

## Luke 6:17-26

Some hard teachings today...Lukes sermon on the plane...often overshadowed by the longer more popular sermon on the mount in Matthew's Gospel...Luke's version is only 32 verses compared to the 107 verses in Matthew.

And the primary audience here is not the large crowd but rather Jesus' own Disciples...that's who He is looking at...that's the focus...and that's us...Jesus is looking at His students...He's looking at you...and me!

He tells them of four blessing along with four corresponding woes...emphasizing Luke's understanding of the Kingdom of God.

Poor vs Rich; Hungry vs Full; Weeping vs Laughing; and the Marginalized & Hated vs the ever Popular false prophets.

And know that blessings here doesn't mean happiness...but rather it's about our standing in relationship with God! It talks of the NOW and the NOT YET...a present reality now AND a future reality for all of creation (Eschatology).

This is Luke's gospel on the plane delivered where people gathered to hear Jesus to be healed and yet Jesus wasn't addressing the crowds but rather his closest friends ...as well as us...the future church of Jesus Christ.

It's not for everyone, is it? It's for those who choose to and/or claim to follow Jesus! Words are cheap especially in today's world.

All these folks came to this place to be healed and to be fed both literally and figuratively. But Jesus probably knew that crowds can be fickle. They came for the free stuff...free lunch and free health care...and Jesus' message was also a message of hope for those who were oppressed and under the heel of Rome. Who wouldn't want these things...those well off wouldn't!

Many of the religious well-to-do in power then made peace with Rome so that they could indeed keep their status quo...have their cake and eat it too...and as you all know...stuff always rolls downhill.

These are the beatitudes Luke Style...a raw unmitigated declaration announcing the reality of the Kingdom of God to come...and woe to those thriving in the Kingdom of man...especially those claiming to follow God's will for their own benefit and not for the health and wellbeing of others!

God will bless the poor and needy... those that we have ignored or forgotten...while pronouncing judgement on the rich, the sated and the comfortable. As many in the church have said... Jesus came to comfort the afflicted... and afflict the comfortable.

The depth and impact of this new (old) world order... this realm of God... has always been difficult for the church and the well off to fathom. Our inclination from the beginning has always been to wrangle, control, and domesticate the radical pronouncement of Christ so that it comfortably fits in with those of us who are wealthy, comfortable and powerful.

In Isreal they wrote off the poor and needy as actually being punished by God for some sin that they or their parents must have committed...I am wealthy and blessed in this world cause God loves me best. That guy must have done something wrong for God to treat him like that!

Do you think it's an accident that Herod felt threatened by John the Baptist... or that the Jewish religious elite or the Roman Empire wanted to hear what Jesus had to offer to everyone... at the cost of their own power and status quo? They didn't kill Jesus cause he was a nice guy.

Do you think the rich and powerful ever, ever, want to give up their wealth and power. What do you think Christian nationalism is today? We want both... We want to be the best and be blessed with wealth and power...and why not...God loves us best.

I wonder if that were true, the Palestinian towns of Bethlehem and Nazareth who can trace their roots back to the earliest Christian communities would be meccas today...but they certainly are not...in fact the irony is...is that our own so called Christian nation sides against these Christians in Isreal.

This is just one example of how people throughout all of the ages of man have subverted and twisted Jesus' radical message of love and acceptance to align with our own man-made ideals and principles.

Over the ages we have taken a book about the oppressed... and somehow subverted it for our own ends. Many mega pastors today have their own private jets and mansions. Popular preachers tell us that the Christian life is one of blessings and materialistic prosperity. This is the popular U.S. prosperity gospel.

And the Vatican itself the font of Christianity has more power and wealth than most third world countries on the globe...See in God's world for some to have so much more...many others have to go without. The scarcity of resources we experience in this world is not the fault of our creator or of creation... but rather it's directly because of us...mankind's greed.

Today we argue in the halls of our own government about placing the ten commandments (that's the old testament) into our schools... while many lawmakers actually brag about breaking them. I promise you that you will never see the Beatitudes (that's the Christian part of the Bible – what Jesus had to say)...posted anywhere!

It's a paradox isn't it. I certainly worked hard all my life, and I don't want me or my family to be poor or homeless in order to be blessed. But I also didn't get to choose where I came to be born and what

opportunities I would have through no choosing of my own... I didn't choose my race, skin color, or genetics in any way at all!

So what's the answer? During this Epiphany...our Epiphany has been that God wants to be with us...in a relationship with us. And not just some of us...not just those who are well-off in the world ...but ALL of us...God's children everywhere.

So Jesus holds up a very large mirror. To see that which we have been given in this world... and then to share those blessings and gifts with others in order to connect with those who may not have had the same circumstances we had been born to...WE then become the hands and feet of God... a blessing to the world...especially to the poor and the marginalized.

God does not bless us as we maintain the status quo... reaping the accolades of those who follow us.

God does not bless us...as we bathe in respectability in the eyes of the world.

God does not bless us...as we quietly maintain our traditions and gloss over and ignore the prophetic voices of God calling out to us to be the church in the world.

God does not bless us... as we protect and build our institutions, country clubs, nations and empires.

God does not bless us...the well off... the comfortable... the hearty... and the well-spoken of.

See the realm of God resides among those who have nothing...but God!

Jesus sermon on the plane offers us disciples, these wondrous yet stark beatitudes which shake us out of our worldly complacency. See our inclination is to fit God into our own definitions and our own cultures... all the little boxes and places where we think God should be...Yet as we

know throughout all of scriptures that God is always breaking down the barriers we construct to keep God in...or out!

Here once again God is calling us back to God...

Repentance...Reminding us all that we must turn from the ways of man in order to empty ourselves of our ego... and to leave some space within for the Holy Spirit to come and dwell within us...the Greek word here is Kenosis.

Kenosis is an empty space we leave reserved for God...and it's always there nagging at us, isn't it? And we always want to fill that space with all kinds of stuff...but nothing in this world ever seems to fill that hunger...nor could it...that space is reserved for God...it's how God created us connected to Godself!

We must all be wary of the trappings of this life... as if it were the ONLY life...for only by being open and receiving God's grace will we receive all the fullness and blessings of God... and then we, as disciples, are to in turn pass that grace and those blessings onto others...thus creating heaven on earth...the kingdom of God now and not yet.

Here in this country of ours we have been given blessing upon blessing...so what is a disciple to do...if we only focus on me and my own... then we hoard and cause scarcity in God's abundant world. How many homeless folks does it take to keep a billionaire rich. How much money does the rich need when there are so many people with nothing at all...

Rather, if we instead focus outwardly... on others...then we get to become Christ's disciples...We get to bless the poor...we get to feed the hungry...we get to bring hope and joy to those in bad situations.

See turning inward causes hell...ego and selfishness...me, me, me!

And we will always become God one way or another...we will either claim godhood for ourselves wanting power and glory for us from

others... or we can turn outwardly causing heaven to be revealed for all...as they see the One God reflected in us...this is a state of relationship together...connection...WE!

So what will you choose to create Heaven or Hell? We as gods...or we serving One God?

When we turn outwards, we disciples...those who follow Jesus, become the face of God to others...that's' the shift...that's' the subtle truth Jesus was trying to show us...that's what separates the kingdom of man from the kingdom of God...it's the same place but a different focus...one inwardly and one outwardly! That's why Jesus says some will see and some won't...

In the end God demands our all...everything we got! God is not to be an afterthought, but God is to BE our thoughts, and our goals and our dreams!

Material goods and money are just part of what we are asked to share. What we are asked to give is our lives...so that we are to be a testament to God's grace and blessings in this broken and needy world.

We Disciples of Christ are asked to follow in Jesus' footsteps...and do the things that our Rabbi did! Even if that means following Him all the way to a cross. For in the end, it will be the Kingdom of God that will always prevail over the fickle and transient ways of man. The ways of man are here today...and gone tomorrow...Empires Rise and Empires Fall...but the ways of God...our Creator...are Eternal!

So who's will, will you choose to Follow...who's will, will be done...and which God will you choose to serve?

Your faithful servant,  
carmen

