

<sup>17</sup> And He came down with them and stood on a level place with a crowd of His disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear Him and be healed of their diseases, <sup>18</sup> as well as those who were tormented with unclean spirits. And they were healed. <sup>19</sup> And the whole multitude sought to touch Him, for power went out from Him and healed them all. <sup>20</sup> Then He lifted up His eyes toward His disciples, and said: “Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. <sup>21</sup> Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. <sup>22</sup> Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you, and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man’s sake. <sup>23</sup> Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven, for in like manner their fathers did to the prophets. <sup>24</sup> But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. <sup>25</sup> Woe to you who are full, for you shall hunger. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. <sup>26</sup> Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets.

Text: Luke 6:17-26 A 2/17/19 Jer. 17:5-8 1 Cor. 15:12, 16-26 Ps. 111 Resp. Ps.: 1  
Hymns: 798, 764, 423, 410

### **THIS LIFE, OR ETERNAL LIFE?**

Dear fellow believers in Christ,

A huge crowd of people, many of Jesus’ followers and many others, had come to see Him. They traveled “*from the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon,*” a trip of 60-80 miles, and from “*all Judea and Jerusalem,*” a trip of 120-160 miles. That is a long way, especially when you consider the fact that most, if not all, of them walked. That says so much about Jesus and how the people felt about Him!

They came to Jesus “*to be healed.*” We, too, often come to Jesus for healing for ourselves and for others. Jesus healed everyone who came to Him, and cast the demons out of everyone who was demon-possessed. The people had also come “*to hear [Jesus],*” which is what they needed most of all from Him. Remember when a paralyzed man was brought to Jesus, and the first thing Jesus did for him was to tell him his sins were forgiven? Then Jesus healed him (Mk. 2:1ff.). In a very powerful way, Jesus made the point that as wonderful as healing is for our bodies, what we need far, far more from Him is forgiveness for our sins and eternal salvation! For these people who had come to see Jesus, He taught them not to think only of our needs for this life. Our greatest need is eternal life.

We’re told, “[Jesus] *lifted up His eyes on His disciples, and said...*” Jesus’ words in our text were addressed first of all to His disciples – to those who believed in Him. Jesus’ promises of blessings are for those who believe in Him. He spoke so that everyone there could hear His words and believe in Him and receive His blessings.

Jesus says, “*Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.*” (“Poor” in the original text refers to those who are so poor that they must beg.) Jesus says in His Sermon on the Mount, “*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*” (Mt. 5:3). So in our text Jesus is saying: Blessed are you who know you are poor sinners and yet believe in Me as

your Savior, for you are going to heaven. Speaking of His own ministry Jesus said, *“The poor have the Gospel preached to them”* (Mt. 11:5). Certainly we want to share what we have with the poor. The greatest thing we can share with the poor and everyone else is the message of their salvation in Jesus!

People look to philosophy, man-made religions, search within themselves, look to nature, turn to alcohol and drugs, and here and there to fill an emptiness in their soul that only Jesus can fill. Jesus says, *“Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied.”* Jesus says in His Sermon on the Mount, *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled”* (Mt. 5:6). So Jesus is saying in our text: Blessed are you who are hungry for salvation in Me, for you are saved. Jesus must bring us to see our sinfulness before Him, despair of anything we might do to save ourselves, and trust in Him alone to save us. He invites us in His Word, *“Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. ... Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance. Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live”* (Is. 55:1-3a).

Jesus says, *“Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.”* We sorrow over the sin in ourselves. Jesus assures us, *“Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven”* (Mt. 9:2). We sorrow as a result of the sin in the world. Jesus assures us, *“In Me you ... have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”* (Jn. 16:33). Jesus will end our sorrow once and for all when He takes us to heaven where He promises we will have *“fullness of joy [and] pleasures forevermore”* (Ps. 16:11).

Jesus has some words that are very fitting for what we Christians are facing today: *“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!”* Jesus has warned us, *“If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you”* (Jn. 15:18). Jesus came to tell the world that He is our God and Savior who wants to give everyone eternal life in heaven. How terribly sad that most people reject Him. Jesus says, *“The world ... hates Me because I testify of it, that its [deeds] are evil”* (Jn. 7:7). The message of Christ’s cross is that we human beings are not basically good by nature, we’re all sinful. The message of Christ’s cross is that no one can be good enough to get to heaven, but that we all need Jesus Christ to save us. The message of Christ’s cross is that all human philosophies and religions – which essentially teach that we can better ourselves and we don’t need Jesus – are wrong. Jesus says, *“Repent!”* (Mt. 4:17) *“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me”* (Jn. 14:6). For that, the world hates Jesus. And because you and I follow Jesus and cling to His Word, the world hates us, too.

Jesus says, *“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! Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.”* When we face the world’s hatred Jesus says we can rejoice because *“Your reward is great in heaven.”* From the time Cain murdered Abel, God’s people have been persecuted for remaining faithful to Him. Once when many who had been following Jesus took offense at Him and stopped following Him, He asked His disciples, *“Do you also want to go away?”* Peter answered, *“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God”* (Jn. 6:66-69). When people make fun of us and oppose

us and persecute us because we're Christians it can be hard and painful and frightening. We may even be put to death for following Jesus. But then Jesus will take us to heaven. Jesus assures us, *"Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life"* (Rev. 2:10b).

Jesus is now going to pronounce some woes that are the exact opposite of the blessings He pronounced before.

Jesus had said, *"Blessed are you who are poor"* (poor sinners who believe in Jesus), *"for yours is the kingdom of God"* (because Jesus is taking us to heaven). Now Jesus says, *"But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation."* Those who think they're "rich," that is, good enough, before God because of their own goodness have whatever praise people may give them now, but they're not going to heaven.

Jesus had said, *"Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied."* Jesus saves everyone who wants His salvation. Now Jesus says, *"Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry."* Those who in this life try to satisfy their souls with anything other than Jesus Christ will be without Jesus for all eternity in hell.

Jesus had said, *"Blessed are you who weep now"* because of the sin in us and in the world, *"for you shall laugh."* In His forgiveness, help, and salvation Jesus makes us happy. Now Jesus says, *"Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep."* Those who refuse to turn to Jesus in sorrow over their sins now will mourn for all eternity in hell.

Jesus had said, *"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! Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for ... your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets."* Now Jesus says, *"Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets."* (Think of those ministers and churchgoers who approve of such things as abortion and gay marriage, and receive the world's praise!) Those who refuse to follow Jesus and to suffer for His sake will suffer for all eternity in hell. Jesus says, *"Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the Gospel's will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels"* (Mk 8:34b-38).

Two thousand years ago our Lord stood before a huge crowd of people and confronted them with what was most important to them, **THIS LIFE, OR ETERNAL LIFE?** What is most important to us, **THIS LIFE, OR ETERNAL LIFE?** We choose eternal life! Amen.