

Appetites and Attitudes for Kingdom Citizens

Luke 6:21-23

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Summary: As Jesus called His followers and prepared them for ministry, he did not sugar-coat the realities of what it meant to follow Him. He didn't exaggerate the benefits of following Him, while ignoring the consequences. He was honest about what following Him would mean. Through our commitment to declare Jesus as Lord, we commit ourselves to earthly trials and eternal rewards.

One of the most famous musicians of the last century was an African American named Marian Anderson. She was a committed Christian, born in 1897 and raised in Philadelphia by a mother and father who also loved the Lord.

She would grow up to sing professionally, everything from opera to gospel. She performed at the Metropolitan Opera and to sell-out crowds throughout Europe during her incredible career. She sang before Congress and heads of state.

Toscanini, the world-renowned conductor, said that hers was the finest voice of the 20th century.

Later in life, a reporter asked Marian what the greatest moment in her life was.

He suspected it might have been the concert at Buckingham Palace for the

King and Queen of England, or when she sang at President Eisenhower's inauguration, or perhaps when she became the very first recipient in 1963 of the Presidential Medal of Freedom or received the Grammy Award for Lifetime Achievement in 1991, two years before she died.

She didn't speak of any of these. She quietly responded that her greatest moment in life was that day many years earlier when she went home and told her mother she would not have to take in washing anymore.

LeRoy Lawson, [Matthew](#) (Stanford Publishing, 1986), p. 277

Her mother would not need to do other people's laundry to help her family survive.

How do you define greatness? How would you define your best day ever?



Describe the best day of your life. What stands out about that experience? What makes it memorable?

Now that's answer will change over time.

A few months ago, Marsha and I went to Charlotte for a few hours to celebrate our grandson's birthday. We sponsored an afternoon of fun and games at Dave and Buster's. If you've never been, it's a noisy, wild, crazy, loud combination restaurant/arcade fun house for kids—with really good food for adults who are in the process of losing their hearing, and a lot of money! Later that night, he went on a scavenger hunt around his house, with clues created by Marsha, with some birthday prize money at the end. Later, when he finally climbed into bed that night, he said to his mom, "This was the best day of my whole life."

What is it that you would look back on in life and say, "You know, that moment back there was actually one of the greatest moments in my life"?

Well, Jesus is about to tell us that moment will have nothing to do with money or medals or sell-out crowds.

Jesus is going to turn everything upside down.

In Luke's Gospel, if you'll turn again to **chapter 6**, Jesus has been demonstrating His credentials as the true King of Israel, and every other nation, for that matter.

He's healing by His very presence, as prophesied of the true Messiah by the prophets; He's demonstrating irresistible authority over the demonic world—literally setting the captives free—also prophesied.

And now He begins preaching about happiness in life, what it means to be blessed—*makarios*—a word that refers to the favor of God that brings true happiness.

This is what it's like to belong to the King, to be a citizen of His Kingdom, which will finally come one day.

But let me tell you this up front: what Jesus will do is reveal to them the harsh realities of following Him now, and the heavenly realities to come.

And the first thing we must do is redefine in our minds and hearts what it means to have the blessing of the King in our lives.

In our last session, we noticed the first redefinition of being truly blessed— **verse 20**.

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

Luke 6:20b

This is much more than financial destitution; this is spiritual desperation.

Blessed are those who depend entirely on the King to get into the Kingdom.

You could paraphrase this to read, “Happy are the helpless—the helpless who come to Christ and trust in Him alone.”

This is the person who gets a reservation in the coming Kingdom of Christ, the person who enjoys here and now what it means to have their security and assurance in the work of Christ alone.

Now secondly, Jesus informs us that truly happy people have an appetite.

The first part of verse 21:

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

Luke 6:21a

In Matthew’s parallel account, he expands on Jesus’ words here:

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Matthew 5:6

First, blessed are the spiritually *helpless*; now, blessed are the spiritually *hungry*.

You demonstrate your citizenship in the Kingdom of God by evidencing an appetite for Kingdom food, which is

righteousness—the character of God—the Word of God.



How have you demonstrated hunger for God’s Word? What are your devotional habits? How often are you thinking about and meditating on the Scriptures?

In this case, subjective righteousness is hungering for whatever is right, and whatever is right is righteous.

The apostle Paul writes it this way:

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

Philippians 4:8

Here’s your menu for a righteous life. Feed on these things.

Now the word Jesus uses here, “**and you shall be satisfied**” comes directly from the farm. It’s a word that primarily refers to fattening up the cattle, filling them up with feed.

They’re satisfied; they’re well fed.

Jesus hints at this paradox: you’re satisfied with something that fills you up,

but then you're hungry again, so you feast on His Word and His glory and His creation handiwork and His attributes—all that is righteous—and then, like the Psalmist, you're hungry all over again. He writes in Psalm 119:20:

My soul is consumed with longing for your rules.

Psalm 119:20a

For he satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul he fills with good things.

Psalm 107:9

Here's the paradox: you're hungry for that which satisfies, and you feast on it, but then you're hungry all over again.

It's a little like Thanksgiving.

You pull up to the table like hungry cattle and you feast beyond that which is reasonable.

And then a couple hours later, what are you doing? You're back in the kitchen getting a piece of pumpkin pie or making a turkey sandwich. What does that prove? It proves you need counseling!

No, it proves you're alive. A deceased body doesn't have an appetite, but a living body keeps getting hungry.

This is true physically and spiritually. You're longing for the Word and the will and the way and the work of God; you never seem to get past a sense of dissatisfaction, and it seems like you never get over your spiritual need, all over

again; that's because you're spiritually alive.

What do you do?

Thomas Watson, the puritan pastor, wrote centuries ago on this text: "Do everything you can to promote a spiritual appetite and do everything you can to avoid that which will hinder your spiritual appetite."

Adapted from Thomas Watson, *The Beatitudes* (The Banner of Truth Trust, 1660; reprint, 1985), p. 134

Remember beloved, we are what we eat. What are you hungry for?

Let's make it a steady diet of all that is right and righteous.

Happy are the helpless; happy are the hungry. Now, Jesus turns everything upside down again in this third beatitude—we could paraphrase to read: happy are the hurting.

Notice the last part of verse 21:

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

Luke 6:21b

Again, in context, Jesus is describing citizens of the kingdom of God living down here for a little while.

These are tears of repentance and humility before God.

This is what one author called an emotional breakdown that follows true recognition of spiritual bankruptcy. The ones weeping here are those experiencing the sorrow of repentance.

James has this same kind of weeping in mind when he writes:

Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

James 4:9-10

This is the sorrow over sin according to the will of God which produces repentance—it leads to salvation, and salvation is your ticket into the Kingdom.

These are tears of sorrow that lead later to the laughter that fills our future home.

But in the meantime, laughter and joy aren't reserved only for future Kingdom days. We evidence His joy now; happiness can happen now.



How can you be the evidence of joy here on earth, as you await the eternal joy of Heaven?

I agree with the practical theology of Oswald Sanders who wrote on this text:

“Should we not see that lines of laughter about the eyes of believers are just as much marks of faith as lines of seriousness and care? Laughter is not necessarily pagan. And a church is in a

bad way when it banishes laughter from the sanctuary and leaves it to the entertainer.”

Quotation adapted from R. Kent Hughes in *Luke: Volume 1* (Crossway Books, 1998), p. 219

Solomon wrote, “***A cheerful heart is good medicine***” (*Proverbs 17:22*).

And do we ever need a dose of that medicine today!

One more beatitude here, where the Lord lays out the reality of the rejection of His disciples. He doesn't pull any punches—look at **verse 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!

Luke 6:22

Notice here that Jesus doesn't say “*If people hate you*” but “*when people hate you*,” He doesn't say, “*If they exclude you*,” but “*when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name*.”

The Lord uses four verbs to describe what they can expect:

1. They will be **hated**. This verb means to be detested; literally, to be pursued with hatred—they will not be left alone.
2. Secondly, they will be **excluded**. This means being disowned—ostracized by family and friends.

Early church history records that Jewish converts to Christianity had their names scrubbed from the membership rolls in the synagogue.

Adapted from Darrell L. Bock, Luke: Volume One (Baker Academic, 1994), p. 579

They were effectively no longer related to the Jewish nation; they were disowned and disinherited, just as many Christians are around the world to this day.

3. Third, Jesus promises His disciples that they will be **reviled**. This means disparaged, run down, denounced, criticized, cut down.
4. And then perhaps for many of them, Jesus adds this fourth verb here where the world will **spurn your name as evil**. That means to be defamed.

In other words, the world takes the final step in ruining a believer's reputation and turning it into something evil, when the believer did nothing but good.

Depending on where you live and when, this will rise and fall. It didn't take long for the Roman Empire to turn the name Christian into something evil; they accused Christians of being cannibals—eating flesh and drinking blood—as they twisted the meaning of the Lord's table.

They accused Christians of holding weekly orgies, twisting the meaning of "love feasts" as believers gathered.

One historian I read noted that above everything else, Christians were accused of hating humanity. They were literally called, "haters of humanity."

And for several reasons: they preached the wrath and judgment of God—in other words, how could anybody hold to such an unloving God?

They refused to enter social activities and festivals that included immorality or idolatry; that made them antisocial; they evidently didn't like people.

They were called treasonous because they refused to call Caesar Lord but considered Christ alone as their Lord.

Adapted from Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia: Volume 4 (Zondervan, 2002), p. 142

And for that, believers who loved their neighbors and loved their world for the sake of Christ were called "haters of humanity."

Jesus promises here in His sermon that the world will turn their name into something evil:

- The Christian in China today is considered a threat.
- a Christian in North Korea is treasonous.
- a baptized believer in Japan is disloyal to his ancestors.
- a Christian in Muslim countries is an infidel.
- in our own culture today, the Christian is being redefined as intolerant, unloving, homophobic, backward, judgmental, and yes, hateful.

Jesus promises that the followers of Christ are going to be, in some measure:

detested, disowned, denounced, and defamed.



Describe a time you have faced persecution for your faith. What did that moment mean to you? How comfortable are you being defiled and ridiculed, slandered and lied about?

But what's the real reason? Jesus tells them here, again in verse 22, "***On account of the Son of Man.***"

In other words, on account of:

- Our belief in Jesus as Lord—how dogmatic is that?
- our belief in the biblical gospel of Heaven and Hell; sin, and salvation—how judgmental is that?
- our belief in the moral claims of Creator God regarding gender and sexual relationships—how backward is that?
- our belief in the design of God for marriage and family—how unloving is that?
- our belief that Jesus is God incarnate, Jehovah in the flesh, "the way the truth and the life," the only way to the Father—how narrow is that?

That's what we believe.

So, it isn't because you hate humanity or because you're backward or out of step or unloving or hateful but because you simply believe the Word of God—period.

Well, you believe all that and you're heading into a storm of persecution and trouble.

But keep this in mind: at this moment, Jesus is sounding strange to His disciples. They are surrounded by thousands of adoring people clamoring to get near Jesus. "What do you mean, we will be hated and excluded and reviled because we're associating with You?"

Bruce B. Barton, [Life Application Bible Commentary: Luke](#) (Tyndale, 1997), p. 153

Look around Lord—everybody loves You! You're the greatest!"

Later, as the rejection of Jesus begins to pick up steam sometime after this sermon, we're told in John's Gospel that many of His disciples left Him and would no longer walk with Him (John 6).

What will you do when they take your name and twist it into something evil?

What will you do when following Jesus doesn't earn you friends, but costs you?

What will you do when you get ridiculed or fired because of your moral beliefs?

What will you do when Jesus doesn't seem to be paying off?

Jesus wants His disciples to take a longer look at life—notice ***verse 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.*

Luke 6:23

In other words, you're being treated much like the prophets who told the truth to their generation.

Wouldn't you like to have the reward of an Isaiah? A Jeremiah? A Daniel?

Their generation didn't have the last word; God did.

So, remember, there's that coming day. Don't let your perspective get stuck to what you see around you.

I read recently of an interesting event I had tucked into my files years ago; it came to mind as I studied the perspective the Lord wants us all to have today. It reads:

On a balmy October afternoon in 1982, Badger Stadium in Madison, Wisconsin, was packed. More than 60,000 die-hard University of Wisconsin fans were there to cheer on their football team against Michigan State. It soon became obvious that Michigan had the better team that year.

But what seemed odd, however, as the score became more lopsided, were the bursts of applause and shouts of joy from the Wisconsin fans. How could they cheer when their team was being beaten so badly out on the field?

Well, it turns out that seventy miles away, another Wisconsin team, the Milwaukee

Brewers were playing the St. Louis Cardinals in game three of the World Series. And the Brewers were winning. Most of the fans at this college football game were listening on their portable radios – and they were responding with joy to something other than what was happening on the field in front of them.

Leadership Magazine – out of print/undated illustration submitted by Greg Asimakoupoulos, Naperville, Illinois

Jesus says here, “jump for joy—*leap for joy!*” How do you do that? Look at what's happening on the field in front of you!

Jesus reminds them, that's not all there is.

The Apostle Paul put it this way:

*So we do not lose heart ...
for this light momentary
affliction is preparing for us
an eternal weight of glory
beyond all comparison, as
we look not to the things
that are seen but to the
things that are unseen. For
the things that are seen are
transient, but the things that
are unseen are eternal.*

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Make sure you're tuned into the Kingdom station; don't let the signal get overpowered or distorted by the static of planet earth and the temporary kingdoms of this world.

You belong to the King; His kingdom is coming; it happens to be your inheritance. Stay tuned.

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