

Faith and Love C.O.G.I.C Sunday School

Lesson 7 January 14, 2024

UNCONDITIONAL LOVE



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- ▶ Bible Basis: Luke 6:17–31
- ▶ Bible Truth: We may have to pay a price for our Christian witness.
- ▶ Memory Verse: “But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you” (Luke 6:27, KJV)
- ▶ Lesson Aim: By the end of the lesson, we will KNOW how to interpret the meanings of love and judgment; EXPLORE the difficult feelings associated with loving people who show total disdain for us; and DEVELOP prayers that express love for the enemy.
- ▶ Background Scriptures: Luke 6– Read and incorporate the insights gained from the Background Scriptures into your study of the lesson.

Lesson Scripture: Luke 6:17-31, KJV

1 And it came to pass on the second sabbath after the first, that he went through the corn fields; and his disciples plucked the ears of corn, and did eat, rubbing them in their hands.

2 And certain of the Pharisees said unto them, Why do ye that which is not lawful to do on the sabbath days?

3 And Jesus answering them said, Have ye not read so much as this, what David did, when himself was an hungred, and they which were with him;

LIGHT ON THE WORD

The plain or level place could have been an actual plain or a flat piece of land. Or, it could have been a level place on the side of the mountain. This word has confused scholars, for some have believed this passage is parallel to Matthew 5–7. If not parallel, then Jesus repeated some of the same sayings on a different occasion (which was often the case for an itinerant, traveling teacher).

LIGHT ON THE WORD

Tyre and Sidon were important cities on the coast of Lebanon. In the Old Testament, they were powerful city-states and home to the Phoenicians. They were also known as the Sidonians—a Canaanite people who were not driven out by the Israelites when they entered the Promised Land. They remained on the coast and became powerful and rich through shipping and trading. Both cities were conquered by the Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans with mixed populations. The Greek woman in Mark 7:23–30 was a citizen of Tyre or Sidon.

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Teaching the Bible Lesson

LIFE NEED FOR TODAY'S LESSON:

AIM: We will learn how to live as one of God's
people amid opposition.



INTRODUCTION

The Sermon on the Plain

The Sermon on the Plain is one of the most powerful passages in the Bible for Jesus gives an agenda for God's Kingdom. He provides a set of rules and instructions for His people to live by. The first part of these instructions consists of four blessings and four woes. These blessings and woes are followed by specific instructions on loving our enemies and doing good to those who mistreat us. These instructions are general guidelines and do not cover every situation but can all be grouped under the Golden Rule: "Do to others as you would like them to do to you" (6:31, NLT).

BIBLE LEARNING

AIM: We will learn what the Bible tells us about how God's people should respond to their enemies.

I. GOD'S BLESSINGS

Luke 6:17-23

Jesus began His Sermon on the Plain by speaking blessings on those who follow Him because they are often the ones whom society considers outcast and downtrodden. Jesus turns the world's categories of blessedness upside-down by saying the poor, the hungry, the weeping, and the outcast are happy. Why are they happy? They are recipients of the kingdom and favor of God. It is not how much we possess or how many people praise us that matters. Our ultimate priority is receiving the praise of God. The pronouncements Jesus told the poor, outcast, and disabled crowd contain the empowerment needed to live distinctive lifestyles God calls us to live.

I. GOD'S BLESSINGS

Luke 6:17-23

Note that Jesus “stood in the plain.” Some translations say, “stood on a level place.” The discourse that follows closely mirrors material in Matthew’s Gospel, the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus may have shared the same sermon at two different locations, but even an elevated plateau above the sea of Galilee could be considered a “level place.” Such a location would be ideal for the healing service that was about to take place in the upcoming verses. The word “virtue” (Gk., *dunamis*, DOO-namis) means strength, power, or ability. The English word “dynamite” comes from it and offers a wonderful word picture of what kind of power Jesus had among the people of the first century.

I. GOD'S BLESSINGS

Luke 6:17-23

Jesus' Sermon on the Plain was much shorter than the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew (30 verses compared to 107 verses) Jesus goes through a series of blessings and woes starting with the poor. The word "happy" may best express the Greek word translated "blessed" (Gk., markarioi, mar-KAY-rio). When we think of the poor, we immediately think of those with material needs. But Luke is thinking from a different perspective. King David calls himself poor throughout the Old Testament (Psalm 40:17; 86:1), but he had material wealth as a king. Poor here is associated more with humility. It takes humility to experience the Kingdom of God.

I. GOD'S BLESSINGS

Luke 6:17-23

The hunger in this passage does appear to reference a physical hunger. And that hunger carries with it the promise to be filled—a theme in the Old Testament's treatment of a messianic banquet (cf. Isaiah 25:6–9; Psalm 107:33–39).

When Luke wrote his Gospel, many Jewish Christians were already being expelled from the synagogue, so it was a reality for his firstcentury readers. There was a time when the word “Christian” was a derogatory term (although it might even seem true today in some people's minds). Others would call Jesus' followers Christians, not to identify them, but to degrade them and hate them for their identification with Christ.

LIGHT ON THE WORD

Contrasting with God's People

Jesus said that the poor have the Kingdom of God, which is eternal. He said that the hungry are happy and blessed because they will be filled. The weeping will laugh. Those excluded and persecuted will receive a great reward since they are following in the footsteps of God's prophets. This is enough for them to be happy plus rejoice and leap for joy. In contrast, the picture of those who are blessed by the world is quite different.

II. THE WORLD'S WOES

Luke 6:24-26

Those who are regarded as blessed in this world have no reason to rejoice, for they have experienced all this life has to offer right now. The rich have all the comfort they will ever receive. The well-fed will be hungry. The laughing will be weeping. The universally praised will receive the fate of the false prophets of the Old Testament. They have their reward and have nothing to anticipate in the future.

II. THE WORLD'S WOES

Luke 6:24-26

Here is a parallel list of woes that closely mirror the previous verses. Just as “poor” earlier was a reference to spiritual poverty, “rich” here means a sense of pride. It references someone with a haughty spirit. Throughout scripture, those with arrogant, haughty spirits are denounced (Proverbs 28:6, 11; Isaiah 32:9– 14). The comfort felt in this prideful arrogance is waning and unsustainable.

II. THE WORLD'S WOES

Luke 6:24-26

Jesus then continues to discuss those addressed by these woes. The source of their laughter is material and unlasting. The laughter is less about joy and more about looking down upon the fate of another. These people would eventually experience weeping and mourning. The tables would soon be turned. Luke goes on to record this situation later in the story of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31). We should be careful about the way we look at the fate of others and the attitude we display when another suffers a fate we feel they “deserve.”

LIGHT ON THE WORD

Returning Blessing for Cursing

By being recipients of God's blessing and anticipating future rewards as followers of Jesus, we are empowered to live a distinctive lifestyle marked by love. The definition of this love is to seek another's goodwill. What makes this so unique is that the seeking of another's goodwill encompasses every one—including our enemies. This is fleshed out in Luke 6:27–31.

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III. BLESSING FROM GOD'S PEOPLE

Luke 6:27-31

Jesus' words to His followers are countercultural and counterintuitive. He commands us to do good to those who hate us, bless those who curse us, and pray for those who mistreat us. He commands us to turn the other cheek to those who strike us and to give to those who take from us.



III. BLESSING FROM GOD'S PEOPLE

Luke 6:27-31

Jesus also gives one last guideline that includes the previous commands and sums up the main way that His followers will live a distinctive lifestyle: “Do to others as you would like them to do to you” (verse 31, NLT). It is the guiding principle of seeking another’s goodwill.

If it were changed to “do to others as they have done to you,” there would be room for retaliation and revenge. However, Jesus’ command draws on our own desire for wellbeing so we transfer that to our fellow man no matter what he has done to us. This is the main characteristic of living a distinctive lifestyle as a follower of Christ.

III. BLESSING FROM GOD'S PEOPLE

Luke 6:27-31

It's important to note the opening word, "but," which serves to separate the verse from the woes listed just prior (verses 24–26). The woes did not apply to the disciples, because Jesus counted them among those who both listened to His teachings and heard them— they had ears to hear (cf. Luke 8:8, 14:35; Romans 11:8). The teaching opens by zeroing in on the last beatitude (verse 22; cf. Matthew 5:38–48). Robert Stein observes, "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" (Luke, 206).

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father,

We thank you for your Sabbath rest in Jesus. We praise You for being a God of love and mercy. We ask that you would empower us to show love and mercy to those who need it. Give us wisdom to discern when and how we should act.

In Jesus' name we pray.

AMEN

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Next Sunday
January 21, 2024
Lesson 8
Godly Relationships

