

Pastor Mollie's Sermon
November 3, 2019
Luke 6:20-31- All Saints Sunday

Luke's "Sermon on the Plain" sounds a lot like Matthew's "Sermon on the Mount."

But there are some significant differences.

For one thing, it's shorter.

Luke includes barely half of the Beatitudes found in Matthew.

But Luke adds something to Matthew's reassuring list of blessings that might make us squirm a bit, if we listen with honest ears.

Along with his short list of blessings,

Luke includes a corresponding list of Woes.

So, as we read this passage together, you will want to follow what is on your hand out, because the verses aren't going to come out in exactly the same order found in the bulletin. I will read the plain text; you read the bold. READ

So, what do the blessings and woes from the first part of this passage have to do with Christ's instructions for living like true saints of God in the verses that follow?

At first, it sounds like the very things that bring us woe are the same things that bring us blessings, doesn't it?

Ah, but there is a difference.

Look carefully at what Jesus is saying in these Beatitudes and their matching woe-itudes.

What do all the blessings have in common?

Seeking God. What do all the woes have in common?

Seeking ourselves.

I think the message is actually pretty simple: We are blessed when we seek God, regardless of our earthly circumstances,

and we find woe *whenever we are self-satisfied instead of seeking God.*

When Jesus blesses the poor and hungry, the sorrowful and the ridiculed,

he isn't saying that we should all aspire to poverty, hunger, sorrow, or being verbally abused.

He is saying that God is present with us, even when the world has abandoned us, that God loves us, even when it feels like everyone else hates us.

As saints of God, then, we find blessing in seeking God, loving those whom God loves, no matter what.

When Jesus announces woe to those who are rich, eat well, and enjoy fame and admiration from people,

he isn't saying that wealth, good food, and popularity are bad things.

He is saying that when we start to take material blessings for granted,

or worse, think that we have somehow acquired these gifts by our own efforts alone, we in a sense abandon God, and our self-dependence will be our spiritual downfall.

Look at your reading, do you notice the word **NOW**, quite often?

I love seeing this...

Because it shows us that those who weep NOW, you will laugh...

Those who are laughing now... you will weep.

The word **now** gives us a snap shot of where we may be now, but not forever.

Our life ebbs and flows in and out of woes and blessings.

But then we come to Vs. 27 – "But I say to *you that listen...*"

No matter which camp you put yourself into to **now**,
whether blessed or woebegone,
none of us can escape Christ's direct commands.
We are all here, right now, hearing the Word of the Lord together.
There's no fudging on this one: *every one of us is being told to love our enemies,
bless the people who curse us,
and do good to the very people who hate us.*
Jesus is turning the tables on us, reminding us that God's kingdom doesn't play by earthly rules.
The things we think are important: wealth, fame, power – these mean nothing in the Kingdom of
God, where love, mercy, and compassion mean everything.
Loving our enemies is not a ticket *into* sainthood.
Christ's command to love our enemies is borne *out of* our sainthood.
It is the way we are to respond to being blessed:
When we are yearning for God, we want the things God wants.
God wants every person on earth to know him and love him.
When we are seeking God, we feel the pain and sorrow God feels for people who are hurting.
These are the people God loves, remember.
Every person on earth.
As we practice generosity, we lose the desire to accumulate more than we actually need,
and we may even find that we need considerably less than we thought we did before.
When we stand up to injustice with love and generosity, we affirm that every human being is
loved by God, worthy in God's sight.
Here's the thing:
We are saints because we are sinners – sinners who have been forgiven and loved and graced
into sainthood.
It has nothing to do with what we do, and everything to do with who God is. God loves us.
God made us for that very purpose, so God could love us and we could love God.
God loves us enough to forgive us for being satisfied with ourselves,
for gorging ourselves while others go hungry,
for hoarding our wealth while others have nothing.
Yes, God loves us enough to forgive us for everything we have ever done to separate ourselves
from God.
God will forgive.
God loves us enough to help us live as both sinner and saint- equal parts, all the time!
We join the great company of saints who have gone before us,
and the great company of saints who will come after us –
all of us forgiven,
all of us loved to our very core.
We come together around this table to remember that God's love isn't limited by our standards.
In Jesus, God is setting a new standard: love your enemies.
Do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you,
pray for those who abuse you.
Do to others as you would have them do to you.
Do to others as God *has already done* for you.
Not so you can become a saint,
but because you already are.