

“Things Accomplished Among Us” (Luke 1:1)

Selected Reflections From Luke

Woes and Beatitudes

Luke 6:20-23 & 24-26

In Luke chapter six, verses 20-23, there is a small collection of beatitudes. Right after that, a small collection of woes, in verses 24-26. What are these about?

A beatitude is a statement of blessing, with a condition attached. That means – it is not a generic blessing for any inactive recipient. A beatitude is a promise or statement of blessing, with a condition attached. *If you want the blessing, you receive it through your compliance with the condition.*

A woe is a classic prophetic format, of announcing doom to a specific guilty party or group. *Don't worry about the woe, if you are not described.*

Listen now to the beatitudes followed by the woes in Luke 6.

²⁰ And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said:

“Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

²¹ “Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied.

“Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.

²² “Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! ²³ Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.

²⁴ “But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.

²⁵ “Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry.

“Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.

²⁶ “Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.

Please hold back on your first impressions. Jesus is not saying, if you live below the poverty level, you are hungry and you cry all the time – that’s your easy ticket into His kingdom. (The Bible nowhere offers a “discount card” to those who struggle from paycheck to paycheck.)

Then, when you go through the woes, hold back from the conclusion that if you live above the poverty level (an artificial, relative statistic), have plenty to eat and enjoy some laughter, your access to His kingdom is blocked. Given everything else the Bible says, that rules out one’s economic status taking you close to God, or far from Him, these impulsive interpretations cannot be what Jesus is talking about.

Similar to the teaching in Matt. 5:1-12, this is about your condition of heart, not your bank account and property holdings. To be a citizen in Christ’s Kingdom, it is essential to know you are broke (poor, morally bankrupt); know you are empty until you let God feed you; and that you mourn over sin.

-Warren E. Berkley