

Upside Down and Backwards

Luke 6:17-26

When do we see things backwards (left and right) or upside down?

Sometimes we see life upside-down and backwards and we don't even know it!

Some key things that came before...

Jesus' first sermon (Luke 4)

'The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor....'

Jesus chose 12 special followers (Luke 6)

After a night full of prayer

Out of many "disciples" He chose 12 "apostles"

Then He began to show and to tell them what His Kingdom is like

Luke 6:17-27

17-19: Jesus taught and healed a great crowd from all over

It was a time for miracles

Seemingly not continuous miraculous healings

This was a special time for it

Jesus blessed abundantly

"Peace" for body, relationships, and soul

Personal connections (touch him) for miracles

Must have been chaotic!

Imagine: The joy, dancing, and laughter!

And teaching

20-21: Jesus taught: Who is in the favor of God? (part 1)

Isaiah 25:6-8

Favor: God's loving and action-filled attention

Those in Christ who know their deep need for God's blessing

No dichotomy between physical and non-physical poverty, hunger or grief

Includes every lack: money, food, relationships, health, psychology, spiritual, ...

The Kingdom of God is far more blessing than anything someone might lack, and it is yours!

Though not experiencing it all yet...

22-23: Jesus taught: Who is in the favor of God? (part 2)

Those who experience rejection because of their connection with Jesus ☞ great reward in heaven

Special status (like the prophets)

"Leap for joy!" → not merely "comfort"

Can be misapplied → martyr complex

Certainly this fit Jesus, and Paul, and Peter, and so many others in the history of Christianity

24-26: Jesus taught: Woe to the "rich"

Not in God's loving and action-filled attention

Who is the audience?

No change, so maybe "wealthy" disciples and seekers

"Woe!" is not judgment ☞ an invitation to change

Exactly the opposite of the blessings

This message is part of the reason for opposition

Particularly for religious people who find their identity in their visible power, wealth, health, and success

Problem is not wealth now but...

Gathering wealth unjustly: Zacchaeus

Keeping wealth ungenerously: rich man (& Lazarus)

Laughter: callousness to the trouble of others

Especially when it is in our power to act

Finding our "blessedness" in our wealth, comfort, laughter, and approval in the present age

Will miss out in the glorious age of God!

The Big Idea

**Those in Christ
who find their blessing in God
experience present and future joy
in His overwhelmingly generous hand**

Notes

Blessedness is for those who are "in Christ"

Not a statement about every person who has trouble

Not a glorification of trouble or lack (the troubles will go away in the Kingdom of God)

Spiritual & practical help: a divine combination!

What Jesus did: teaching & miracles for human needs

A great model for church ministry!

Whether practical help is miraculous or not...

Would likely lead to the same three groups in the church

Both disciples and people who initially come

because of the good they see and experience

Application

Where you lack...find your blessedness in Jesus

Believe Jesus: This is His claim about the world

Believe in Jesus: It happens in the person and work of Jesus

He really meant what He said

Blessed are God's people who are poor (in any way), hungry, weeping, or experiencing hardship in Jesus

In a way that goes far beyond earthly wealth → eternal weight of glory that far outweighs all temporary wealth

Such joy I lose daily because I think my small lack prevents my experiencing God's joy → actually an opportunity for joy!

Gospel thinking

Our greatest poverty is being separated from God because of our own sin

There is nothing I could ever do to fix that problem!

God gave His wealth (Jesus) to bless His enemies (us)

So I would stop being the enemy of God

So I would become a cherished child of God!

Since He eagerly paid the highest price for my greatest lack, why in the world would He hold back anything else?

So if you lack...find your blessedness in Jesus!

Jesus: "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink."

Blessings now

Spirit and worship and hearing His Word

Every gift we have received: life, relationships, food, shelter, ...

Every lack is a reminder of our limitless riches in Christ!

2 Corinthians 4:16-17

and blessings in the coming Kingdom of God

Dancing and laughter

Uncontainable joy in the abundant love of God!

Where you have...find your blessedness in Jesus

Jesus said, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions." Luke 12:15

A great danger of earthly blessings (money, things, relationships, physical health and ability, emotional strength, success, ...)

Thinking my blessedness is in earthly blessings
 Distraction from being rich toward God
 Earthly blessings will always disappoint & go away ☹️ angst

Be on your guard!

Where you have...bless others

Use your blessings (physical, spiritual, emotional, relational) to bless others

- Freely you received, now freely give in joy!
- What Jesus did (miracles) and called His disciples to do
- What Zacchaeus did and what the rich man did not do
- What the early church did, and Christ-like churches still do

As Jesus did, we should have people come who are attracted to the just, merciful, life-giving, and generous presence of Christian community

What Jesus did miraculously (feeding, healing) was a first step (down payment) of complete fulfillment to come in His Kingdom

The church should be a community and an instrument for increasing holiness, justice, love, and mercy

A down payment & initial taste of what is coming!

To say a blessing to the poor and then not do anything to help them is offensive to Jesus!

A Gospel-centered view of "bringing justice to the nations" (Isaiah 42:1)		
Holy God	Entirely good = holy, just, loving, and merciful	God's holistic plan for us too!
Sinful people	A mixture of good (HJLM) and not good. → every person and every organization	Christians and the Church must constantly repent and reform
Jesus' victorious death	Took the effects of sin on Himself (poverty), to give us His riches	Point everyone to Jesus Love others as Jesus loved
Blessing by faith in Jesus alone	We enter the goodness of God by faith in Christ alone We don't need human goodness to have the full blessing and goodness of God Nothing and no one can separate people in Christ from the love of God	Offer this to others too
To be like Jesus	By the power of the Spirit, bring good (HJLM) to all people in head, heart, and hands For every individual & in every organization/policy/practice we can touch (salty salt)	
Until Jesus comes again	The complete expression of God's goodness only comes when He returns	Keep pointing ourselves & others to this one true Hope!

Conclusion

Woe to those who find their "blessedness" anywhere else!

It is a good thing to fling away lesser gods while blessing

Invitation to be in God's loving and action-filled attention

Rejoice in Christ, both now and forever

Invitation to be like God: loving and action-filled attention

Across differences and in the midst of brokenness

Reflection Questions

1. Where are you aware of your lack, whether it be financial, physical, emotional, relational, psychological, ...?
What does it look like for you to find your blessedness in Jesus, in the loving and action attention of God?
2. Where do you have "riches"? James 1:17 says, "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows." Yet we need to be cautious about finding our "blessedness" primarily in pleasures and comforts of this world. What do we need to be cautious about? Why does it matter?
3. "It is a good thing to fling away lesser gods while blessing." Where are you tempted to find your blessedness in earthly wealth? Where will you be generous in blessing others which the riches God has given you? Why might that be hard to do?
4. What does it look like for you to bring good (holiness, justice, love, and mercy) where you have opportunity to do so? How might this affect your work? your studies? your social life? your private life?