

13-19 February 2022 Luke 6: 17-26

Overflowing blessing

[Read the passage from Luke. It is written below.](#)

He came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon. They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. And all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them.

Then he looked up at his disciples and said:

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

“Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled.

“Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.

“Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.

“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 all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets”.

Bible notes

One of the key aspects of the ‘Sermon on the Plain’ (as this section is sometimes called, because it takes place at the bottom of a hill, in contrast to Matthew), is how it is addressed to the disciples rather than the crowd. The crowd with their needs are there but, for now, Jesus’ attention falls on his disciples. And he begins to unfold what it will mean to be his follower while still grappling with the clamour of a world in need, He begins by focusing on blessing.

The idea of blessing is fascinating. It has implications of praise and worship, as well as of thanksgiving and ‘speaking well of’. Some people suggest that the English word comes from ‘to make holy’ or ‘to consecrate’, perhaps by sprinkling with blood! Whatever its origins, Jesus’ blessings – directed at those who follow him – can seem surprising. Praiseworthy are the poor? Or the hungry? Holy are those who weep? Even for Jesus’ closest followers, there would surely have been some raised eyebrows and puzzlement, for in what sense are those who weep praiseworthy or holy?

Or, perhaps, for some in the audience, Jesus' words represented a moment of recognition and promise. In hearing these blessings, perhaps for the first time in their lives, Jesus' poorest and hungriest disciples might have felt recognised and given fresh heart. It is usually the powerful and successful who receive all the attention. Jesus' rather rag-tag band of followers would have been filled with encouragement. It would have been like the most ignored hearing their names called out by God on a roll call of honour.

Reflection

Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.

Most of us can recall the famous old hymn, 'Count your blessings', name them one by one. We are a blessed people, yet so often life can cause us to lose focus of all that God has blessed us with. We can fall into the trap of equating blessedness with materialism. In other words, the more we possess, the more we are blessed. However, Jesus claims, 'Blessed are the poor' or 'Blessed are those who mourn' (Matthew 5.3,4). What does it mean to be blessed by God? And, just as importantly, what does it mean to be a blessing to others?

Questions for reflection



- How does this image make you feel?
- When do you feel full of God's blessings?
- In what ways can you be a blessing to others?

Prayer

Adapt to your local context.

Lord, we thank and praise you
for all the many blessings in our lives.
For food and shelter, for family and friends,
for the measure of health we have,
and the many comforts we take for granted.
Thank you also for your plain speaking;
these blessings are not merited by anything we have done,
just as the problems of many – of those who hunger,
and are homeless, and sick – are also undeserved.
So, Lord, in giving our heartfelt thanks,
we ask that we might be a blessing to those
whom the worldly-wise often curse. **Amen.**

A prayer to end the Bible study

Lord, as we step into this week,
help us to cultivate our relationship with you.
We want to be rooted in you.
Show us our barriers to receiving your blessing.
Help us not only to recognise how blessed we are,
but also show us ways that your blessing
can overflow to others through us.
Amen.