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**Woe to You – Luke 6:17-26**

Let us pray: God of mercy, grant the Word you speak this day may take root in our hearts, and bear fruit to your honor and glory, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Blessed are the poor? Happy are the hungry? Fortunate are the tearful? What on earth is Jesus talking about. I never heard anybody say, "Isn't this great, I'm starving!" I have never seen a person sobbing their heart out with a smile of joy on their face. Have you?

Let's take a look at this part of His sermon: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.

"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.

These Scriptures probably sound somewhat familiar. In Matthew's gospel Jesus there gives what we call the Beatitudes. Blessed are the... However, Matthew's are different because they are more spiritual in nature.

Luke records a different set of beatitudes. Now, this was given through the preaching of Jesus, actual words from his lips. Luke is not changing the words of Jesus. Two different sermons, one on the Mount in Matthew and another on the Plain level place- Luke 6:17.

Similarities are because they are both delivered by the same person, Jesus. The Sermon on the Mount was given BEFORE Jesus chose His 12 Disciples. This sermon (the Sermon on the Plain) was preached AFTER He chose them. In addition, there's several other details that are different between these 2 messages.

In the Sermon on the Plain Jesus is stressing that people who experience poverty, hunger, sorrow and hatred are special to God... and He wants them to be special to us as well. So... that's the point of the blessings Jesus talks about. But then He shifts His focus... from blessings to curses (or woes):

"But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets."

What's Jesus talking about here? Well, he's contrasting the rich vs the poor. He's contrasting the well-fed with the hungry. He's contrasting the entertained masses vs. those who weep and mourn, and He's contrasting the popular with the hated.

Essentially Jesus is telling the rich and well-fed, the happy and popular to start paying attention to those who struggle with life. He's telling them to try to find ways of helping those who are poor, hungry and sorrowing... or else. Now, this is a repeated theme in Jesus' teachings. Jesus tells the story of the Rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-25:

"There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. "The time came when the beggar died, and the angels carried him to Abraham's side.

The rich man also died and was buried. In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So, he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.'

"But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. Now, who's sitting in hell? A rich guy who didn't care for a poor beggar named Lazarus.

Luke was out to prove that Jesus came to do away with distinctions that made some people think they are better than others. His is a universal Gospel-and the universe is populated by the less fortunate. Luke and Jesus are on their side.

The rich had problems hearing and rejoicing in the Gospel because it told them to change their ways and share. This was bad news to them. On the other hand, the poor heard him gladly because of the message of hope and liberation. This is where the Gospel is vital and life-changing.

We are rich materially and we are full materially. We might not think we are rich if we compare ourselves to professional athletes, entertainers or corporate CEOs who have more than we do, but we ARE rich if we compare ourselves to most of the world's population.

Our stomachs, closets, drawers, basements, attics and garages are full. Jesus is sad when he sees us make decisions that are contrary to what is best for us, for what he has in store for us.

He teaches us to see the world's sorry little treats for what they are compared to God's heavenly banquet. The poor in this world will receive God's blessings. You see, you and I are the ones commanded to help the poor (not the government). That was the point of the story of the Rich and Lazarus.

Our behavior is a natural expression of an inward goodness. In other words, you do as you believe, and you believe as you do. Those who satisfy only their physical needs will experience a terrible spiritual famine. You take control of your life. Don't let someone else or something else determine it for you.

Don't let the world squeeze you into its mold. You make your part of the world into YOUR mold. Injustice in this life will be reversed in the next life. God will win over all the forces that take away a person's humanity.

If God embraces us, the world can't take that away. To grow into becoming a Christian is, in no small part, to be converted into seeing the world as God sees it. Brother Smith Wigglesworth was a British evangelist who was influential in the early history of Pentecostalism. He saw the world as God sees it.

For example, Brother Smith Wigglesworth accompanied someone to visit a patient in a hospital. The patient was dying of cancer of the liver and had a protruded stomach. When Bro. Wigglesworth got to the sick man, he gave him a heavy punch on his stomach, and he fell down from his bed. The doctor raised an alarm.

But to his amazement and that of other hospital staff, the man who had been under life support jumped up and started to shout for joy saying, "Doctor, I am healed, I am healed." Before they knew it, Bro. Wigglesworth was on the third bed dragging another patient.

Eventually, he emptied the hospital beds of patients that day. If he were an educated person, he would have thought about what science said about the condition of those patients and would not have been able to move in faith the way he did.

So, we should do away with many things if we want to start moving in the ways of God. The Bible talks about Apostle Paul who preached and ministered in the streets.

There was an occasion when he accosted some men preaching in the street and asked if they had received the Holy Spirit since they believed. And

they answered, "We have never heard of anything called the Holy Spirit." They told him that they only received the baptism of John.

Paul laid his hands on them and prayed for them and they began to prophesy and speak in tongues right there in the streets. (Acts 19:1-7). A modern man would find that very difficult. He would ask the preacher to look for a hidden corner to pray.

Whether the negative circumstance has happened because you are a devoted follower of Jesus Christ, or just because bad things happen in life, that negative circumstance can lead to great spiritual blessing. It's all about the condition or attitude of your heart.

Do you trust God in your circumstances, or do you not? Whatever circumstances you find yourself in – trust God. The apostle Paul did this, which is why he can write in Philippians 4 that although he is sometimes without food, sometimes he is beaten and slandered and imprisoned, he has learned the secret of being content in all situations.

The secret is an eternal and spiritual perspective. He writes in Philippians 4:13 that he can do all things through Christ who strengthens him. This is the secret to living the contented life, even when from a physical viewpoint, there is not much to be contented about.

Every negative thing that happens in your life and my life is another opportunity for spiritual blessing. We may see God provide in a miraculous way. We may experience God's presence and protection in ways never before imagined.

We may understand new truths about the Bible or come to grasp a whole new dimension about God that we were formerly ignorant of. Even if the blessing does not come in this earth, we know that there are great rewards stored up in heaven for those who stand firm under persecution and worldly trials.

If, as a disciple of Jesus Christ, you stand up under poverty, and hunger, and weeping and public scorn, congratulations. That does not mean that every Christian who is rich, or every Christian who laughs, or every Christian who is popular isn't much of a Christian and will not receive reward in heaven.

The point made by Christ is that as one of His disciples, these things in the woes must not be the things we chase after. Though all the world chases after riches and entertainment and fame and glory and popularity, true followers of Christ know that such things are empty and meaningless in light of eternity.

"There are people in this world that say we are poor people here. But no one is poor who has Jesus." There is no "Woe is me" as long as you have Jesus. Amen.

Let us pray: Dear Father, help us to realize that we can never find happiness in the things that this world has to offer. You alone are the source of true happiness. Amen.