

The Gospel of Luke

Lesson 9: The Sermon on the Plain -- Luke 6:20-49

A great crowd has come down off the hillside with Jesus, and now He stands on a level place surrounded by people who are desperate for Him. They have come from Tyre and Sidon, from Jerusalem and all Judea, the sick and the troubled and the curious, pressing in to touch Him because power is going out from Him to heal them all. And then He lifts up His eyes, looks at His disciples, and begins to speak. What He says turns the whole world upside down. Blessed are you who are poor. Blessed are you who are hungry now. Blessed are you who weep now. The people who thought they were at the bottom hear, for the first time, that heaven sees them differently than the world ever has.

We call it the Sermon on the Plain, and it is Luke's record of the kind of teaching that left people astonished, because Jesus taught as one who had authority. But notice where He begins. He does not begin with rules to keep or boxes to check. He begins by describing a kingdom whose values are the exact reverse of ours. The poor are rich. The hungry are filled. The weeping will laugh. And those who are riding high now, full and comfortable and well spoken of, are the ones who should be most afraid. This is not a sermon about getting our outward behavior in order. It is a sermon about whose kingdom we actually belong to, and what kind of heart that kingdom grows in us.

From there Jesus says things that no merely human teacher would dare to say. Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who abuse you. When someone strikes you, do not strike back. Give, and do not demand repayment. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. Do not judge, do not condemn, but forgive. He is not handing us a tighter set of regulations. He is describing the family likeness of the children of the Most High, who is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. This is what God is like, and this is what God is forming His people to become.

And then, at the very end, Jesus asks a question that should stop every one of us in our tracks. "Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and not do what I tell you?" He tells of two builders, one who dug deep and laid his foundation on the rock, and one who built on the ground with no foundation at all. When the flood came, only one house stood. The difference between them was not that one heard Jesus and the other did not. Both heard. The difference was that one heard and did, and the other heard and did nothing. Read this passage slowly, and let it search you. Jesus is not asking whether you admire Him. He is asking whether you will build your life on His words.

Group Discussion: Jesus opens this sermon by pronouncing blessing on the poor, the hungry, and the weeping, and woe on the rich, the full, and the well spoken of (vv. 20-26). On its face, this is the complete reversal of what our culture calls a good life. What do you think Jesus is

getting at, and why might the people the world envies be in spiritual danger, while the people the world pities are pronounced blessed in His kingdom?

Personal Reflection: Jesus closes by asking, “Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and not do what I tell you?” (v. 46). Most of us would never say we ignore Jesus, yet there are often specific commands of His we have quietly set aside. Is there a place in your life right now where you call Him Lord with your mouth but have not yet done what He tells you? What would it look like to begin obeying Him there this week?

Read Luke 6:20–49

Study Questions

1. Jesus opens the sermon with four blessings and four woes, declaring “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God” and “woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation” (vv. 20, 24). What does this great reversal teach about the values of God’s kingdom and about where true blessing is found, and how is this different from simply praising poverty and condemning wealth?
2. Jesus pronounces blessing on those who are “hungry now” and weep “now,” promising they “shall be satisfied” and “shall laugh” (v. 21). Where are you tempted to build your sense of being blessed on present comfort, fullness, and the approval of others, and how does the kingdom Jesus describes reorder what you long for?
3. Jesus commands, “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you” (vv. 27–28), and gives the reason: “you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil” (v. 35). What does this teach about the very character of God, and why is love of enemies presented as the family likeness of God’s children rather than as an optional ideal?
4. Jesus gives the Golden Rule, “As you wish that others would do to you, do so to them” (v. 31), and then says even sinners love those who love them (vv. 32–34). Think of one relationship where you are doing only as much good as is done to you. What would it look like this week to take the initiative and treat that person the way you would want to be treated, regardless of how they treat you?
5. Jesus says, “Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven” (v. 37), and then tells of the speck and the log (vv. 41–42). What is Jesus actually forbidding here, and what is He not forbidding, and how does the log in our own eye relate to our readiness to correct the speck in someone else’s?
6. Jesus says, “the measure you use it will be measured back to you” (v. 38), tying the mercy and generosity we extend to others to the mercy and generosity we ourselves receive. Where in your life are you using a harsh measure with others, perhaps with a family member, a fellow Christian, or someone who has wronged you, and what would change if you began measuring out the same mercy God has measured to you?
7. Jesus teaches that “each tree is known by its own fruit” and that “out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks” (vv. 44–45). What does this teach about the relationship

between the heart and the life, and why can outward religion never substitute for a heart that has been made good by God?

8. Jesus pictures “the blind leading the blind” falling into a pit, and a disciple who, when fully trained, “will be like his teacher” (vv. 39–40). Who are the voices you are following and being shaped by, and who is being shaped by you? What does it look like to make sure your life is being formed by Christ the Teacher rather than by blind guides?
9. Jesus asks, “Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and not do what I tell you?” and tells of two builders, one who “hears my words and does them” and digs his foundation on the rock, and one who “hears and does not do them” and builds with no foundation (vv. 46–49). Both men heard the same words. What does this passage teach about the nature of genuine faith and discipleship, why mere words or admiration of Jesus cannot save, and what it means to build a life that will stand when the flood comes?
10. Look back across the whole sermon, from the blessings and woes to the two builders. Jesus has been describing not just a new set of behaviors but a new kind of heart, reordered by His kingdom and built on His words. Name one specific way you sense Jesus forming you through these verses. What is the single truth from Luke 6:20–49 that you most need to carry into this coming week?

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Matthew 5:1–7:29, the fuller Sermon on the Mount that parallels and expands this teaching; James 1:22–25, being doers of the word and not hearers only who deceive themselves; Romans 12:14–21, blessing those who persecute you and overcoming evil with good; Matthew 7:21–23, not everyone who says Lord, Lord will enter the kingdom, but the one who does the Father’s will; 1 John 3:18, loving not in word but in deed and truth.