

Kingdom Values

Luke 6:20-26

Introduction

Parenting Manual: I still remember the exhilarating feeling *twelve* years ago when Jackson was born. And then, what felt like moments later, they sent us home with an entire human and no instruction manual, assuming we'd know what to do! We took a lot of classes on the birthing process but had precious little training on how to take care of a baby (*contra* adoption and foster classes). **I'm a parent** (true!), **but how do I parent** (😬)? For many of us, a similar phenomenon occurs. **I'm a Christian, but how do I Christian?**

How Do I Christian?: The simple answer is you "Christian" like Christ (e.g., "little Christ"; Abby is a "little Whitney"). To be a Christian means to place your **faith** in Christ and, by *his* power, walk in his **ways**. "To become a Christian involves learning the story... of Jesus well enough to interpret and experience oneself and one's world in its terms" (Lindbeck). Jesus is going to teach what it actually looks like to live as a Christian in the world.

Kingdom of God: Jesus describes his mission as "preaching [ing] the good news of the kingdom of God" (Lk 4:43). The Kingdom of God is the place where Jesus is King, where his rule and reign are in effect. He is the sovereign on the throne who determines the agenda and values of the kingdom.

- In his preaching (Sermon on the Plain, Sermon on the Mount), he describes the inbreaking of the Kingdom. He will tell them later that "the kingdom of God is [already] in [their] midst" (Lk 21:21). As citizens of his kingdom, we have a different allegiance and a different set of values (Phil 1:27, 3:20).
 - Mali, never greet someone with your left hand (or eat food with it, etc.). 🇲🇱 🙅
 - U.S. presidential voter turnout usually ranges between 50% and 60% (non-compulsory). Australia's is 95% (compulsory with fines).

Upside Down Kingdom: Everything about the KoG is different than the kingdom(s) of the world.

- ¹¹ Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. ¹² The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³ Let us walk properly as in the daytime (Rom 13:11-13a; cf. Eph 5:8-14). The sun is coming up over the horizon. Wake up, get dressed, brew your coffee (don't be walking around in your PJs).

Are you going to live according to the values of the world or the values of the Kingdom of God?

- We're going to look at four corresponding **blessings** (vv. 20-23) and **woes** (vv. 24-26) that contrast the values of the world vs the values of Jesus and call us to live according to his kingdom.

²⁰ And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said: “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. ²¹ “Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied. “Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. ²² “Blessed are 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. ²⁴ “But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. ²⁵ “Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry. “Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. ²⁶ “Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.

1. Wealth vs. Weakness (vv. 20, 24)

²⁰ And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said: “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God... ²⁴ “But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.

Personal: This is a very **personal** conversation. Not only is he specifically focusing (ἐπίπαρος) on his disciples, but each statement is phrased in the second person (i.e., “blessed are you”). These are not abstract blessings but a concrete call to live and think a certain way in our day-to-day lives.

- You are blessed (hence “beatitude”; lat. *beatus*) even now in your suffering, as you wait for your ultimate consolation in the future glory of Christ.
- You are blessed because you have been identified as someone who belongs to the Kingdom of God (and more importantly to the King of the Kingdom!).
- Therefore, your suffering has a purpose (his glory) and it has an end date (his return). Your reward is as certain as he is trustworthy. As a result, even now you can live with blessed life, secure in his promises, and free to follow him rather than the temporary and destructive path of the world.

Entrance: Luke's first “beatitude” describes the foundational posture required to **enter** the KoG: **poverty**.

Poor: The poor are those in desperate need. They cannot provide for themselves and are **dependent** on God. “Believers [are those] who seek help from Jesus because of their own helplessness” (Goppelt). Being financially poor doesn't guarantee entrance into the KoG, but...

- **(1) Negatively:** ...it can **remove** a major obstacle to **depending** on God: **money**. The rich young ruler (Lk 18:18-30) could not inherit eternal life because he **lacked one thing**. The one thing keeping him from completely following God was his money.
- ²² When Jesus heard this, he said to him, “One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” ²³ But when he heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich. ²⁴ Jesus, seeing that he had become sad, said, “How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! (Lk 18:22-24).

- The love of money is a frequent source of evil (1 Tim 6:10). Most people want God **and** the world. They want God to cosign their desire for wealth (e.g., follow God and be rich). If you're wealthy, pay attention. But, if you're not, don't think you're in the clear. **You can love money whether you have it or not. You can worship money in your poverty** (i.e., daydream). Do you think life would be better if you won the lottery? Do you think God's blessing equals financial prosperity? Do you daydream about being rich? Are you jealous of wealthy people? Then you have the same problem as the rich young ruler.
- Following Jesus is less like a fancy car, a posh house, or an Instagram lifestyle and more like washing feet and serving the poor (e.g., Why do we assume homeless folks need Jesus? They might already have Jesus). We have too frequently equated financial **success** with **blessing** when the Bible says, more frequently, it's the opposite.
 - We have this myth that numerical success proves I'm right (from bank accounts to church attendance).
- **(2) Positively:** ... it can **free** you to depend on God, rather than yourself. It humbles you. Material poverty is an opportunity to depend on God. Physical poverty connects to spiritual dependence (e.g., "poor in Spirit," Matt 5:3).
- When we think material prosperity is a result of spiritual superiority, we misjudge our own righteousness. We are as spiritually incapable of finding God, saving ourselves, and earning our blessing as the rich person trying to enter the kingdom of God through the eye of a needle (Lk 18:25). It's an impossibility! It's an impossibility for any of us to save ourselves. Thankfully we serve a God of the impossible (Lk 18:27).
- When you understand the gospel, you are keenly aware of your inability to save yourself. You approach God and others with humility, without pretense, with no guise of self-sufficiency. "Christianity is one beggar telling another beggar where he found bread" (Niles). "Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to the cross I cling" (*Rock of Ages*).
- The one thing you need to be saved is "nothing" but admitting that is often the hardest part. By admitting our shortcomings and depending completely on God, he graciously reigns in our lives now and promises an eternal home with him in heaven.
- This also radically changes the way we treat others! "We look down on others because we are not looking up at God" (Sally Lloyd-Jones). In the presence of God, we should be humble (e.g., my middle school basketball career vs. Steph Curry).¹

2. Comfort vs. Discomfort (vv. 21a, 25a)

^{21a} "Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied..." ^{25a} "Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry."

Grab a Snickers: "You're Not You When You're Hungry" Snickers commercials. Celebrities represent the problematic alter ego of someone who is hungry (e.g., Betty White/old lady instead of a football player or Aretha Franklin/diva instead of a down-to-earth friend). But as soon as your hunger is satisfied by a Snickers, you are back to being a good person. Beyond simple "hunger," I think these commercials represent a worldview we all hold to: if I can satisfy my desires, then I can be my truest self. Hunger and thirst are a picture of **desire** and

¹ Bullpen a further conversation on weakness being the way of Christ from 1 Cor 1:18-2:5

longing. What do you long for? If I just had _____ then I'd be happy. Many of us know this is false because we've learned to eat even when we are full (i.e., "emotional eating," amen?!). Even the natural desire for food is not enough to fill the spiritual void in our hearts.

Satisfied: Jesus makes this clear in the wilderness temptation (Lk 4:4) when he quotes Deut 8:3: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."

- This beatitude reminds us that the broken way things are now will not last forever and urgently pleads for us to know that what truly satisfies is God.

Eschatological: Don't measure your ultimate satisfaction by your current circumstance. The story is not over. This is only a comfort if you perceive the reality of God's sovereign power and trust his timing and plan. Ultimately, if you want God more than you want food.

- The spiritual dimension may be less explicit in Luke than in Matthew, but it is no less clear. "Blessed are you who sense your lack and instead depend on God, for he accepts your faith and satisfies you in and for eternity" (Bock *adapted*).

If you are able to be satisfied by the things of this world, be warned. Such satisfaction is at best a temporary prelude to eternal, cosmic dissatisfaction. If you can find true fulfillment in a political agenda, material possessions, vocational success, relational accomplishments, etc. then be warned,

- *I think* most of us can admit that even the greatest joys of the world do not and cannot satisfy us. "I wish everyone could get rich and famous and everything they ever dreamed of so they can see that's not the answer" (Carrey).
- "If I find in myself desires which nothing in this world can satisfy, the only logical explanation is that I was made for another world" (C.S. Lewis).
- **The KoG belongs to those who are satisfied by God alone.**

3. Laughter vs. Mourning (vv. 21b, 25b)

^{21b} "Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh..." ^{25b} "Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep."

Realistic Appraisal: Following Jesus isn't a call to naive optimism. He doesn't tell you that everything *is* alright but, rather, everything *will be* alright.

- We live in a broken world. If you don't recognize this reality, you are painfully disconnected (e.g., poverty, abuse, etc.). **Jesus wept** (Jn 11:35). **Weeping is not weakness, it's reality.** We should weep because of the suffering and injustice in this world.
- Crying now acknowledges the need for Christ and opens our eyes to the better life to come. If this is all there is, then live it up! But when we see there is a greater day coming we can acknowledge the reality of brokenness and experience joy in the midst of it.
- We live for the day when our Savior "will wipe away every tear from [our] eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, no pain anymore, for the former things have passed away" (Rev. 21:4). It is the reality of that promise that

gives us hope. It is the future nature of the promise that keeps us from seeking our joy in the state of this current world.

Sin: When was the last time you wept over sin? It is a blessing of God's grace to weep over the brokenness of the world and the brokenness of our own hearts because of sin.

- It is a blessing because God has opened your eyes to his holiness and your sin.
- It is a blessing because he has paid the penalty of your sin.
- It is a blessing because, in the age to come, he will fix all that is broken and redeem all that is enslaved to sin.

Distracted Living: Rather than weep, we'd rather party. Rather than grieve, we prefer to celebrate. "Writing on the wall?" This comes from Daniel 5, where Nebuchadnezzar's Son, Belshazzar is throwing an idolatrous (praising the gods of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone) and raucous party (drinking wine from the temple vessels; wives and concubines present, *awkward*) when a human hand writes an ominous warning on the wall. Daniel interprets it to let him know his pride has caused his judgment by God. The Persians are going to take his kingdom. Belshazzar is killed that night.

- Jesus shows up and says, there is a new, greater kingdom coming (he is the king). You can surrender and live! But we, like Belshazzar, party it up, ignoring the coming judgment.
- Party now and pay the price forever, or repent now and enjoy the KoG forever!

4. Recognition vs. Rejection (vv. 22-23, 26)

²² "Blessed are 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... ²⁶ "Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.

People Pleasers: If you're a people-pleaser, this might be the hardest one yet! Many of us can identify with Lindsey Lohan's character in Mean Girls when she says, "I just wanted to be accepted." Do you want approval from people or from God?

- Our reputation among outsiders should be good because of our gospel integrity, not in spite of it.
- "Israel often courted prophets who gave the message it wanted to hear, rather than God's message" (Bock). Seeking the wrong people's approval is like seeking a false prophet. You don't want the truth, you want your opinion from someone else's mouth.
- Would you rather receive your praise now and rejection in heaven?

Suffering as a Christian: The world's values and God's values are different indeed. If you truly follow Jesus, you should expect rejection. **Not all suffering is suffering for Jesus' sake.** Stop blaming God for everything. "Everything happens for a reason. Sometimes the reason is you made a bad decision!" If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed (1 Pet 4:14). Everybody shouldn't like you (easy enough 😊 don't say 'amen' too quickly), but it shouldn't be

because you are a jerk! If someone doesn't like you because of the God you serve and the righteousness you pursue and the gospel you believe, that's good. But if they don't like you because you're not likable, then that's another thing.

Increasing Hostility: It goes from **hate** (μισήσωσιν; cf. misophonia = “hate” “sound”),² to **exclusion** (ἀφορίσωσιν; cf. aphorism = “from” “separate”; defining or delimiting), to **reviling** (ὀνειδίσωσιν), to **spurning** or **casting out** (ἐκβάλωσιν τὸ ὄνομα ὑμῶν).³ It goes from an attitude to a passive action, to a direct insult, to a physical removal.

- We should expect this **from the world for our stand on the gospel** (not on other things).
- It also should be the opposite of the way we act. We should welcome in, build up, and love others, inviting them to the joy of Christ!

Joy in Suffering: Rejoice in that day. What day? Not the day of heaven but the day of your suffering! Christian suffering includes the strange presence of joy. It is a gift to suffer with and for Christ (Phil 1:29). The repeated admonition of Scripture is to rejoice in suffering (1 Pet 4:13, Rom 5:3). So we count every faith-testing trial **all joy** (Jas 1:2).

- When you suffer for Christ, you participate with Christ, walking in his footsteps, footsteps that ultimately take us to eternal union with him in glory.
 - That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death (Phil 3:10).
 - The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him (Rom 8:16-17)
 - But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed (1 Pet 4:13)
- “Truly our way to eternal joy is to suffer here with Christ. Our door to enter into eternal life is gladly to die with Christ so that we may rise again from death and dwell with him in everlasting life” (*Book of Common Prayer*, “Visitation for the Sick,” *adapted*).
- So we can leap for joy when we suffer for Christ (the only direct command in this passage) because we are walking with Christ. Christian suffering isn't evidence of God's absence but his presence. He walks with us through the valley because he has traversed it before us. And where does the valley path take us? To eternal glory in heaven with him. And the great reward in heaven is the uninterrupted, undisturbed, unencumbered presence of our Savior for eternity.

Conclusion

What Do These Beatitudes Point Us To?:

² We should never hate someone because of their religious persuasion.

³ Deut 22:14

1. Perspective: Is this all there is? No, there is a greater reality coming. Don't sacrifice eternal joy for temporary satisfaction. Sin is always a shortcut that leads you off the path. The road is narrow, and the race is long, but it's worth it. Stay the course.⁴

2. Alternative: The values of Jesus upend the values of the world. Jesus doesn't come to rubber stamp the already existing worldly ways but to overthrow them. "Jesus is an alternative to the dominant ways of the world, not a supplement to them" (Peterson). Sacrifice over power. Love your enemies. The way up is down. Be wary if your values align with our world's political, social, and cultural values. Be wary if everyone always likes you. Be wary if the call to follow Jesus never challenges you to change.

3. Freedom: Karl Marx famously called religion "the opium of the people" because, he argued, it prevents Christians from seeking real justice in the world but, instead, waiting passively for some future justice that he thought was a fairy tale. There is some truth to Marx's critique that some have abused religion to **subjugate** others. But, in its true form, Christianity does not enslave people, it liberates them.

- If this world is all there is, then I am a slave to the powers that be to keep my job, maintain my reputation, or even protect my life! But if my true life is secure with Christ in heaven (Col 3:3),⁵ then I can boldly and freely live justly now! It's not the opiate of the people but the smelling salts (Keller).
- If in your job there is a situation where you must lie to keep your job. If you tell the truth, you will lose your job, your income, and your house. Your professional reputation will be ruined. Everyone will think you're a loser. If you are a slave to money, status, professional acceptance, and temporary security, then you *have* to lie. But if you are a slave to Christ, you have found your security, identity, and belonging in him. His acceptance is all that matters, then you are *free* to tell the truth!
- When you are satisfied in Christ alone, you have the capital to be generous. You can risk your financial well-being (because you are not a slave to money), risk your heart to generously care for someone (because you are not a slave to approval), and step into **risky** situations (because you are not a slave to comfort).

4. Salvation: All of these remind us that the path to the KoG always goes through Jesus. We only get into the kingdom because of the king. He gave up power, comfort, and approval to purchase our salvation. He suffered so we can be saved. When Jesus calls us to let go of these worldly values he is inviting us to find life in him. When we let go of our addiction to money, comfort, pleasure, and recognition, we are letting go of what's in the way of finding true life in Jesus. "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?" (Matt 16:26).

- Considering the eternal joy promised in the Kingdom of God, what worldly comfort, pleasure, opinion, or value is Jesus calling you to let go of to follow Him?

⁴ The Rich Man and Lazarus (Lk 16:19-31). Esau sells his birthright (Gen 25:29-34).

⁵ One with Himself, I cannot die; My soul is purchased by His blood; My life is hid with Christ on high, With Christ, my Savior and my God ("Before the Throne of God Above").