

Warning Signs

Luke 6:24-26

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Summary: Where does happiness come from? What is the root of satisfaction? As Jesus compares and contrasts those who are supremely happy with those who are eternally empty, His reminder of where hope and joy come from are just as important today as it was 2,000 years ago.

I read an article recently about some of the scrambling that's been taking place by officials at Montana's Glacier National Park. They have been quietly removing or altering signs which predicted many of the Park's glaciers would melt by 2020.

The National Park Service had pumped out brochures, films and signs for the past 20 years declaring that the glaciers were melting away rapidly and would be gone by 2020.

At the main display in the visitor center, a three-dimensional diorama shows little lights that represent individual glaciers. Visitors can press a button to see the diorama lit up to represent the year 1850; then the lights begin going out as you move into the 20th century and finally, as predicted on the sign at this display, the lights are turned out and the glaciers are "gone by 2020."

The problem is, of course, the public can see for themselves. One of the glaciers—which can be seen from the highway—is *larger* than it was 10 years ago.

So, the Park Service took advantage of the Visitor Center being closed and began removing signs or rewording them to predict a new message; now the narrative is along the lines that these glaciers are going to melt "in future generations."

And of course, international news sources have been silent on these failed predictions, and that's because it doesn't fit their narrative that there is no Creator God who created everything for His purposes and according to His divine timetable and it's all up to us to keep planet earth up and running.

In fact, the world at large today is terrified that life will become unsustainable on earth; the sun will either burn out or it will burn us up.

Let me encourage you, this fear is related to a rejection of God's promises, God's signs, God's predictions to us about planet earth.



When science and God appear to be at odds, who do you side with? Ultimately, where does the truth you place your faith in come from, God or man?

For instance, the apostle Peter talks about the first judgment by water—the global flood—and a future judgment; he writes this:

The world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

2 Peter 3:6b-7

Peter is referring to the coming final judgment of the unbelieving world, followed by a fire that God Himself is going to ignite where the universe is literally burned up.

I guess you could say that global warming is on its way.

According to the Bible, following this cataclysmic fire ball, a new heaven

(universe) and a new earth are crafted brand new, which will exist forever.

How do we know that?

The apostle John writes of that final judgment Peter alludes to; it's called the Great White Throne judgment. It's at this final, comprehensive judgement of unbelievers when John records the future as God allows him to see it:

If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Revelation 20:15

Now immediately after this judgment text, John writes in the very next verse:

Then I saw a new heaven (universe) and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.

Revelation 21:1a

Remember, the apostle Peter explained to us how it passed away: in a fireball of judgment.

But Peter also gave us God's promise about the earth—here it is again in 2 Peter 3:7:

The heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment ...

2 Peter 3:7

That word *kept* means “to be reserved; to be kept in store.”

Who’s keeping the universe functioning; the sun shining at just the right temperature; the moon orbiting at just the perfect distance away; who’s keeping the earth alive and well, so to speak? God.

How long will the earth remain functioning and capable of sustaining life as we know it today? God said in His word it will remain—it’s being kept—until the day of judgment.

But how do you know we are not going to freeze or fry along the way? There can be variations in temperatures along the way, and that’s true. Based on even the most liberal estimates, the earth is around one degree warmer on average than it was 130 years ago.

But how do we know these variations won’t create one vast desert out of planet earth—with no seasons of winter and summer; no ability to produce crops and provide for humanity?

How do we know that will not happen? We know because of a promise God made more than 4,300 years ago.

It’s a promise God made to the man who endured the first judgment of a global flood. His name was Noah.

When Noah finally disembarked with his family from the ark, they had lived on for it a little more than a year. People think they lived on the ark for 40 days and nights, but no, that’s how long it rained.

It wasn’t as bad as living in your minivan for a year—this was a big boat—but still it would take a year for the water to recede, creating the oceans and rivers and lakes, carving out canyons and rock formations and mountain ranges along the way.

Now if I were to give you a pop quiz and ask you what the promise of God to Noah involved, you would immediately think: “well, that would involve the rainbow.” And you’d be right.

God promised Noah that a rainbow will be His sign—His promise—that He will never again flood the earth with a global flood (Genesis 9:13).

Which is significant proof that this was a global judgment—a global flood. If God had promised Noah that there wouldn’t be another regional flood, God becomes a liar, because there is regional flooding all around the planet every single year.

But there has never been another global flood of God’s judgment.

What God predicts always comes to pass; He doesn’t have to change the brochures or the signs.

But there’s another promise God made to Noah that is also going to come true. In fact, this promise would make humans sleep better at night if they only took God at His word.

Here’s what God also said to Noah in Genesis chapter 8: “While the earth remains . . .”

He's making a promise to Noah that something will happen for as long as the earth remains.

How long will the earth remain? Noah didn't know the answer to that, but we know because Peter and John were given the timeline from the Holy Spirit: *the earth will remain until it is destroyed by fire and God recreates a new universe at the end of human history.*

So, what happens to earth between now and then?

God told Noah:

"While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease."

Genesis 8:22

In other words, between now and the final judgment, the earth will produce harvests which requires sunshine and rain; the earth will experience cold and heat, summer and winter, so the seasons will continue every year; day and night will not cease, so the earth will keep rotating on its axis because we will have daytime and nighttime.

None of this will cease until the earth no longer remains.

This is what God has promised, and what God promises, He performs.

This universe is His universe, and He has plans for it. This earth belongs to Him, and He's got plans for it.

And for the past 4,300 years, from the time of Noah until today, God hasn't had to change the signs. He hasn't had to quietly remove any of His predictions along the way.

All of God's predictions come true.

Now maybe you came in today and you thought we were in the Gospel of Luke. We are. This is just an introduction.

You see it struck me as I listened to Jesus preach here in Luke chapter 6—which is where you can turn now—Jesus is making some predictions; He's not changing any of the signs, He's reinforcing them. He's pointing to them.

He's predicting some things that will ultimately come true, and these signs happen to be warning signs, as His audience of several thousand people listen to Him preach here on the plateau—on this level place on the mountainside.

Now earlier in our study, Jesus preached how someone could be in a state of blessing (happiness) before God. The happy and blessed individual was:

- spiritually dependent on the King.
- repentant over their sin.
- faithful despite rejection, choosing to stand with the King—King Jesus.

This is how to be in a perpetual state of blessing before God.

Now Jesus is going to turn the tables and basically say, “Let me warn you, this is how to be in a perpetual state of danger before God.”

Let me warn you of the grave danger you’re in!

And He does this by pronouncing 4 woes here—a woe is a warning delivered as a pronouncement of divine judgment.

Adapted from John MacArthur, [Matthew 16-23](#) (Moody Publications, 1988), p. 375

But it isn’t an angry statement or the result of hatred or lack of compassion. It’s a word that delivers a warning that something is wrong in a terrible way; something desperately needs to change; something bad is about to happen.

Isaiah used this word when he saw himself compared to God’s holiness; he said, “Woe is me, for I am undone” (Isaiah 6:5).

When my mother used to tell me, “Just wait, your father will be home soon,” what did I say? I said, “Woe is me; I am undone.”

Something needed to happen.
Something needed to change.

Now Jesus delivers here four woes, which are four warnings. In other words, there’s still time to repent and change, but this final day of judgment is on its way.

Here’s the first warning—verse 24:

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

Luke 6:24

Now, don’t assume that no American can get into the kingdom of Heaven. After all, according to world standards, if you have food in a refrigerator, a change of clothes in your closet and an automobile in your garage, you are in the top 5 percent of the world’s wealth.

Is Jesus saying, “You should have never succeeded in business”?

No. Would you note that these four woes are contrasted with the previous four blessings.

Back in verse 20, the Lord said:

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

Luke 6:20b

In Matthew’s Gospel account of this sermon, he adds the words, ***“blessed are the poor in spirit.”***

This poor person is spiritually destitute and entirely dependent on the King to get into the kingdom.

In contrast, the rich here in ***verse 24*** are those who don’t need the Lord. As far as they’re concerned, they have everything they need, and they can depend on themselves. They don’t need Jesus.

Woe to the *rich* is a warning to the *self-satisfied*.

Self-satisfied is the self-made man; the person who wants or needs nothing of God.

And notice again what Jesus says to them: “For you have your *consolation*.”

That’s the same Greek term translated comfort—*paraklesis*—in fact, the same root word is used of the Holy Spirit. He is our comforter, our consolation.

Even more startling is the fact that Luke used this same term earlier in chapter 2 when he referred to the Messiah as Israel’s consolation (Luke 2:25).

Adapted from Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on Luke* (Zondervan, 2012), p. 156

Jesus is effectively saying here that those who are in the kingdom will find their satisfaction in the Messiah, but those who aren’t in the kingdom will find their satisfaction in themselves.

The believer says, “I am not happy without God;” the unbeliever says, “What do you mean I’m not happy? I don’t need God.”

Now to the second warning—verse 25:

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

Luke 6:25a

Again, this is contrasted with the beatitude the Lord delivered *in verse 21:*

“Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied (full).”

Luke 6:21a

Matthew adds that this hunger is related to being righteous or right with God.

The citizen of Christ’s kingdom long to be right with God and to live right before mankind.

The citizens of this world think they have *no* need for God and have no desire to be right before God.

Adapted from Bruce B. Barton, *Life Application Bible: Luke* (Tyndale, 1997), p. 154

Woe to the *full* is a warning to the *self-righteous*.

They already look good enough to themselves. They know how to keep up appearances. They are literally full of themselves.

And let me tell you, when you are full of yourself, there isn’t even room for God.

They have posted a sign across their hearts that essentially reads, “No Vacancy.”

This warning is tantamount to rejecting the King.

There’s no room. They’re full.



Have you ever felt full on something other than God? Have you ever felt satisfied without Jesus? In what ways does Jesus satisfy you that no other thing or person or opportunity can?

Now notice the third warning in the latter part of **verse 25**.

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

Luke 6:25b

Woe to the *laughing* is a warning to the *self-assured*.

The word here for ***laughter*** is often tied to boastful and proud people laughing in a derisive manner. It’s used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament in Lamentations 1:7 for the enemies of God laughing over the destruction of Jerusalem.

Darrell L. Bock, [Luke: Volume 1](#) (Baker Academic, 1994), p. 584

Jesus is contrasting the mocking laughter of the world with the laughter of the believer back in **verse 21**. Believers mourn and weep over sin, but later, Jesus promises they will laugh with joy as every tear is wiped away in Heaven (***Revelation 21:4***).

But the unbeliever, Jesus says here in **verse 25**, essentially have no repentance—no sorrow—over their sin; they laugh now at the thought of the gospel; they effectively laugh at the King and the citizens of His kingdom.

But Jesus puts up a sign here—a warning sign—and it won’t be changed later. Those who laugh at the King and mock His warning will one day realize they denied the true King and their weeping will never end (***Matthew 8:12***).

Woe. Here’s the warning sign; here’s a prediction that will come true for all who refuse the message of this King.

This is no laughing matter; this is dangerous territory.

One more warning in verse 26:

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

Luke 6:26

Woe to the *popular* is a warning to the *sought-after*.

“Woe to you, when all people speak well of you”—the key word here is the word all—“when all people speak well of you.”

Jesus isn’t encouraging you to make enemies or to be ornery. If this is your theme verse for being obnoxious, you’ve misinterpreted it.

He’s not saying Christians won’t ever get a good review at work; or people in your neighborhood won’t think you’re a nice person; hopefully that isn’t true.

Again, this is understood in contrast to the citizens of the kingdom of God up in verse 22—look there:

“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 . . . your reward is great in heaven.”

Luke 6:22a

Listen, when you represent Jesus the King as a citizen of Heaven, somebody will hate you and exclude you and revile you.

But look again at the contrast in **verse 26**; look at the citizens of earth: what are they pursuing? What matters most to them? When ***all people [are] speaking well of them.***

Along with their false prophets who tell them what they want to hear, the citizens of earth are warned for this reason: they want acceptance and admiration from everyone but the King.

So, they are not going to make any waves, and they’re not going to rock any boats.

Adapted from David E. Garland, *Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Luke* (Zondervan, 2011), p. 278

False teachers and the public at large will choose to pursue acceptance at the expense of truthfulness.

Bock, p. 585

“Let’s just change the signs; let’s soften the narrative; let’s go with the flow; let’s fit in; don’t stick out like a sore thumb.”

You want to be self-made; self-righteous; self-assured; you’re even sought-after as an influencer.

Everybody’s impressed with you; I’m sure God is just as impressed!

Jesus will say later in ***Matthew chapter 8, “Many who think that they are sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness.”***

When? When Jesus predicted it. When the Bible revealed it.

That day when their eternal destiny is sealed before that terrifying throne where all unbelieving humanity will stand one day; when God’s predictions come true, thousands of years after delivering them.

The apostle Peter wrote about it; the apostle John wrote about it.

Just before God sends earth and the universe up in flames, He judges unbelieving mankind as they stand before Him:

- it’s no laughing matter then.
- the world’s applause won’t matter then.
- a self-made status won’t matter then.
- self-righteous feelings won’t matter then.

The question that determines your eternal destiny must be answered now—Jesus has given you plenty of warning—is He your King?

Are you a citizen of His kingdom that will never pass away, or are you a citizen of the kingdoms of earth that will one day be burned up and gone forever?

This is not a sign about a glacier melting, this is a sign about judgment coming.

Jesus is delivering here His definition of blessing, and His warning of danger, and it will all come true one day.

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