

Series: Special Study
Text: Luke 6:20-26
June 28, 2015: Gospel Community Study Guide

This Study Guide is based on a sermon by Dr. Joshua Mack. You will find the link to the sermon here.

<http://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?sid=7315922242>

Getting Started:

If you asked most people what are some of the characteristics of a person who has it really good in this life, what do you think the average person would say?

For many people, it is basically a given, if you have a lot of money, if you are popular, if your life is comfortable, than you have it good.

Into the Bible:

In this text we studied this past week in the gospel of Luke, we saw the reality is not actually quite that simple.

Have someone read Luke 6:20-26 out loud.

What are the characteristics of the person Jesus says is blessed here? What are the characteristics of the person Jesus says are cursed?

The key phrase in this listing of blessings and woes is found at the end of verse 22. Why are the people in this verse being ridiculed and persecuted?

The Big Idea:

Jesus is not just talking about any poor person or any rich person. He's talking about people who are poor for the sake of the Son of Man and people who are rich because they have compromised and are trusting in their riches instead of following Jesus.

In other words, Jesus is **not** saying here that simply being poor means you are blessed or simply being rich means you are cursed. Instead, Jesus is saying that poverty and riches are not the best ways to evaluate whether or not someone is truly blessed.

Blessing and cursing instead are determined by one's relationship with Him.

Digging Deeper:

This idea is so revolutionary that I want us to think a little more deeply about it.

To do that, we are going to focus on the wicked rich man who has all kinds of material goods, has all he could ever want to eat or satisfy his desires, is completely comfortable in this world, and is looked up to by the people of this world. I am sure you can imagine him. Now, what would most people say about this person?

In contrast, what does Jesus say in verse 23 about this man? What does woe mean? What is the reason they have it so terrible?

Let's try to pick this apart a bit.

First, according to this verse then is it possible to be wicked and to be rich? (Don't worry, the answer is obvious!)

Sometimes people speak as if earthly prosperity were always an indication of God's favor. But this is very unbiblical. The fact is God sometimes gives wicked people even more material goods in this life than he gives to his own children.

If you feel like you need another proof of this, have your group turn to Psalm 73 and read out loud verses 3-12. How does the author describe the wicked person there?

Coming back to Luke 6, Jesus says that these wicked men who are also rich individuals have received their comfort or consolation now. He acknowledges that riches do bring some comfort in this life. What are some of the different ways having riches brings comfort in this life?

Now, while many would think all that comfort that riches provides is a reason to envy someone, Jesus actually thinks very differently, because he says that is the only comfort they will ever receive. If you had to say it in your own words, how would you summarize the point Jesus is making?

Jesus pities the wicked rich man because all the comfort and pleasure that wicked men will ever have, they have in this life. This short life here on earth is the only time they will experience pleasure or comfort.

Pause to Consider:

We need to think about this because we often spend so much time envying people who have more material possessions than us. And while, it is nice to have material possessions, we should also realize that material possessions are not nearly as valuable as a relationship with Christ.

Have some read the following paragraphs. Don't simply read the whole thing all at once. Instead, at the end of each paragraph, stop and discuss what reasons that paragraph gives as to why material prosperity is not as valuable as a relationship with Christ before moving on to the next paragraph.

“First of all, the material goods you accumulate for yourselves will all come to an end. If they don't break before you die, you aren't going to be able to keep them once you die. The fact is, it is very difficult to keep what you have gained even while you live. You might think about the nicest thing you ever bought. How long was it before you lost it, or it broke, or you gave it away, or it just didn't satisfy you any longer? I would guess, it wasn't very long. It's very difficult for a man to keep enjoying what he has gained for himself while he lives. I know there are times where you say if I just have that, I will be happy. Then you get it. And guess what, it's not very long before you want something else. Our relationship with Christ and the salvation he provides is much better than temporary things like material possessions because it lasts forever. If there is something that you could enjoy for a million years and something else that you could enjoy for a second, which do you think would be worth more? And eternity is much longer than our life here on earth, just like a thousand years is longer than a minute.

The fact is even if you could get everything you ever wanted in this world, you would find, it's not nearly as valuable as you thought it was at first. Take riches. Riches are of little worth. They don't bring much satisfaction. In fact, they usually tend to the opposite. As Jonathan Edwards once explained, “Worldly riches are so far from bringing satisfaction with them, the more one has of them the more we want. That is but a poor sort of drink which, instead of quenching thirst, the more one drinks the more thirsty they are.”

Another way to see how little value material prosperity really has is to consider what good great prosperity will do a wicked man after he dies. If your soul is not saved, it is condemned, and if it is condemned, it will be deprived of all pleasures forever. The only pleasures a wicked person will enjoy are the pleasures he experiences before he dies. After that, they will be deprived of every pleasure they enjoyed in this world. They will be deprived of spiritual pleasure and communion with God.

It can be difficult for us to imagine the suffering those who are forced to endure the wrath of God will experience eternally. An image the Bible uses to describe it, is a like living in a lake of fire. Now you know how much it hurts if you have a single spark of fire land on your arm. Imagine if that single spark of fire was on your arm for the rest of your life. That would be awful. Yet it's nothing compared to being plunged into a sea of fire. If you have ever had a toothache, you know how much it can hurt. What if that toothache would never go away? That would make it so much worse. It must be incredibly terrible to have every part of the body in pain, for all eternity, without a moment's stop. When a person is condemned, he is condemned eternally.

The reason we think of these sad realities is because they better help us to appreciate the value of salvation in comparison with material prosperity. We so often say blessed is the rich man and woe to the poor man. But really? If the rich man has abandoned Christ to get what he has and the poor man is poor because he is following Christ, who really has it better. Salvation is something that we so easily take for granted, and yet look at what we are saved from! The worse the condition we are delivered from,

the greater the deliverance. Therefore, the deliverance of a soul from hell is the greatest kind of deliverance of all. The man who has Christ has it better than all others.”

Summing Up:

We often say at church that the only time a Christian has to suffer is now. Once we go to heaven, we will never suffer again. On the other hand, the only time a non-Christian has to experience pleasure is now. Unless they repent of their sins and turn to Christ, they will only know suffering eternally.

How should this reality change the way you value earthly prosperity?

How should this reality impact the way you value your relationship with Christ?

At the end of the day, we all have to look at what Jesus says here and look at our own value system. Would we say with Jesus that a relationship with Him is more important than earthly prosperity? If so, if we really believe that, how do you think our lives should be different as a result?

To Think About:

What are some of the main encouragements or challenges you have taken from what we have studied together today? Is there any specific word of praise you would like to give to God for what you have learned about Jesus today? How about questions? Do you have any thing you are still wondering from what we have talked about? What are some of the practical differences what you studied makes on your life? What would you like to share with someone else? Is there any specific issue that this study has brought up that you want the members of your gospel community to be praying for you about?