

The Best is yet to Come (Luke 6:17~26)

Beloved, may I suggest to you, that “*The best is yet to come*”... For those of us who follow Jesus Christ, there is this glorious truth, proclaimed by our Lord himself that *the best is yet to come!*

²⁰And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, *Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God.*

²¹*Blessed are ye that hunger now: **for ye shall be filled.** Blessed are ye that weep now: **for ye shall laugh.***

²²*Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake.* ²³*Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: **for, behold, your reward is great in heaven...***

Truth is, the way of Christ is hard... The life of the one who truly follows Jesus is one that *involves suffering and hardship*. It is a life of “*self-denial*,” a life of “*self-sacrifice*,” a life of “*service*” to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. As disciples of Christ, we find ourselves in the midst of a dark, sinful, “*godless world*,” the antitheses of everything we stand for, making for tough times, often suffering and rejected.

But even so, we continue to march forward, knowing that even though the way is hard, we know that it is *the way of blessing!* We know, that at the end of this road, lies the blessed hope and promises of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. This passage could be summed up in the words of the Apostle Paul...¹⁸*For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory, which shall be revealed in us.* It will be worth it all... Truly, *the best is yet to come...*

This passage serves as an both an encouragement to all who have taken up the cross of Jesus Christ, and are following him, and a warning, to those who don't... The key to this passage is found at the end of verse 22...***for the Son of man's sake.*** That is to say, that all the suffering and persecutions spoken of here, (Poor, hungry, weeping, persecution...) come as a result of identifying with Christ. Given that, here Christ seeks to encourage his followers, by reminding them, *the best is yet to come.*

Something he explains, is not the case for all those who reject him, to live for this present evil world... The truth for them is, this is as good as it gets! It is a warning to all who reject the way of Christ, to *live on easy street*, that their future is anything but bright! Theirs is the easy road, the road of pleasure, the road of comfort... But notice, this is a dead end street... You who are rich...***you shall be poor!*** You that are full...***you shall be hungry!*** You that laugh...***you shall mourn and weep!***

Notice the principle of “*Reversal*.” How those who suffer now, will be blessed, while those who are blessed now, will suffer later. It is the principle Jesus spoke of in Matthew 15, when he said, “²⁵*For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.*” Those who “*lose their life here*”...will find it... While those who “*keep their life here*” will lose it! The life of following Christ is a life of “*self-denial*,” “*self-sacrifice*” and “*service*” to the Lord Jesus Christ, which is tough for now, but the best is yet to come! This is contrasted with a life of “*self-love*,” “*self-exaltation*,” “*self-indulgence*”... which will end in tragedy.

In order to understanding this passage, it is imperative we understand just exactly who it is that Jesus is speaking too. The BLESSED in verses 20~23, and those of WOE in verses 24~26. It is clear who the first group is...²⁰And he lifted up his eyes on **his disciples**, and said... The first group is that of his disciples, this small band of men who had left everything to follow him. But the second group is not so obvious, matter of fact, if not careful, this group could be easily mistaken to mean someone it doesn't. There are two key statements that reveal who this group is, and they are found in verses 23 & 26...

²³*Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did **their fathers** unto the prophets.*

²⁶ *Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.*

He is referring to the Scribes and Pharisees, the religious leaders of the day... It is extremely important that we understand this because there's a danger of seeing this second group as referring to those out here who have no affiliation with the worship of God, taking this to be a comparison between the religious and the non-religious. To understand it that way would be to see this passage as teaching those who identify with the worship of God will reap a reward in the end, while those who do not, will get their due. But to do so would miss the whole point!

Here he begins a series of teachings to his disciples, concerning this new way of life they have chosen. A life, that becomes clear, is not an easy road. Here he seeks to both encourage them, and at the same time warn them of the suffering and hardships they will endure at the hands of religious men. The particular passage comes as a result of his being rejected, and persecuted by the Scribes and Pharisees back in verse 11. Here Jesus warns his disciples of their impending suffering and persecution from the hands of these men, simply because they have identified with him.

These two "paths" represented here, typify the "*Narrow and Broad ways*" Jesus spoke of in Matthew 7. Most people understand that teaching to refer that the narrow road refers to those who attend church, while the broad way refers to those who don't. But it doesn't, the narrow way refers to following Jesus, (*Narrow carries the meaning of difficult*) While the broad represents the path of religion, in this case a life lived to the Law of Moses. The narrow was is "*difficult*" in that it is the life of "*self-denial, self-sacrifice,*" which the broad way requires no "*self-denial, no self-sacrifice.*"

(Luke 6) Here Jesus describes the "*His Way*" and the "*Way of religion*" as complete opposites...

...²⁰ *Blessed be ye poor...* ²⁴ *But Woe unto you that are rich...* The natural tendency is to think he is referring to money. I can't imagine the Lord blessing only those who have nothing, while condemning those who have a little money. But if it were in the context of covetousness, greed, and such, then that would certainly apply here. Over and over God warns of covetousness, the love of money. And there are many who do love things, people who live for this world, and the things of this world. But here, it is more likely that this *poor* refers to "*poor in spirit.*"

To be "*poor in spirit*" would be to have a *spirit of humility*, a *lowliness of spirit*. The opposite of this would be a *haughty spirit*. Poor seems to refer to being "*bankrupt*" in spirit, having a "*broken spirit, a contrite spirit,*" speaking of the recognition of one's sinful condition, understanding the need of mercy and grace. Notice, he says, "*for yours IS the kingdom of God.*" Not "*shall be*" like the others, but "*IS.*" It is to say that humble, contrite sinners, enjoy the "*kingdom of God, the presence of God...NOW!*" Therefore, we are the "Truly Rich" of this world!

This is in contrast to those who are rich, speaking of a *proud spirit*, a spirit of *self-sufficiency*, a spirit of *self-adequacy*. It describes men who, rather than have a sense of unworthiness, rather than broken over their sin, they feel certain they have lived in a way that warrants approval. (*Which is exactly the way the Scribes and Pharisees felt*)

²⁴ *But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation.* *Consolation* speaks of reward, and here Jesus is saying that they have received the only reward they have coming to them. And it's certainly not the kingdom of God! It is humble sinners who will inherit the kingdom! The consolation he seems to be referring to here, is the praise of men! In Matthew 6, (same sermon) speaking of these men, Jesus said over and over... "*Verily I say unto you...they have their reward.*" Which was referring to the praise of men. (*Explain alms, prayer, fasting...*)

...^{21a} *Blessed are ye that hunger now...* ^{25a} *But Woe unto you that are full...*

With each one of these, there is the question, is he referring to physical things, like here is he referring to physical hungry? I don't think so, but, we do see the same principle in the story of Lazarus and the rich

man. Remember that story, the rich man had plenty, and Lazarus was a beggar, and sought simply the crumbs from the rich mans table, which he would not even give him. In that story, all that changed at their death, the rich man became poor, and the poor man became rich!

Here though, I'm convinced he is speaking to the spirit... Hunger speaks to "*desire*"...if you are hungry, that is to say you desire food. The opposite of that would be to be full. If you are full, you have no desire for food. The issue is desire, and rather than food in mind, Jesus is referring to "*righteousness!*" This is made clear in Matthew 5:6...***Blessed are they, which do hunger, and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.***

This speaks of an *earnest desire* for righteousness! *Hunger* and *Thirst* describe *longings*... The sinner who comes to Christ, is painstakingly aware of *his destitute condition*... He fully understands he is "*empty*" of righteousness. Yet, given the knowledge of what Christ has done for him, he longs within his heart to live his life, in a way that is pleasing to his Lord, the one who died for him.

This is contrasted with the "*Full*," which refers to those *who have no such desire*... The reason he has no earnest longing for righteousness, is because he is full of righteousness, (*At least in his mind he is.*) Listen closely; it's important to the point Jesus is making here. The man who is full, has no longing, no desire for food. It is only the man who is hungry, that has a desire for food...right?

Here Jesus applies that principle to declare who the *true children of God* are! Mind you, the whole point of this passage is to confront and expose the hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees. They, like many in our day, were filled with *Self-Righteousness*, resulting in no "*real, genuine desire for righteousness!*" A man may think he's righteous...but there's coming a day when he will realize, just how unrighteous he is. But it will be too late...***25a But Woe unto you that are full...for you shall hunger...***

*...**21b Blessed are ye that weep now... 25b But Woe unto you that laugh...***

Weeping speaks of sorrow, of mourning, whereas laughter speaks of just the opposite, that of happiness, enjoyment... The contrast here is that of perspectives on life. One describes a life of brokenness and grieving, while the other a life of pleasure, a life of amusement. It speaks to the fact that genuine born believers, have a much different outlook on life, than that of the religious man. His eyes have been opened to the reality of those all around him, dying in sin He lives a life of brokenness over all those around them dying in sin, while the religious man could really care less!

Woe unto you that laugh... is aimed at those whose lives are a continuous cycle of amusement, entertainment and pleasure. They act as if life was made for fun and frolic...and are oblivious to the desperate condition of men outside of Jesus Christ! It describes the man who is too busy living a life of pleasure and having fun to be concerned with others! His is the life given to the purist of happiness, the pursuit of pleasures, while the follower of Christ is lived in efforts to reach those around him, who are dying in sin. The religious man never has any time for the kingdom business, because he's too busy wrapped up in the things and pleasures of this world... Here Christ says, he may live it up now, he may enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, but all that will change in time...In time he will weep and mourn.

Lastly Jesus says...***22 Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake.***

23 Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.

26 Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.

This serves as a good reminder, that it doesn't matter so much what men think and say about us, what matters is what God says...

Why would Jesus say, ²⁶ *Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you!* (Ref: Mt. 6:11...rejection!) In John 15, Jesus said, *"If you were of the world, the world would love its own!"* The praise of men is often not a good thing. It's may well be a sign you are not living the life or faithfully proclaiming the message! Over time, I've come to understand that he was referring to the *"religious world"*. It was not the Gentiles who persecuted Jesus, or Paul or the other apostles! It was those who attended the synagogue's every week! Jesus was known as a "friend of publicans and sinners!" But all throughout scripture, he is an enemy of the religious system. Think about, even the leaders of Rome didn't want to crucify him...but the chief priest and Pharisees persisted...

That is something that has been true throughout history... The *"great reformation"* came as a result of persecution from the Church in England. The Catholic Church killed somewhere in the hundreds of thousands, in the name of Religion! Looking back over my short Christian life, I've not been persecuted by drunks, by drug users, by thieves and such, they usually show respect. But I have been crucified by church members!

Beloved, it is the religious system that was the enemy of Christ, and still is! Religion is of Satan, and is extremely dangerous! Just because a man or woman is religious, doesn't mean anything! As a matter of fact, he might be worse off, than someone who's not, if their heart's not right. Religion is extremely dangerous in the sense, that rather than serve to better the man, religion destroys the man, and blinds him to his sin! Rather than create an earnest desire for true righteousness, religion does just the opposite, and deceives men! Religion *"Feeds the ego,"* religion *"Feeds the flesh"*...it creates in men a sense of righteousness by their actions. It creates a *"false security,"* causing the individual to think they are pleasing God by the way they are living!

Christianity is NOT a religion... Matter of fact, it teaches against religion...by clearly teaching that conformance to a set of rules are no benefit. It teaches we are sinners, hopelessly bound in sin, in need of a Savior. It is not a religion, but a relationship...

The Christian life is a tough life; it is a life of self-denial, self-sacrificing service to Jesus Christ! It is a life of humble service to our Lord, yielding our lives, day by day unto him, taking up the cross of Christ, putting self to death. It is a life of mourning over sin, and weeping over those yet in bondage to it. It is a life of suffering and persecution and rejection...

But according to the promises of God...it will be worth it all! The best is yet to come...