

Luke 6:12-36 // The Saviour's People

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- [0 : 0 0] Today's reading is from Luke chapter 6, verses 12 to 26, page 1033 of your Bible. One of those days, Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, who he also designated apostles. Simon, who he named Peter, his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James, son of Elphius, Simon, who was called the Zealot, Judas, son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor. He went down with them and stood on a level place. A large crowd of disciples was there and a great number of people from all over Judea, from Jerusalem and from the coastal region around Tyre and Sidon, who had come to hear him and be healed of their diseases. Those troubled by his pure spirits were cured, and the people all tried to touch him because power was coming from him and healing them all. Looking at his disciples, he said, Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.
- [1 : 3 2] Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil because of the Son of Man. Blessed are you who are poor, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who are poor, for you will be satisfied. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven, for that is how their ancestors treated the prophets. But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort. Woe to you who are fed well now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep. Woe to you who are rich, for you will be satisfied. Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you, for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets. This is the word of the Lord. Hello, St. Silas. If we've not met before, I'm Martin Ayres. The lead pastor here. It's great to have you with us. It's our regular diet as a church to read through sections of the Bible, books of the Bible, and preach through them chapter by chapter, so that we're letting God set the agenda, rather than just cherry-picking bits of the Bible that we like, and so that we're connecting the truths about God we're hearing with the implications and life application that the Bible gives us by going through it systematically like that.
- [3 : 1 5] So we're in a series in Luke's gospel. I actually think we were going to go, did we just stop at 26? Did I hear that right? So I think we're going through to verse 36 today. So I'll just read Luke 6, 27 to 36, and then I'll go back and we'll look at this together. So from verse 27 of Luke 6, If you love those who love you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who will treat you. If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. Give to everyone who asks you.

And if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you?

Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you?

[4 : 24] Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full. But love your enemies. Do good to them. And lend to them without expecting to get anything back.

Then your reward will be great. And you will be children of the Most High, because He is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

This is God's Word, and you can find an outline inside the notice sheet if you find that helpful, as we look at this together. But let's pray. Let's ask for God's help as we turn to His Word.

Almighty God and loving Heavenly Father, thank you for this portion of your Word and your promise that it's the unfolding of your Word that gives light. And so we ask that this morning, by your Word and your Spirit at work, speaking that Word to us, you will enlighten us, that you'll give us eyes to see, that you'll inform our minds and our understanding.

But more than that, you will inflame our hearts, that we'll not just see your Son, the Lord Jesus, but we will respond rightly to Him. For we ask these things in Jesus' name.

[5 : 38] Amen. Well, there's a best-selling book for children. It's actually a series of books now called You Choose by Pippa Goodhart. Some of you may have read these to your kids.

Others of you may have had them read to you as kids. And they ask questions like, if you could go anywhere, where would you go? You choose. What would you wear when you go there?

Who would you choose to be your friends? So they let a child dream dreams about who they would choose to be. One of them says, close your eyes and dream yourself however you would most like to be.

So if we were going to play now a grown-up version of You Choose, if you could choose your dreams, if you could choose your future, what would it look like?

I wonder if any of us would be surprised if we were opening a book like that to read with a child, You Choose, and some of the options you could choose were the things listed for us by Jesus here, by Luke in chapter 6, verses 20 to 22, that your expectations for how your life will be, your hopes for your life would be that you would be poor, verse 20, that you might go hungry, verse 21, and weep.

[7 : 03] Or in verse 22, that you might be hated and insulted and rejected. And yet Jesus says to us today, if you are trusting Him and following Him, these things may well mark your life.

And if that's the case, he says, blessed are you. You are blessed. That word blessed means you're living the good life. The word blessed means happy, fulfilled, content, because God approves of you.

So we could, in a modern phrase, say for blessed are you, good for you. Good for you if your life looks like this. If following Jesus has become very costly for you.

If it's left you poor, hungry, and weeping. Now I don't know what you think about that, but I think lots of us today do not think like this as the good life.

If you've got kids and they were to grow up and they trust Jesus and their life was to look like this, poor, hungry, weeping, rejected.

[8 : 15] Would you be happy with that? Would you be happy for them? Would you think they're being blessed? So we need to see how Jesus gets there. In verses 12 to 16, we find Him responding Himself to being rejected.

In chapter 4, Jesus told us His mission. He was in a synagogue. He read from Isaiah the prophet where the long-promised Saviour is announced in Isaiah as someone who'll come and proclaim good news to the spiritually needy.

And Jesus says, this scripture is fulfilled today in your hearing. In chapter 5, we saw what the good news was as the paralytic man was lowered through the roof by his friends in front of Jesus.

And Jesus demonstrated He has authority to forgive sins. That's the good news for the spiritually needy, that in Jesus, we can have a fresh start with God and turn back to God forgiven.

And it brings joy, that mission from Jesus. The joy that was described last week in the passage as the joy of new wine. There is new wine on offer to us all with what God freely gives us in Jesus.

[9 : 25] But then we also saw last week how the religious leaders were responding. They came to see Jesus, they evaluated Him, they weighed Him and measured Him and they rejected Him.

Why? Well, in Callum's words last week that we heard he was preaching because Jesus' new wine and the Pharisees, the religious leaders were a bunch of old winers.

Callum was quite pleased with that play on words. I was too. In other words, the old winers, they've got their moralistic religious system and they're so stuck in that they reject Jesus because He doesn't fit with that, with this new invitation to anyone who is spiritually needy, come back to God in me.

So look with me at chapter 6 verse 11 where we left things last week. The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were furious and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus.

they respond with fury and this is a really significant moment in world history for here are the very custodians of the promises of God able to see with their own eyes the one in whom all those promises are fulfilled and they respond with fury and rejection.

[10 : 47] So how will Jesus respond to that? Well, He pulls an all-nighter. Look at verse 12. One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray and spent the night praying to God.

Now I used to be a lawyer. I used to work at a law firm where we used to pull all-nighters so you'd occasionally, quite occasionally, not that often, be in the lift on the way back up to your desk and people would be arriving for work and you'd have a coffee in one hand and a fresh shirt you'd just gone out to buy in the other to wear that day and people would look at you bleary-eyed and you'd say, yeah, I had to work straight through last night and it was like a badge of honor.

You'd done an all-nighter for a client. Well, the all-nighter, the work that keeps Jesus up all night is prayer and it signals to us the gravity of what Jesus is about to do and he tells, Luke tells us in verse 13, when morning came, Jesus called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them whom he also designated apostles.

Well, the word apostle is to be a sent one and he's sending these twelve out on mission. So, here is Jesus rather than kind of conforming to try and win the favor of the religious leaders.

He's doubling down on his mission by extending the work to these twelve men who he'll send out to do what he's been doing, to be the heralds of the good news that the kingdom of God has come in Jesus.

[12 : 21] And when we read about twelve and we hear about a mountain, if we've read our Bibles, it rings bells for us from the Old Testament. For when God brought Israel Israel to him and made Israel his son, his people, he, Moses, went up a mountain and appointed leaders for the twelve tribes of Israel.

In other words, here is Jesus with astonishing authority reestablishing the people of God around himself for all time.

so that when the apostle John is given his revelation of the future, of the new creation that we have in Revelation, and he pictures it as a heavenly city coming down, the new Jerusalem, he says, the walls were built on twelve foundation stones, each one named after one of these twelve apostles, with Matthias replacing Judas Iscariot who betrays Jesus.

So here is a saviour whose mission cannot be thwarted or stopped by furious rejection and hostility. And how good it is for us to be reassured this morning that Jesus has this kind of authority and wisdom.

I was thinking about that this week when in the news Donald Trump was visiting the UK and had his state visit to Windsor Castle and this banquet and because he was here and we were hearing what Americans think of Britain and what do Britons think of America, there were lots of journalists just writing generally about the state of the world and the state of our country and I was listening to and reading journalists saying things like why does our government not have a plan about what they're going to do about AI and all the jobs that will be lost because of AI in the coming years and what's the government going to do about the conflict in Ukraine and in the Middle East and what's the government going to do about the migrants coming on boats and what about the culture wars and I was thinking as I was hearing journalists talk about this who on earth would want to be a government leader right now because lots of the time

[14 : 51] I think the answer might be some of these problems are just really really difficult and the government just doesn't really know the answer about how to fix them well we come to Jesus in Luke and when it comes to his mission which we've seen is a really big mission it's a put the whole world right one day and gather a multitude of people through the ages to be there with him it's that mission and he'll never get it wrong and nothing will stop him he's got the poise the wisdom the plan the prayers to carry it through and that means that whatever it might cost us to line up our lives with Jesus we can be really sure he's worthy of our trust he'll get it right so as he forms this new community around him and appoints the leaders what's it going to be like to be part of his community that's what the rest of the chapter shows us as Jesus comes back down the mountain and we're going to see it's a magnetic community it's an afflictive community and it's a distinctive community so first of all it's a magnetic community in verse 17 we find that people are coming to Jesus from everywhere a large crowd of his disciples was there and a great number of people and they're from all over Judea that's some days travel south of where he is from Jerusalem and from the coastal region around Tyre and Sidon well that is beyond the promised land up to the northeast from Israel and this was what the Old Testament people of God were always meant to be that their holy lives would be magnetic and would attract the nations to come and see the living God and meet him and worship him well here it's the man

Jesus who can draw the crowds from far and wide verse 18 it says just at the bottom there they'd come to hear him Jesus and to be healed of their diseases so when they come to him evil is taken away when you're with Jesus there's nothing to fear anymore and look at his power over sickness verse 19 the people all tried to touch him because power was coming from him and healing them all no wonder people are traveling for many days to be part of it wouldn't you have done the same last year some of you went to Germany when Scotland were competing in Euro 2024 200,000 people from Scotland went to Berlin for Scotland playing there the roads here were mercifully peaceful and one song that was written by one of the Scotland fans who went was called

What a Time to be Alive what a time to be alive Scotland are in the Euros well picture the crowds here traveling for days to be with Jesus because the news has come the anointed one is finally here what a time to be alive now that Jesus had come would you go of course you'd go and it's a glimpse of the future again in Revelation when we when we're given this picture of what the future will be like for our world we're to picture a great multitude that no one can count gathered around the throne and the risen Jesus is on the throne and there is no evil anymore and there's no suffering anymore he's taken all the sickness all the sadness all the sin away and everyone is invited come to Jesus and share in that hope as we picture that crowd we all long for that kind of community today do we not we've seen a lot of flags appearing all around us at the moment in the UK as I drove back up the M74 last week to Glasgow there were

Union Jacks and Scotland flags on the bridges and then just running around Mary Hill this week there were Scotland flags on the lampposts there and some people are saying we're putting up flags because we're trying to recover something that we think has been lost a sense of collective identity national identity of what it means to be Scottish and other people are feeling very threatened by the flags because they're saying that the flags express a protest against immigration and that they reflect a kind of Scottish identity or British identity that we don't recognize so they're kind of being raised in a kind of some kind of aim to be a sort of united community but actually of being quite divisive for other people well when we come to Jesus and we invite others to come to him what we're seeing in chapter 6 of Luke here is that we become part of a community with him that genuinely crosses all the boundaries that we as humans would put up where we all have this shared identity that we're all people with one thing in common that we needed spiritual healing and we found this great physician the Lord Jesus who can heal us and so we listen to him and we're yearning for the future that he has demonstrated he has the power to bring and now

Jesus gives us the marks of his community and the ethics of his community so this is a bit like when a sports team gets its new coach and they tell you what their philosophy is how the team is going to perform from now on what are they going to value all the talk at the moment in the world of football is about Manchester United their manager Ruben Amorim he's got this system and he is sticking with the system no one's going to change the system this week the headlines were Ruben Amorim said not even the Pope could make me change my system okay everyone else seems to think it's the wrong system okay but Ruben says if you want a new system at Manchester United you'll need a new coach and they might well do that but if they do the new coach will come and they'll say this is now my system this is how it's going to be well Jesus here has gathered his people his new community and he's showing us this is what's important to him this is what it will look like this is how we are to live so our second point this morning it's an afflicted community if you just look with me at how the next section is structured in your Bibles you can see in verses 20 to 22 we get four descriptions of the blessed person and then in 24 to 26 we get the other side of the coin we get four descriptions from Jesus of a kind of person or people who Jesus warns and he says war to you if you're like this what's really crucial is that we get that the people in the first list are people who trust

[22 : 24] Jesus they are faithful to God verses 22 and 23 make that clear so it's not just people who look like this who are poor and weeping they are people who trust Jesus and are like that and then the people in verses 24 to 26 are unfaithful they are rejecting Jesus you can see that in verse 26 and especially in his firing line are the religious leaders who've rejected him because in verse 26 he says they are like the false prophets of old so what are the marks of the good life here Jesus says good for you if you are my disciple and you are poor hungry weeping and persecuted for my name in other words if following Jesus leaves you feeling weak that it's costly that you grieve that you are excluded good for you why well the first reason he gives is about the present and then the next three are about the future for you the first one if you're poor verse 20 good for you because yours is the kingdom of God all the blessings in this life of knowing

God as your heavenly father of having Jesus as your savior who loved you and gave himself for you of redemption of adoption into God's family of being chosen and dearly loved by God it's all yours now and so that liberates you from needing to be rich and powerful materially in this world and then he gives you future promises if your life is marked by sacrifice and suffering for Jesus now good for you because you will be satisfied by him you will find fullness of joy you will be rewarded in heaven verse 23 on the other hand if you are rejecting Jesus today you might find that in this life you feel very powerful verse 24 rich that your experience in this life is fullness and comfort and the word for laughter there in verse 25 is a word for boasting or gloating a kind of laughter that's look look how well

I've done and scoffing at others and verse 26 you might find that your experience of this life while you reject Jesus is that you achieve recognition and popularity but Jesus says to you be warned if you are rejecting him it will not last one day we're all going to meet Jesus and the tables will be turned so then look at us meeting today in a church in the prosperous west end of Glasgow how do these descriptions map onto the Christian life today where we live well we see these patterns at play in the global church and when you speak with people in our church family who have experienced the Christian life in other countries we find out more about that in our church family we've had a lady from Indonesia

Bella who said that in her region back home it's legal to be a Christian but you find that your children if they're Christians don't expect the same education it's much harder to get school education if you're a Christian and when jobs are advertised there will often be a quarter that restricts the number of Christians that will be hired so your prospects in life are hindered by being a Christian so these things happen all around the world but we also see in Scotland today ways that being a Christian can leave you feeling poor and weak and excluded there are churches around us in Scotland who have had to leave their historic denominations because of their commitment to God's word we left our denomination because of our commitment but some of the churches who've done that also had to leave their buildings behind and that was very costly and there are church members in those churches who remortgaged their homes to give them money to help finance the buying of buildings so that they can meet together and there are ways that for any individual

Christian I think we should be able to say being a Christian has cost me it has been costly for me it has meant radical change in my life to listen to Jesus words I was thinking this week about reunions because my wife Kathy has been invited to a university reunion and my mate has been invited he's a minister now but he's been invited to a reunion for where he used to work and he's kind of dreading going back and seeing how everyone else has been getting on but it's an opportunity for him but as I was saying to him but what I found is I mean last time I went on a university reunion I was reflecting with a Christian friend who was there how when we were at university our lives there were certainly ways that as a Christian you would stand out because of things that you did differently but when it came to the sort of standard of living that we lived it wasn't that different from our fellow students we drank in the same places we ate in the same places we lived in the same kind of accommodation as our fellow students who were not Christians but as you go on in life the further you go just the gap gets wider and wider and wider between their standard of life and my standard of life as more and more they've kept on moving up in the world getting

[28 : 52] OBEs and things like that and focusing on self fulfillment and self achievement if we are serious about living to serve Jesus so that we're lining up our lives behind his agenda of making him known today we will find that we've given time and gifts and money towards his work and advancing the gospel and helping other Christians in need that mean that the gap between us and our non-Christian peers who maybe did the same job as us or who have the same background as us just gets wider and wider and wherever you feel that most acutely Jesus says good for you good for you that your life looks like that how comforting for you here this morning if you can think of ways that you have felt poor for Jesus you can think of sacrifices you've made for him for his work for his kingdom in the job that you decided to do the place that you've chosen to live the time you've spent with people the strained relationships you've had to endure for being a Christian how your spirits should be lifted today by hearing that Jesus says good for you for you will be comforted by me when I say to you well done good and faithful servant he goes on verse 22 good for you even when people hate you and exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil because of

Jesus and we're having to get used to that in Scotland where I think a few generations ago while most people around wouldn't have been Christians it would have been something like I don't believe the miracles of Jesus but I admire his teaching but today in Scotland when you hold on faithfully to Jesus words people don't just think I don't believe what you believe they might well think you are morally wrong to believe that and what Jesus says about that is so astonishing in verse 23 you notice that verse 23 he says rejoice in that day and leap for joy leap for joy if that's how people think of you why well he says two reasons in verse 23 reward in the future that is absolutely secure because he is in charge of the future and validation in the here and now this is how the faithful people of

God have been treated over the generations if you're being treated like that it's a good sign that you're on the right side this is what we see the apostles then doing in Acts Luke's next book as they get persecuted and flogged and imprisoned and they they rejoice and they sing hymns in prison that they would be counted worthy to suffer for Jesus name folks these are the marks of the authentic Christian life how many of you would choose this today would we rather not choose to be powerful rich comfortable and popular and a friend of Jesus as well wouldn't that be our ambition for our kids for ourselves well Jesus is saying turn your whole expectations for life upside down and let's be reassured in that that it means there's no spin from Jesus whatsoever about what life with him might look like what it might cost us to follow him he's completely transparent with us so if you're a new student arriving in

Glasgow working out is it going to be worth living for Jesus during my student days I'll miss out on some things is it really going to be worth it or if you're in your 40s and life is a big struggle you're under pressure and you've been wondering is the Christian thing still worth holding on to when I've got so much pressure in my life well let's take home from Jesus words here that to be a Christian the sums really do add up it really is worth it but the sums only really add up when you consider the future it is worth it because Jesus really is who he claimed to be he rose from the dead he really is coming back and so living for him now will be costly but being in his kingdom now is true freedom it's wonderful and more than that you can trust him for the most wonderful future so this really is the good life to be with

Jesus because the future he will bring he's demonstrated he has the power to get rid of suffering to get rid of evil and now risen he will take us to be there and so then finally this morning Jesus tells us how he wants us to live we've seen his people are a magnetic community an afflicted community thirdly it's a distinctive community now the big idea in these verses is that Jesus calls us to be astounding in our love for others especially in who we love look with me at verse 27 but to you who are listening I say love your enemies do good to those who hate you he gives us the principles in verses 27 and 28 he says love do good bless and pray pray for those who mistreat you I was struck recently by a Christian friend who had been wronged by a colleague at work and they were being continually opposed by the same colleague wrongly treated by them it was related to them being a Christian and they said to me

[35 : 14] I'm praying that God will give me an opportunity to do something really good for them to really help them to bless them it was not what I was expecting him to say he was praying for but if you follow Jesus Jesus is saying here when you're hated be distinctive!

Astound the world by responding not with vengeance but with love our response to people who are unjust towards us should baffle and amaze it should leave non-Christians scratching their heads then Jesus gives us four pictures of it in verses 29 to 31 there are these punchy vivid hyperbolic pictures they're designed not to be taken literally but to give us a jolt to provoke us and I think it's best to understand all four of them in the wider context here of Jesus speaking about being persecuted for his name a synagogue leader might slap a Christian on the cheek as an insult it was a sign of rejection of being excommunicated and Jesus is saying let them drive you out if that's what they're going to do if the Roman authorities seize your possessions don't hold back if they demand your money let it go free yourself from needing to get them to pay so he's not talking here about situations where people find themselves in an abusive relationship or situation today where it's entirely right to get help and to protect yourself from harm but what he's got in mind here is when

Christians are under fire when we're being opposed our posture is that we're not looking to retaliate but to do good to those who would harm us so how can we do it well the power comes at the end of verse 35 he says then your reward will be great and you will be children of the most high because he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked so it's when we're convicted that we were once ungrateful towards God and we were wicked in how we treated him and the people around us and we were godless and self centered and we told lies and we were greedy and God's response to us seeing all of that in our hearts and in our lives was the most astonishing kindness that he sent Jesus to come and save us even to die for our sins knowing what we've been like when we have experienced that kindness that undeserved kindness it gives us the strength and the resolve and the willingness to turn to others who would wrong us and have compassion on them to show kindness and love to them and the effect of that should be that the quality of

Jesus' life in us is so astonishing to outsiders that these are the moments that create opportunities for us to proclaim the news about him that they like us can join the multitude that we've seen here in Luke chapter 6 who listen to Jesus who are healed by Jesus and who yearn for their future with him so let's pray together just a moment of quiet to reflect on what God has been saying to us Lord Jesus we praise you for your authority your wisdom your compassion thank you that you demonstrated on the mountain and on the plane that you are the savior we can trust by your spirit would you transform our expectations of the blessed life and would you empower us to love everyone around us even our enemies would we respond to persecution with joy to rejection with love and as we live these ways would you open doors for your name to be made known amen holy