes it's known as the Sermon on the Plain. And the reason for that is because in Luke, Jesus comes down, and He finds a patch of level ground from which to teach.

Now, it could be a level patch on the side of a hill, or it might be a completely different teaching opportunity – at a completely different place; at a completely different time, but where Jesus delivered a similar message. The thing is, it doesn't matter. Some folk who do not want to believe might look for slight differences between the Gospels. But those who want to hear and receive and act on the teaching of Jesus, will find wonderful, wonderful teaching in both Matthew and Luke. And because there **are** slight differences, we will be challenged in different ways, but never does one teaching conflict with the other.

So, be encouraged. Read; study; be challenged by the Matthew's Sermon on the mount. And likewise, over the next few weeks, we're going to read; study; and be challenged by Luke 6.

Anyway, as Jesus begins this teaching, there are 3 groups of people, listening: There were disciples; apostles; a lot of other people.

Firstly, there was a large crowd of disciples. These were the ones who would come along to hear Jesus' teaching, but they were more than that – they were His followers.

And from these disciples/followers of Jesus, He appointed 12 of them to be Apostles. Now, we don't have Apostles today. Within the Christian church, there **are** those who have Apostle-like gifts – Apostles are ones who are sent. And so we might recognise that a missionary has an apostle-like gift, because they take the Gospel to a land where the Gospel has never been before – They are 'sent ones' (like the Apostles were).

But within the early church, the Apostles held a position of great authority. **Most** of them walked with Jesus and followed Jesus for the whole of His ministry. Paul is probably the exception – Paul describes himself, he's an abortion of an apostle (as one untimely born) – he's the least of the apostles. But **all** of the apostles encountered the resurrected Jesus, and could testify (as eye witnesses) to His resurrection.

And within the church, the Apostles had a very important responsibility. And we can see that, even in the way that Jesus selected them – He prayed all night before He chose them. The Apostles were the ones who would have the authority to nail down/define what the Gospel is. And the teaching of the Apostles, is now recorded in the New Testament.

Now to me, the outstanding thing is, those Jesus selected as His Apostles, were not at all, outstanding. They weren't:

- highly educated;
- famous;

- wealthy;

They were just ordinary, run-of-the-mill sorts of blokes. There was 2 sets of brothers (all fishermen); a zealot (freedom-fighter/terrorist); there was a tax collector; a father & son; and Jesus even chose Judas Iscariot, who would become a traitor.

And that's the thing: When the Lord calls people to follow Him, He calls everyone. And when he calls followers to leadership, and into specific ministries, He doesn't call the gifted – He gifts the called. And **we** experience that, don't we, and that's why I like being part of a small church. In a large church, so often we step back and let the professionals do the ministry. But the thing is, Jesus calls every one of us to be involved in ministry.

And guess what – in the church (as Jesus intended it to be), we're not overflowing with professionals – He calls ordinary men and women to serve Him with their whole hearts. And when the Lord calls, we say “**Yes** Lord. I know I can't do it, but I'll give it a go because I know **You** will strengthen me and **You** will enable me to do whatever it is that You call me to do...” And as we step up, by His Holy Spirit, **God** does His work through us... And isn't that wonderful – isn't that a most satisfying thing – **not** to do it ourselves, but for God to do His work through us.

Alright, so there's Disciples – those who are following Jesus; There are Apostles – those Whom He had called to leadership (in what **will** become a specific function); And the **third** group was a great number of people, from all over the place, and these folk are almost like spectators.

They were there for the spectacle – they were there for the healings. Some were troubled by unclean spirits, and Jesus would cure these too. And all the crowd wanted to touch Jesus because He had the power to heal... And Jesus did heal – He healed them all, but they had no actual relationship with Jesus.... They wanted to touch Him; they wanted to be healed, but they weren't followers – they weren't disciples – they're what I call "spectators".

And within the church today, this is what we continue see – There are:

- some who are committed followers of Jesus;
- those who are active in leadership;
- there are those who are spectators – they've come along for a bit of a look.

Which one are you? Are you a committed follower of Jesus? Or are you merely a spectator? And if you **are** a committed follower of Jesus, is Jesus calling You to step up and serve Him at a deeper level???

For some of us, that's going to be enough for us to think on. But as we get into this, we're going to see there's a very good reason, to go beyond being a spectator.

Anyway, Luke says very little about the healings, apart from the fact that it happened. What is **most** important, and what Luke most wants us to focus on, is what Jesus taught. And Jesus began with what we call "The Beatitudes", or as Billy Graham referred to them, "The Beautiful Attitudes"...

When Paul and Silas preached the Good News of Jesus in Thessalonica, people were responding to the Gospel, and the Jews were a bit jealous about that, and so they stirred up a rabble,,,, And they said “**These men have turned the world upside down**, and now they’ve come here too....”ⁱ”

And you know what? They were absolutely right. The Gospel turns everything on its head. From the world’s perspective, blessings and woes are inverted. But from God’s perspective, everything is getting turned the right way up. And the reasons for this is the words “now” and “shall be”. The world focuses on what we experience “now”. Disciples of Jesus focus on eternity – “what shall be”.

So, let’s see how that plays out in the beatitudes..

Jesus looks at His disciples (not the spectators – His disciples). And He says: “Blessed are **you**” 4 times. What does it mean to be blessed?

In the Greek, this word “blessed” means:

- “how fortunate you are”;
- “how happy you are”;
- “how good it is for **you**”
- – blessed...

How fortunate you are, **you who are poor...**

Now, hang on a minute, don't the poor be pitied??? And many of us might think of ourselves as "poor" – If so, we don't know what poverty is... The poor here, is referring to those who are completely destitute – they have nothing – they are so poor they have to beg...

And Jesus is saying, "Oh, how fortunate **you** are, you who are living in abject poverty..." **Why???** I'll **tell** you the reason why – not because they're poor, but because He's talking to **disciples** – because He's talking to committed followers of Jesus. You see, it's not poverty that is the blessing – The **Kingdom of God** is the blessing.

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

We're talking about the joy of those who share in salvation. They're blessed/happy, because of what is promised to them.

You might be poor now, but you are happy in your poverty because you're looking to the future – you're looking to eternity, and yours is the Kingdom of God.

And the same goes for the hungry.

- "how fortunate you are";
- "how happy you are";
- "how good it is for **you**"

who are hungry now

You might have nothing in the cupboard to eat, and your children are crying because they're hungry. Or you might be spiritually hungry and craving the Word of God...

But how good it is to be you, because your human need, is going to be met with divine salvation. ²¹ **"Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied.**

The third blessing:

"Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.

Disciples of Jesus have an underlying joy. And so when we:

- mourn our loved ones who have died;
- encounter tragedy;
- fall on hard times;
- that which is evil, seems to gain the upper hand and we suffer;

yes, we will be filled with sorrow, and we do weep... But we **will** laugh. Why? Because we look beyond this life, to the great hope that we have in Christ Jesus...

Yes, we will weep now. But how happy we are through that sorrow, because we are sure of the immense joy when Jesus returns.

Verse 22

²² **"Blessed**

- "how fortunate you are";
- "how happy you are";
- "how good it is for **you**"

when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man!

20 or 30 years ago, this would've been unthinkable. But now in the eyes of the media (particularly), Christians and the Christian church are being more and more depicted as the baddies. Of course not all Christians are bad – just the ones who

- still believe the Bible; and
- are committed to truth; and
- are willing to stand against the evil that activists and weak politicians are engineering into our society...

It's begun, and it's going to get worse. Christians are hated. Why? Because we will not be convinced by the world's version of morality. **Jesus** is our Lord. And **God's** word is truth. And nothing can change that.

Christians are being excluded.

- Israel Folau may well be a very good footy player, but he need not apply. Why? Because he dares to quote the bible and give some examples of sinners who need to repent.
- The ACT government has just put in legislation to take over the hospital that the Roman Catholic church have been running. Why? Probably because those pesky Christians are committed to saving life, and because they won't kill off unborn babies or old sick people.
- The Victorian Liberal party have just expelled Moira Deeming, a Christian who was willing to stand up and speak against the whole transgender bandwagon... Apparently she had the hide to say that men are not

women just because they want to be.

- Andrew Thornburn was cancelled as the CEO of Essendon (pretty-much within a day) because he was connected with a Christian church who hold godly views on marriage and sexuality...

Christians are being excluded/cancelled, and we'll see more and more of this.

Christians may be excluded in:

- your work place;
- your sporting club;
- from leadership...

And Christians are being reviled. That means “disgraced/shamed/abused/mocked” – they will raise a complaint against you, simply because you love Jesus and you stand firm in Him.

And they **spurn your name as evil** – they will despise us and call us “evil”,,, why? **on account of the Son of Man!**

Who'd have thought that Christians would be the targets and that Christians would be the ones who are accused of being hateful. In many ways, for a Christian to preach repentance from sin, is now **officially** a “hate crime”.

And I've been accused of that...

Ahh, but V²² **“Blessed**

- “how fortunate you are”;
- “how happy you are”;
- “how good it is to be **you**”

when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man!

²³ Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.

The Godless have **always** had it in for the Godly (not a new thing). The Godly have often suffered throughout history. And the Godly **will** suffer today. But that's OK. In fact, it's more than OK. We rejoice/dance with joy, because there's a heavenly reward for committed followers of Jesus, who continue to walk the unpopular road.

And we continue to proclaim the Gospel, because, although some will hate us for doing that, and call us hateful for giving the message of forgiveness through the repentance of sins,,, some others will hear the message and heed the message, and they too will become disciples of Jesus and dance for their reward will be great in Heaven too.

You see, when the prophets of old brought the Word of God to what were supposed to be God's people, **they** were rejected; **they** were hated; **they** were ridiculed; **they** were ignored... But the reward for God's faithful, is great...

Righto, so at this point, Jesus turns from "blessing" to "woe", and He gives 4 woes.

Now, “Woe” is an expression of grief/despair. It can be an expression of sympathetic sorrow – “Oh, I’m so sorry for you”.

And in the context it’s being used here, it is pity for those who stand under divine judgment.

So, **is** the woe for **un**believers, or for disciples? Well, it’s **definitely** for unbelievers, but the way it’s written, Jesus is continuing to address His disciples. And so, for disciples of Jesus, these woes function as a warning, to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, and to **not** turn to things of the world.

The first woe is for the rich.

Oh, you’re rich... Ow, that’s no good. I’m so sorry to hear that... **for you have received your consolation.**

You see, Jesus is speaking to people who are in grave spiritual danger. The rich can only be rich by using their wealth to purchase their own comfort and their own security, rather than meeting the needs of the poor. And often the rich find so much satisfaction in their wealth that they see no need to secure for themselves, treasure in heaven.

What would Jesus say to the prosperity preachers of today??? Their message is God wants to bless you – God wants to make you rich... That is an outright lie. Jesus says, **woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.**

You’ve had your good things.

It'll be about a year until we get there, but in Luke 18, Jesus tells a rich man how to have treasure in heaven – Sell what you have and distribute it to the poor...

2nd woe.

25 "Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry.

You've got plenty to eat – actually you're well fed / over fed... Oh, how unfortunate for you...

Jesus is talking to me here. I obviously eat more than I need. I've been blessed with a wife who's a good cook. And if you know my parents, you know I've got the genetics to make good use of whatever food I eat..

The woe is to have plenty to eat and gobble it all up, while others starve.

When Jesus spoke these blessings **and** these woes, it wasn't entirely a new kind of teaching. The Lord had spoken similar words earlier, through the Prophet Isaiah.

in Chapter 65 of Isaiah,
God pronounces a blessing for His people who seek Him.
And He says:

Isaiah 65:(ESV)

¹¹ But you who forsake the LORD,
who forget my holy mountain,
who set a table for Fortune

and fill cups of mixed wine for Destiny,

¹² I will destine you to the sword,

and all of you shall bow down to the slaughter,

(this is an image of judgment isn't it.

Why are they judged?)

because, when I called, you did not answer;

when I spoke, you did not listen,

but you did what was evil in my eyes

and chose what I did not delight in."

¹³ Therefore thus says the Lord GOD:

"Behold, my **servants** shall eat,

but you shall be hungry;

(Why were they hungry?

Because they rejected God

and did evil)

behold, my **servants** shall **drink**,

but you shall be thirsty;

behold, my servants shall **rejoice**,

but you shall be put to shame;

¹⁴ behold, my **servants** shall sing for gladness of
heart,

but you shall cry out for pain of heart

and shall wail for breaking of spirit.

And then he talks about how those who forsake God will be judged, But then the Servants of God will be given a new name. It sounds a lot like the return of Jesus in the Book of the Revelation, doesn't it... And that's exactly what it's about, because then in V17:

17 "For behold, I create new heavens
and a new earth,
and the former things shall not be remembered
or come into mind.

18 But be glad and rejoice forever
in that which I create;
for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy,
and her people to be a gladness.

19 I will rejoice in Jerusalem
and be glad in my people;
no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping
and the cry of distress.

You see, when we look back to the Old Testament and Isaiah, we realise what the woe is about – the Day of Judgment... It's about those who reject the Lord and reject the ways of the Lord. And the blessing is for those who follow/listen/obey the Lord.

And Disciples of Jesus who are able, give food to those who have nothing to eat.

3rd woe:

“You laugh now... Oh, I’m so sorry.”

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

While the godless laugh at, mock and ridicule the way of Jesus, when He returns in judgment, they will have no laughter then... “Oh no – what have we done...”

And the 4th woe:

You’re really popular – don’t put anybody off side... “Oh, I’m so sorry.”

²⁶ “Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.

There is a good reason for being well thought of, and there is a bad reason.

The right reason is to be a people of:

- honesty;
- integrity;
- of their word;
- who can always be trusted.

Disciples of Jesus should be well thought of like that.

The bad way to be well thought of, is what Jesus is getting at here (like the false prophets). Preachers who will never offend, because they tell sinners exactly what they want to hear.

Do you know how to tell a false teacher today? A false teacher:

- will tell their listeners exactly what they want to hear.
- will adjust the teaching to make it more palatable and less offensive;
- either remove truth or water it down.
or just avoid the topic altogether.

I can assure you, a false teacher won't be teaching from the beatitudes – at least not in the way that Jesus gave them. They may well talk about the blessings, but they won't talk about the woes.

You see, the temptation for me as the preacher today, has been to rob these words of the offence that Jesus intends them to cause.

What was Jesus saying???

Are you rich? Well get offended, because wealth for yourself isn't my way.

And if we go home today and have not been offended, then we have not heard the word of God. If we have not been challenged to share what we have and to share generously with those who most need it, our hearts are very hard. Oh how unfortunate. You've had your good times.

Michael, are you eating more than you need? Well get offended, because getting fat while others starve, isn't my way.

And if I go home today, and I'm not offended, and I have not been challenged to give food to the starving, Oh how unfortunate. I'm going to be hungry...

Do you laugh at and mock the ways of Jesus? Well, get offended, because when Jesus returns the smile will be wiped from your face.

Do you water down the word of God so you don't offend anyone??? Well, get offended, because Jesus has just exposed just how false and faithless you are...

Isaiah foretold that Jesus would be like a stone that would make us stumble, a rock that makes us fallⁱⁱ. You see, the beatitudes are lovely, but part of the beatitudes are the woes – the inverse of the beatitudes. And these are words of Jesus that give offence.

What's the point? And still I'm torn with the opportunity to give you a summary that removes the offence. And I have to make myself not do that.

The point? Be offended. These words are words of judgment for unbelievers, and words of warning for Disciples of Jesus.

If all we have is health, wealth, friends and happiness, well that's very sad, because we've missed the whole point. Follow Jesus; Live for Jesus; and live not for this world and worldly blessings, – in fact, but give up worldly blessings and have treasure in heaven.

Was anyone not challenged today?
Was anyone not offended today???
But have you not also been encouraged???

You see, these words are meant to offend, but for disciples of Jesus, they should also be a great encouragement. When we suffer for Jesus – when we **are** excluded/cancelled/miss out, we're encouraged, because that's evidence that we **are** living with an eternal perspective.

So, **be** offended. Just don't stay offended.

- By His Holy Spirit, be transformed.
- Focus on eternity
- Love God;
- Love others; and
- hold on to the truth.

And be encouraged. Your reward is great in the Kingdom of God.

Let's pray:

Lord Jesus Christ,

Your words cut deep.

They cut deep to our heart/soul/spirit.

And Lord, as we read these blessings and woes,
we are reminded of just how much
we are drawn to worldly things...

We realise how ungodly

- some of our habits are;
- beliefs;
- teachings we like to hear,
that appeal to our fleshly nature...

Oh Lord, by Your Holy Spirit,
renew us / transform us,
to be a people of such strong faith,
that when we are hated/excluded/spurned for Your
sake,
that we would rejoice and leap with joy,
because our hearts are set on eternity
We know they're set on eternity,
otherwise the world wouldn't hate us so.

And help us,
as we live day by day,
as your faithful disciples,
to continue to proclaim Your goodness,
and your Gospel of salvation,

in Your Name,
Amen.

ⁱ Acts 17:6

ⁱⁱ Romans 9:33