

The 6th Sunday after Epiphany
“The Full and Blessed Life through the Gospel of Jesus” Luke 6:20-23
February 16, 2025
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Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for the 6th Sunday after Epiphany is from our Gospel reading, Luke 6:20-23

**“20 Then He lifted up His eyes toward His disciples, and said:
“Blessed are you poor, For yours is the kingdom of God.
21 Blessed are you who hunger now, For you shall be filled.
Blessed are you who weep now, For you shall laugh.
22 Blessed are you when men hate you, And when they exclude you,
And revile you, and cast out your name as evil, For the Son of Man’s sake.
23 Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven,
For in like manner their fathers did to the prophets.”**

So far the text...

How many times does Jesus describe the blessedness of the believer in our text? Four times. How many times does Jesus describe the woe of the person who is walking the wide way to destruction? Again, four times. We see amazing symmetry in our text as Jesus speaks of the life of a Christian which is full of amazing joys in having salvation of one’s soul through Jesus. But, just as true, Jesus tells of the coming judgement of condemnation, the woes, of those who fill their lives with their own idle mirth.

As we sang in the opening verse of our hymn of the day, *“The day is surely drawing near
When Jesus, God’s anointed, In all His power shall appear As judge whom God
appointed. Then fright shall banish idle mirth, And flames on flames shall ravage earth
As Scripture long has warned us.”*

For every person who has rejected Jesus, rebelled against God and His gracious hand of salvation for the destitute, poor sinner, knows only Jesus’ kingdom of power, not the kingdom of grace. In confirmation class this week we studied God’s three kingdoms: power, grace and glory.

In the kingdom of power are those who know no consolation of the Gospel for they have *“despised His precious Word”*. As we sang in verse 4. *“Woe to those who scorned the Lord”* and whose consolation is in what they fill their own lives with...idle laughter, *“carnal pleasure, earthly treasure.”* *“With shame and trembling they will stand and at the judges stern command to Satan be delivered.”*

Yes, fright will banish idle mirth. In God’s kingdom of power, there is only woe and destruction which causes great fear. The things that filled the unbeliever’s life which he or she sought for consolation in great wealth, extravagant feasting, haughty laughter, and a praise of one’s belief in false teachings...like when men spoke well of the false prophets...all these things vanish at God’s judgement and are replaced with unending mourning, weeping, and gnashing of teeth in the outer darkness of hell.

Did you see that the second part of verses 23 and 26 correspond exactly except for one word? Verse 23 describes what evil men did to the *true* prophets. Verse 26 describes what evil men did to the *false* prophets. They enjoyed their false teaching and therefore spoke well of them.

Eternal blessedness or eternal woe... that is what is at stake. Jesus offers blessedness to those who recognized their great need of forgiveness. We heard last week in chapter 5 how Peter fell on his knees in the boat, having witnessed the great power of Jesus, true God and true Man in the great catch of fish. Depart from me for I am a sinful man.

Peter recognized the poorness of his spirit. And that is what poor means in our text, as we also hear in Matthew 5 “Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”. Peter needed to hear that there is love and forgiveness in Jesus his Savior. He needed to be reassured that though his sins were great, God’s love covers all our sins by the blood of Jesus. Peter needed to be assured that he lives in the kingdom of God’s grace. In three words, Jesus reassured him. “Do not fear”.

There is no fright with Jesus. There is no condemnation. For Jesus was condemned in our stead. As we sang in “Rock of Ages” ... "Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling."

And Jesus graciously gives to the repentant believer entrance into His kingdom of grace.

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

Look how Jesus speaks personally to each and every repentant sinner. Look how He speaks to you and me who recognize our spiritual poorness. Yours is the kingdom of God. It belongs to you...yes to you. Right now it is yours. You don't have to wait for it in the future. God's kingdom of grace comes to you right now through His Word and Sacraments to give you a complete full life of His forgiveness and salvation.

And this blessedness is happiness in the Lord...joy in the Lord. It is a soul that isn't hungry, for it is filled with the consolation of Jesus' righteousness. It is a soul that has cried out to the Lord the words of Psalm 30.

“O Lord my God, I cried out to You, And You healed me.

3 O Lord, You brought my soul up from the grave;

You have kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.”

Jesus the doctor of our souls heals us with His forgiveness by giving us life in the Good News of the Gospel of His love and favor. So, Psalm 30 continues:

“4 Sing praise to the Lord, you saints of His,

And give thanks at the remembrance of His holy name.

5 For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for life;

Weeping may endure for a night, But joy comes in the morning.”

When we lament our sins, when we have grief or sadness in this world because of what sin has caused, God does not forsake us. He turns our weeping into laughter and joy! So what does Psalm 30 next tell us?

“Now in my prosperity I said, “I shall never be moved.” Prosperity in God's spiritual riches of the Gospel. Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ!

And when a Christian feels isolated and in the minority for daring to trust in God's Word and His riches of forgiveness...when a Christian is laughed at for putting such confidence in the promises of God in His Word, our text tells us to rejoice in that day.

22 Blessed are you when men hate you, And when they exclude you,

And revile you, and cast out your name as evil, For the Son of Man's sake.

23 Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven,

Heaven with all its rewards awaits the believer in Jesus!

So we sang in verse 5 of our hymn of the day:

*“My Savior paid the debt I owe And for my sin was smitten;
Within the Book of Life I know My name has now been written.
I will not doubt, for I am free, And Satan cannot threaten me; There is no
condemnation!”*

So, Psalm 30 concludes:

**“You have turned for me my mourning into dancing;
You have put off my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness,
12 To the end that my soul may sing praise to You and not be silent.
O Lord my God, I will give thanks to You forever.”**

Isaiah 61:1 prophesied that Jesus would preach good news to the poor. That was fulfilled in Luke 4:18. For Jesus closed the scroll, handed it to the attendant and said **“Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”**

There is healing for the soul brokenhearted in sin, liberty for the soul captive in sin, and sight for those blinded in sin! Mere earthly poverty and destitution are no blessing. It can lead to all kinds of evils.

The blessedness that Jesus gives is the fullness of the Gospel. It is a complete washing of one's sins in baptism. It is the receiving of Jesus' very body and blood for your soul's forgiveness and blessedness. Come unto Me all who are weary from sin, hungry to be filled with His love. Come to Me all who wander for in Christ is the Light for your path. Come to Me all who are fainting for I will give you life.

Jesus gives the Christian fullness, meaning and purpose in life and supplies every earthly need. Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men! Whom shall I send? Send me, replied Isaiah after his sins were forgiven!

But, if a person rejects Jesus' invitation and tries to fill one's life with one's self-righteousness and the material things of one's own choosing, there is only woe. Their god is their belly whose mind is set on earthly things. In short, the unbeliever is full of oneself, and lacks the oil to light the lamp and enter into the heavenly feast with the Bridegroom, Jesus!

Thanks be to God that He chose to give us His Son to be our Savior and through His death and resurrection give to us inestimable riches of life and salvation. What blessedness is yours! What joy is yours through faith in Jesus. Psalm 1, our Psalm for today, proclaims where our delight is.

**“Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,
Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;
2 But his delight is in the law of the Lord, (that is, God’s Word of the Gospel) And in
His law he meditates day and night. 3 He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of
water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither;
And whatever he does shall prosper.”**

Amen

**And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts
and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)**