



table of contents

luke 6.....	2
luke 6. ¹²⁻¹⁶	2
luke 6. ²⁰⁻²⁶	3
luke 6. ³¹⁻³⁶	5
luke 6. ³⁷⁻³⁸	6
luke 6. ³⁹⁻⁴²	7
luke 6. ⁴³⁻⁴⁵	8
luke 6. ⁴⁶⁻⁴⁹	9

Luke 6

Luke 6.¹²⁻¹⁶

¹²*In those days, he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. ¹³And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles; ¹⁴Simon, (whom he also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, ¹⁵Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphæus, and Simon called Zelotes, ¹⁶And Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor.

We know next to nothing about these men, these disciples, these apostles. The New Testament Gospels are not about them. The gospel is not about them. What scripture tells us about them is not particularly complimentary and so what we do know about them is not all that impressive. Standing with Jesus—a light whose “luster [is] above that of the sun at noon-day”—their light shines dimly, a little in excess “of the stars in the firmament.”¹ And yet, unlike so many before and after them, they recognized Jesus for who and what he was and is. Though they did not understand what it meant, they knew that he was Messiah. And they knew that there was nowhere else to go and no one else to turn to, to find and feast upon “the words of eternal life.”² They came to know that He was God and that “God is love” (1 Jn. 4.⁸).

This was enough. Is it enough for all of us. With this we are equipped to go out into the world and bear witness to him who is “the bread of life,”³ the most fundamental need of our spiritual existence and advancement.

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

(edition: may 21, 2024)

¹ 1 Nephi 1.⁹⁻¹⁰

² John 6.⁶⁸

³ John 6.³⁵

²⁰Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God.

²¹Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled.

Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh.

²²Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake.

²³Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.

²⁴But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation.

²⁵Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger."

Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep.

²⁶Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you!

For so did their fathers to the false prophets.

I am always intrigued, but not surprised, by our seeming preference for Matthew's version of the Beatitudes over that of Luke. With their high standards, both versions of the Beatitudes are extraordinarily challenging. However, in my judgment, Luke's version raises the stakes.

For example, Matthew's "poor in spirit" is illusive. What does it mean to be "poor in spirit," and who is "poor in spirit"? How does one measure and judge whether one is "poor in spirit"? We can and have discussed and debated such questions ad-nauseum, always with the same disappointing and unsatisfying results. One suspects that this is just the way we like it. Keep it ambiguous so we do not have to ask harder questions, and face more troubling realities.

But Luke's version grants less shade. Who is "poor"? Answering this question is relatively simple. Real, temporal poverty is easily measured. We can look at our own life and determine whether we are "poor" or not. Finding ourselves lacking "poverty," we wonder if we are "blessed" and whether ours is the "kingdom of God." But, worse yet, we can observe the very real poverty of millions of our fellow citizens. We do not much care for them. They are lazy. We "reproach," justifying our reproach by imagining that their poverty is somehow related to a spiritual defect. We chaff at the idea that the great God of Heaven is particularly interested in their plight, their poverty, and considers them the blessed ones. Blessed over us? This is all too galling. Better to rush back to Matthew—after all, it more closely resembles the Beatitudes found in 3 Nephi of the Book of Mormon.

Of course, Luke's account throws even less shade with its parallel, "Woe unto you that are rich." No spiritualizing this! No reading a nonsensical, "woe unto you that are rich in spirit." Similarly, Luke's Jesus pronounces a blessing upon those who are "hungry," those who "weep," and those who are "hated" and disrespected, while pronouncing a "woe" upon those who are "full," who are always happy, and those who are well-spoken of, the respectable.

What the heck is Luke up to with all this nonsense? When we sense what looks to us like a world turned up-side down, one wonders if Luke is not giving us a glimpse into a more authentic Jesus. It was no less than Jesus' own mother, after all, who warned us about her son and his desire to turn the world upside down in precisely the same way Jesus indicates in Luke's version of the Beatitudes.

"He hath shewed strength with his arm;
he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

He hath put down the mighty from their seats,
and exalted them of low degree.
He hath filled the hungry with good things;
and the rich he hath sent empty away.”⁴

Yes, Jesus’ “gospel,” or “good news” might be something very different than we imagine. For some, the “good news” might actually be troubling, “bad news.” I can’t help but think of that very folksy LDS hymn, “Whose on the Lord side, Who?” Apparently, not the temporally rich, full, content, or well-thought of. It is, indeed, enough to make one’s head spin.

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

(edition: may 21, 2024)

⁴ Luke 1.⁵¹⁻⁵³

³¹“And as ye would that men should do to you,
do ye also to them likewise.
³²For if ye love them which love you,
what thank have ye?
For sinners also love those that love them.
³³And if ye do good to them which do good to you,
what thank have ye?
For sinners also do even the same.
³⁴And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive,
what thank have ye?
For sinners also lend to sinners,
to receive as much again.
³⁵“But love ye your enemies,
and do good, and lend,
hoping for nothing again;
and your reward shall be great,
and ye shall be the children of the Highest:
for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.
³⁶Be ye therefore merciful,
as your Father also is merciful.

I often think of Jesus as he carried his cross to Golgotha and then submitted to its cruelty. I have wondered many times what thoughts passed through his mind. I can't say, of course. But I feel very, very confident that his thoughts did not revolve around the power and glory that would come to him because of his sacrifice. Rather, I think it likely that his thoughts centered on each of us and the blessings that would enter our lives because of his self-sacrifice.

Sometimes it feels like we, contrary to Jesus' example, require assurances that there is something in it for us before we will commit ourselves to do that which is simply right and good, and is a beneficial to others. But in this portion of Luke's version of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, we are admonished to follow Jesus in giving up all thought of "what's in it for us." We are admonished to be merciful ("perfect" in Matthew's telling) as our Father in Heaven is merciful; to do good to and for those who don't look good on us and may not appreciate our efforts in their behalf.

How dramatically would the keeping of these admonitions change the nature of life on earth as we know it! How dramatically different would human society be! How dramatically different would the world be if everyone treated everyone else as they themselves wished to be treated? What a different world it would be if everyone acted consistent with their divine heritage! If everyone acted as children of God and imitated his self-denying mercy toward others.

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

(edition: may 21, 2024)

³⁷“Judge not, and ye shall not be judged:
condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned:
forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:

³⁸Give, and it shall be given unto you;
good measure, pressed down, and shaken together,
and running over, shall men give into your bosom.
For with the same measure that ye mete
withal it shall be measured to you again.”

We have all needed to measure something. How many feet and inches long is your living room? How many cups of sugar are needed for your dessert recipe? How many pounds did you gain after all the holiday feasting? Hopefully our tools—tape measure, measuring cup, scales—are accurate. Hopefully, for example, the inch is really an inch. If the inch is only 7/8 inch, we measure our living room to be smaller than it actually is. If our cup of sugar is actually 7/8 cup, our dessert will be a disappointment.

We measure people and ideas around us continuously. We must. But we must do so accurately, according to some accepted, maybe even divine standard. If we use faulty standards, we might shortchange and devalue others. Jesus warns that when we devalue others, we become subject to the same devaluation. But when we are generous in our measurement, others will be generous to us. We receive a “good measure... and running over.

If Jesus practices what he preaches, and if he, indeed, is a reflection of God, his Father, then we can take great comfort in the knowledge that we are and will be judged by an extraordinarily generous God.

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

(edition: may 21, 2024)

³⁹And he spake a parable unto them,
“Can the blind lead the blind?
Shall they not both fall into the ditch?
⁴⁰The disciple is not above his master:
but every one that is perfect shall be as his master.
⁴¹“And why beholdest thou the mote
that is in thy brother’s eye,
but perceivest not the beam
that is in thine own eye?
⁴²Either how canst thou say to thy brother,
‘Brother, let me pull out the mote
that is in thine eye,’
when thou thyself beholdest not the beam
that is in thine own eye?
Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out
of thine own eye,
and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote
that is in thy brother’s eye.

It probably shouldn’t. Jesus is addressing something that is deadly serious. Yet, the truth is that this passage has always brought a smile to my face. I can’t help seeing this gigantic beam, the size of a ship’s mast or a home’s long rafter sticking out of this tiny little eyeball... and chuckling just a bit. I wonder if Jesus smiled.

We are wont to measure others’ flaws in feet, yards, meters, miles, even—Jesus addressed this just before this passage. Others’ flaws speak to a lack of character. We measure our own flaws in millimeters, microns, as tiny as a splinter. Our flaws speak to a momentary lapse in judgement, inconsistent with our character.

Jesus, however, reminds us that it is often exactly the opposite. There are moments when we see the beam in our own eye as just that, a beam. But this does not keep us from performing surgery on another. In fact, it often seems to drive us to dig deeper into the other’s wound. There may be times when another could use our help getting a speck out of their eye, but we should be sure that we have first gotten the beam out of our own, lest we do irreparable harm. We all go through periods when we are blind to our flaws. But Jesus invites us to be on guard of such delusion. He encourages us to deal with our flaws. Only then can we know how to and actually be a healer to others.

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

(edition: may 21, 2024)

⁴³“For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit;
neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

⁴⁴For every tree is known by his own fruit.
For of thorns men do not gather figs,
nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes.

⁴⁵“A good man out of the good treasure of his heart
bringeth forth that which is good;
and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart
bringeth forth that which is evil:
for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.”

In comparing plant production to human behavior and speech, Jesus is actually addressing more than simple “behavior” and “speech”—our “works.” He is focused on “fruits,” “outcomes,” “consequences” of our works.

Consider a farmer and what constitutes a good farmer. Suppose a farmer works, and works, and works. Every time we pass by, we see him working in the field. Then imagine that come harvest time, he has no crop to show for all his efforts. Will he be counted as a good farmer? No. He will not be judged by how hard he works or how many hours he spends in his labor. He is a farmer to produce a crop, “fruit.” He will be judged on his harvest.

So it is with us. We are to determine our “goodness” or “evil” not simply by our works, but the fruit our work produces. Bad behavior and bad speech produce deleterious “fruit,” i.e., outcomes and consequences for individuals and societies that are subjected to them. On the other hand, good behavior and good speech produce positive or good “fruit,” i.e., outcomes and consequences for individuals and societies that are the beneficiaries of them.

God does not simply call us to labor in his vineyard. The question that Jesus would have us ask is, “How impactful are we in the lives of individuals and the functioning of society? What are the outcomes of our labors? Is the world a better place for our having been and labored in it?”

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

(edition: may 21, 2024)

⁴⁶“And why call ye me, ‘Lord, Lord,’
and do not the things which I say?
⁴⁷Whosoever cometh to me,
and heareth my sayings,
and doeth them,
I will shew you to whom he is like:
⁴⁸he is like a man which built an house,
and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock:
and when the flood arose,
the stream beat vehemently upon that house,
and could not shake it:
for it was founded upon a rock.
⁴⁹But he that heareth, and doeth not,
is like a man that without a foundation
built an house upon the earth;
against which the stream did beat vehemently,
and immediately it fell;
and the ruin of that house was great.”

What could make more sense or be more consistent with rational and predictable explanations of the causes and effects of discipleship than what is found in Jesus’ analogy of building construction? In his analogy, Jesus has explained how to build a house. When one builds a house on a foundation, as per Jesus’ instructions, the house will endure the, often, harsh weather conditions it will face. When one ignores Jesus’ instructions and dispenses with the foundation, the house will not endure those same conditions.

While the builder would be clueless as to how to build a house without Jesus’ instructions, and while it is the builder’s observance or non-observance of the building instructions that determines whether the house stands or falls, Jesus need not—and, I suggest, normally does not—thereafter act as an active agent in “making” or “causing” the house to stand or fall. Whether the house stands or falls is not the consequence of God’s active agency in “blessing” or “punishing.” Whether the house stands or falls is the natural consequence of it having been built in such a way as to withstand harsh weather conditions or not.

So it is in our discipleship. The “blessing” that God provides comes in the form of his providing instruction on how best to navigate this world in preparation for navigation within the next. When we follow his instructions, we very naturally successfully endure the oft-harsh conditions of mortality and are better prepared for whatever conditions immortality may present. If we do not follow his instructions, we will very naturally fail to navigate the harsh conditions of this world and be unprepared for those of the next.

This is not active “blessing” or “punishment” from a God either pleased or angered. It is the natural consequence of having followed or not the instructions so graciously provided and so necessary for successful navigation.

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

(edition: may 21, 2024)