

Luke 6:24-27a
December 9, 2018

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Over the last two weeks, we looked at four WAYS in which people are blessed (or happy) when we follow Jesus. We learned that blessings await the poor, those who hunger, those who weep, and those who are hated, for God's kingdom belongs to them. But now Luke records four WOES that Jesus preached that deal with certain life circumstances. They will perhaps be familiar because these woes are opposite of what we processed over the last two weeks.

Our task is to figure out why these seemingly "good things" in life are classified as woes. Let's begin. Would someone read Luke 6:24-26?

BOOK (NIV 1984):

V.24:

- "But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort.

V.25:

- Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep.

V.26:

- Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q V.24: What is the first WOE that you see? ["Woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort.]

Q: How should we interpret the word "rich" in this context? [Not strictly socioeconomic. Just as the meaning of "poor" should not be interpreted strictly in socioeconomic terms, nor should we interpret the "rich" in socioeconomic terms. Thus, "rich" refers to those who are arrogant, haughty, and dishonest.]

Q: Was Jesus condemning a person for being rich? [No] If not, what's His message to the rich? [Don't continue in a pattern of being self-satisfied, self-reliant and ungenerous. The poor in spirit modeled a complete reliance or dependence on God.]

Q V.25: What is the next WOE? ["Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry."]

Q: What is Jesus really saying here? Surely, He isn't saying I'm going to take food away from you so that you starve. [Again, Luke is highlighting the spiritual truth that Jesus was teaching. Jesus taught that you take what you want from life and you pay for it. If you want wealth, or in this case, fullness, you can get it; but there is a price to pay: *that is all that you'll get.*]

Q: So it begs the question again: Is Jesus saying it's "wrong" to have wealth or to be so comfortable that you're never "hungry?" [No – He is saying *that being satisfied with them is its own judgment.*]

Q: What is the next woe? ["Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep."]

Q: Again, there is nothing wrong about having laughter in your life. So what is the spiritual truth Jesus is conveying? [The present temporary state of happiness, laughter, and gluttony of the haughty rich will one day end and will be followed by an eternal state of mourning and weeping.]

Q V.26: What is the last WOE? ["Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets."]

Q: Who does "you" refer to in this WOE? [Those who are arrogant, oppressive, unbelieving rich about whom "all" speak well.]

Q: Why is it a problem when men speak well of those who are rich, satisfied, etc? [Jesus is alluding to OT examples where men spoke well of certain prophets, but in fact, they were false prophets. Those who received universal praise were in fact false prophets. (See Isa 30:9–11; Jer 5:31; 23:16–22; Mic 2:11)]

Q: After looking at these four woes, what do you think they have in common? [Those who place value on wealth, power, and popularity as an end in itself will lose eternally. They find satisfaction in these things instead of in Jesus. And to be clear, it's not wrong to have these things. The difference is Christians enjoy all that God gives us (I Tim 6:17) because we live "with eternity's values in full view."]

X-REF Rev 3:14-17

Transition: Jesus is preparing his apostles for persecution. This was the experience of the prophets, the experience of Jesus, and would be on occasion their experience as well. Jesus is teaching them that persecution *affirms that they are indeed God's people*. Now Luke turns his attention back to the last beatitude, which speaks of times "when men hate you...because of the Son of Man." The following section of verses is devoted to this theme. As we read this, you'll find four commands as it relates to those who hate us. Someone read Luke 6:27-31.

[Read Luke 6:27-31]

V.27:

- "But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,

V.28:

- bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.

V.29:

- If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic.

V.30:

- Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back.

V.31:

- Do to others as you would have them do to you.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q V.27: Jesus is expanding His teaching on “when men hate you...” Jesus has a new paradigm that contains some commands. What are the first two commands you see in this verse? [“love your enemies and do good to those who hate you.”]

Q V.27a: Does anyone want to guess the Greek word for “love” in this verse? [Agapao]

MacArthur writes that **agapao** "expresses the purest, noblest form of love, which is volitionally driven (X-REF: Php 2:13 note = the Spirit provides the desire and power, but we still must work it out – X-REF Php 2:12), not motivated by superficial appearance, emotional attraction, or sentimental relationship. (1 & 2 Thessalonians. Moody Press)

Love is present imperative which is a command we can keep only by continually relying on the supernatural enablement of the Holy Spirit. Loving your enemy is simply not our fleshly, natural response! Because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Ro 5:5-note), we have His love with which we can love those who are our enemies. This is not natural but supernatural. "We **love** (present tense - supernaturally, as our lifestyle) because He first loved us." (1 Jn 4:19-note)

Q: After I quick study on “agapao” love, when Jesus says “love your enemies,” does that mean the apostles are to sit on the sidelines and “love” them? If no, what are they supposed to do? [They are to *serve* them! And because it is the Spirit of God who gives us this desire and power to do so, it is incumbent on us to act on it in obedience to Jesus. ***Jesus is concerned that we follow through on it and show our love in concrete service for the sinner.***]

Q: What are the possible positive outcomes if we love our enemies? [Let people engage. our response may change the heart of our enemy. Love like this is unbeatable. I Cor 13:8 says “Love never fails.”]

LOOK: The four “woes” all share a common truth: you take what you want from life and you pay for it. If you want immediate wealth, fullness, laughter, and popularity, you can get it; but there is a price to pay: *that is all you will get*. Jesus did not say that these things were wrong. He said that *being satisfied with them is its own judgment*.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Vol. 1, p. 193). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

The four “woes” all share a common truth: you take what you want from life and you pay for it. If you want immediate wealth, fullness, laughter, and popularity, you can get it; but there is a price to pay: *that is all you will get*. Jesus did not say that these things were wrong. He said that *being satisfied with them is its own judgment*.

H.H. Farmer wrote that “to Jesus the terrible thing about having wrong values in life and pursuing wrong things is not that you are doomed to bitter disappointment, but that you are *not*; not that you do not achieve what you want, but that you *do*” (*Things Not Seen*, Nishbet [London], p. 96). When people are satisfied with the lesser things of life, the good instead of the best, then their successes add up only as failures. These people are spiritually bankrupt and do not realize it.

Life is built on character, and character is built on decisions. But decisions are based on values, *and values must be accepted by faith*. Moses made his life-changing decisions on the basis of values that other people thought were foolish (Heb. 11:24–29), but God honored his faith. The Christian enjoys all that God gives him (1 Tim. 6:17) because he lives “with eternity’s values in view.”

People (vv. 27). Jesus assumed that anybody who lived for eternal values would get into trouble with the world’s crowd.

Martin, J. A. (1985). *Isaiah*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 220)

b. *The woes (6:24–26).*

6:24–26. In contrast with the disciples who had given up everything to follow Jesus were the people who would refuse to give up anything to follow Him (cf. 18:18–30). These were the **rich**, the **well-fed**, the ones **who laugh**, who were popular. They did not understand the gravity of the situation which confronted them. They refused to follow the One who could bring them into the kingdom, and therefore Jesus pronounced woes on them. These woes were the exact reversal of their temporal benefits. And they are the exact opposites of the blessings and rewards of Jesus’ followers, cited in 6:20–23.

3. TRUE RIGHTEOUSNESS (6:27–45).

a. *True righteousness revealed by love (6:27a).*

6:27a. Jesus mentioned seven aspects of unconditional love. These actions, not done naturally by human nature, require supernatural enabling—and are thus proof of true righteousness:

(1) **Love your enemies.**

Cabal, T., Brand, C. O., Clendenen, E. R., Copan, P., Moreland, J. P., & Powell, D. (2007). *The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith* (p. 1524). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

6:24–26 Although Matthew omitted these “woes” in his account, it does not mean that Luke was putting words into Jesus’ mouth. Similar terminology and syntax between the woes that Luke

recorded and the beatitudes that Matthew recorded suggest the same. Either Matthew did not know of the woes or he omitted them as unnecessary to his purpose. Jesus was not condemning all rich, satisfied, joyful, and well-liked people any more than He was commending all poor, hungry, sad, and persecuted people. The former categories stand for the self-satisfied, self-reliant, and ungenerous as the latter stand for those who rely on God.

Stein, R. H. (1992). Luke (Vol. 24, pp. 202–207). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

6:24 Luke, unlike Matthew, followed his list of beatitudes with a parallel list of woes. Although a different audience is envisioned by the very nature of the material, Luke placed this material here because of its parallelism to the four beatitudes. We find a similar parallelism in Isa 65:13–14. Even as the blessings of the beatitudes reverse the present negative circumstance of the second, third, and fourth beatitudes, so the woes reverse the present positive circumstances of the corresponding woes.

But woe to you who are rich. Such “woes” are found elsewhere in the Gospels (esp. in Luke), as well as in the rest of the Bible. The meaning of “woe” and “rich” must be understood in light of the meaning of “blessed” and “poor” in Luke 6:20. Thus rich should not simply be equated with an economic status. It denotes the arrogant, haughty (Prov 28:11; Sir 13:20), and dishonest (Prov 28:6) who oppress the poor (Sir 13:19) and who were the object of the prophets’ criticism (Isa 32:9–14; and esp. Amos 6:1f.). The kind of “rich” Luke had in mind is clear from Luke 12:13–21; 16:14, 19–31; 18:18–30. The woes refer to the experiencing of God’s wrath instead of his blessing. The strong adversative “but” indicates that what awaits the rich is not the blessedness of the beatitudes but terrible torment (16:19–31).

For you have already received your comfort. The rich now have all the consolation that their wealth will ever bring. At best it may last them their lifetime, but for some even that lifetime may be considerably shorter than they expected, as the rich fool discovered (12:16–21).

6:25 Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. This reversal proclaimed by Jesus already had been announced by Mary (1:53). This is an example of synecdoche in which a part of the judgment upon the satiated, namely, hunger, serves as a metaphor for the whole of the judgment that will come upon them.

Woe to you who laugh now. The present temporary state of happiness, laughter, and gluttony of the haughty rich will one day end and will be followed by an eternal state of mourning and weeping. (Cf. Jas 4:9 for the contrasting of weeping, mourning, and laughing.)

6:26 Even as the reader encounters in the fourth beatitude a style change, so in the fourth woe there is also a style change. This woe again speaks to those arrogant, oppressive, unbelieving rich about whom “all” speak well. When all people praise someone, he or she best beware, for those prophets in the OT who received universal praise were in fact false prophets (Isa 30:9–11; Jer 5:31; 23:16–22; Mic 2:11).

The Lukan Message

We find in this section a major Lukan emphasis on the great reversal the kingdom brings. See Introduction 8 (5). Blessings await the poor, who hunger, weep, and are hated; for God’s kingdom belongs to them, and God will one day wipe away each tear. This momentary (“now”) affliction will soon give way to glory (2 Cor 4:17). On the other hand, for the arrogant rich, who are now satiated, there is a fourfold woe. For Luke’s readers this should encourage them not to

lose heart (cf. 2 Cor 4:16) but to continue with greater resolve to live with eternity's values in view. Whereas the coming of God's kingdom brings with it a partial realization of these blessings, believers understand that the ultimate filling and laughter spoken of in the beatitudes is "not yet" and awaits the consummation of the kingdom that belongs to them. In these verses Luke also sought to warn of the dangers of riches and to exhort his readers to make judicious use of their possessions. See Introduction 8 (7).

Two other Lukan themes appear in this passage. One involves the persecution that comes upon God's people. God's people must prepare themselves for persecution. This was the lot of the prophets (Luke 11:47–51; 13:33–34; Acts 7:52), the lot of Jesus (Luke 4:24; Acts 7:52) and would on occasion be theirs as well. Such persecution, however, affirms that they are indeed God's people. A second involves teachings given to the disciples that recall what Luke stated concerning the traditions being passed down by the "eyewitnesses and servants of the word" (Luke 1:2). Having chosen the twelve who would be his apostles (6:13), Jesus now was teaching them the traditions they would pass on to the church (6:20f.). Thus, Luke's readers could be assured of the certainty of what they had been taught (1:4). See Introduction 7 (1).

Context

Having completed the parallelism of the beatitudes and the woes, Luke now turned his attention back to the last beatitude, which speaks of the times "when men hate you ... because of the Son of Man" (6:22). The entire section is devoted to this theme and contains the following subdivisions: 6:27–28—four commands concerning love of one's enemies; 6:29–30—four examples of the commands; 6:31—a summary; 6:32–34—three further examples of the commands; 6:35a—three commands concerning love of enemies; 6:35b—a divine promise; 6:36—a concluding summary. Much of this material is paralleled in Matt 5:38–48. A Lukan emphasis in this section can be seen in the additional commands to love one's enemies found in 6:28, 34–35a.

Comments

6:27 But I tell you who hear me. "You" is emphatic: *But to you I say who hear*. Because the woes of 6:24–26 were not directed to the disciples (see comments on 6:24), Luke included these words to help his readers recognize that what follows is not a set of conditions needing to be met in order to become disciples but rather directions to those who are already disciples.

In 6:27–28 we find four commands in synonymous parallelism, in which the same thought is repeated in poetic rhythm. The importance of these commands is evident in that they are Jesus' first direct commands in the Gospel. Luke may have included four commands concerning enemy love in order to match the four reproaches in 6:22. (For Luke's love of "fours," see comments on 6:22.) We find a sharp contrast in the four commands to normal attitudes toward enemies. At Qumran one was to love all the sons of light (fellow members of the sect) and hate the sons of darkness (those outside the sect). We find a more positive remark toward enemies in the *Testament of Joseph* 18:2, "If anyone wishes to do you harm, you should pray for him, along with doing good" (cf. also Exod 23:4–5). But Jesus' positive emphasis on loving your enemies is unique in its clarity as well as in the numerous examples given to explain what this love entails.

Love ... do good ... bless ... pray. The synonymous parallelism that follows the first command helps to explain and clarify what loving one's enemies means. The last three commands reveal that the command to love one's enemies does not appeal to the emotions but to the will. Jesus did not command his followers "to feel" in a certain way but to act in a certain way. Emotions

can be elicited but not commanded. Actions and the will can be commanded. Thus the command to love one's enemies is not directed to how believers are to feel but how they are to act. Often loving feelings follow loving actions much like a caboose follows an engine. Jesus' commands, however, are addressed to the engine of the will and not the caboose of feelings. Love involves doing good. (Cf. how the centurion's love for Israel resulted in his building a synagogue, i.e., his doing good [7:5], even as the good Samaritan's love of his neighbor [10:27–37] resulted in his doing good to the needy man, who as a Jew was his enemy.)

© 2018 Lee Ann Penick