

AM Luke 6:12-23

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[0 : 00] It's chapter 6 beginning to read at verse 12. This is the Word of God. In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God.

And when day came he called his disciples and chose from them twelve whom he named apostles. Simon whom he named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John, and Philip and Bartholomew, and Matthew and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simeon who was called the Zealot.

And Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot who became a traitor. And he came down with them and stood on a level place with a great crowd of his disciples, and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem, and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases.

And those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured, and all the crowd sought to touch him. For power came out of him and healed them all. And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples and said, Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

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

[1 : 26] Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy. For behold, your reward is great in heaven. For so their fathers did to the prophets.

Amen. This is the inspired and an errant word of God. Let's turn to the Lord in prayer now. Let us pray. Heavenly Father, once again, we thank you for your word.

We thank you for the truth that it communicates to us. We thank you for the way that it speaks to us. We thank you, Father, for the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps we're more conscious of it in recent weeks than we perhaps used to be.

We're conscious, Father, of the need for your spirit. We're conscious of that need to have your word applied to our hearts. We can't meet together physically. We can't come together and encourage each other with thoughts from your word.

But we thank you, Father, that the spirit does his work. That the spirit, that he opens our blind eyes. That he softens our hard hearts. And that he gives us that new heart of flesh.

[2 : 32] As we come this morning, Father, we want to pray for all of our emergency services. We pray for those doctors and nurses who are continuing to treat people with the coronavirus. We pray that you would grant them safety.

We pray that you would grant them good health. We pray, Father, for all of those school children who are perhaps a little bit worried. A little bit put out by what's happened over these past weeks. May you be near to them. May you encourage them. May you be with all of those parents who are perhaps left at home now wondering how on earth to teach this child.

May you give them wisdom and guidance and instruction. We pray for Boris Johnson, our Prime Minister. We pray for Nicola Sturgeon, our First Minister.

That in these days of upheaval, in these days of distress and discomfort, we pray, Father, that you would give them wisdom. We pray that you would give them clarity of thought, clarity of ideas.

[3 : 31] And we pray, Father, that you would be with us now as we come to your word. Forgive us for our sins, we ask. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Let's turn then, please, to Luke chapter 6. Luke chapter 6 in these verses, 12 through 23. Luke chapter 6 verses 12 through 23. And we're going to look at them together this morning.

I'm sure we've all had that experience of being at school when teams are being picked. Maybe sometimes, perhaps, you had the privilege of picking the teams. As I say, it probably usually

happened at primary school rather than secondary school.

I don't ever really recall it happening at secondary school. But as you were left to pick the teams in primary school, who did you pick? Well, first of all, you might pick your friends because you want to be on the same team as them.

You want to share the experience you're about to have with them. Perhaps then, after you've picked your friends, you might pick the person who's best at whatever game it is that you're going to play because you want the best chance of winning.

[4 : 32] You want the best chance of doing well in the game. And then there would be those who would be left to the end. Those who were neither your friend nor those who were good at the game you were about to play.

And as we come to Luke chapter 6 this morning, as we come to these verses 12 through 23, it's all about Jesus picking his disciples. It's all about Jesus teaching people what belonging to his kingdom would involve.

And as we see, it's going to look slightly different than we might expect. You see, as Jesus picks his disciples, he picks not the best, he picks not the most influential, he picks not the most popular people in society, but he picks those who have been chosen.

As he comes to teach people what it will mean to belong to the kingdom of God, what his kingdom ethic will be, we see that again, it's an upside down kingdom. That he says, belonging to my kingdom will not look like belonging to an earthly kingdom.

Belonging to my kingdom will not look like success in the world's eyes, but rather it will look like, blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who are hungry, for you will be satisfied.

[5 : 48] The whole nature of Jesus' kingdom is that it's an upside down kingdom. It doesn't conform to what people expect it to be.

His kingdom isn't about earthly power and prestige, but his kingdom is a kingdom of reversal. It's a kingdom where the poor are made rich, where the hungry are satisfied.

We put it in the theme of our opening illustration, Jesus picks not his friends, Jesus picks not those who will be good for his kingdom in worldly terms, but he picks those whose others might pick last. We want to think about three things this morning, so you see three things together. Firstly, we're going to think about Jesus picking his disciples, and we're going to see that they are an unlikely bunch, that there's an unlikely banding together of Jesus' disciples.

Secondly then, we want to think about this unsettled crowd, this unsettled crowd that Jesus gathers a crowd round him of people who are troubled by various things.

[7 : 00] And then thirdly, we're going to see how Jesus' kingdom is an upside down kingdom, that it doesn't exist on worldly terms, but is an upside down kingdom.

An unlikely bunch, an unsettled crowd, and an upside down kingdom. So first then, an unlikely bunch, an unlikely bunch, and we see that in verses 12 through 16.

Verses 12 through 16. So remember then where we left Jesus last week. We saw Jesus having this confrontation with the religious leaders about their special day.

We saw him defending his disciples as they walked through the fields of grain, as they plucked the heads of grain to eat. We saw Jesus defending his disciples as the religious leaders said, well why do you eat with tax collectors and sinners?

We saw Jesus defending his actions as he healed the man in the synagogue on the Sabbath. And as we come to verse 12 then, we're moving on slightly from this confrontation, only slightly.

[8 : 01] We haven't left it all together. We're going to come back to Jesus confronting the religious leaders in just a few moments' time. But as we said, Jesus begins to teach here what belonging to his kingdom will look like.

Belonging to the Pharisees, belonging to the scribes' kingdom, looked like keeping rules, it looked like doing what they said on the Sabbath, but belonging to Jesus' kingdom is going to be fundamentally different. In verses 1 to 11, he's exposed what following the religious leaders looks like.

And now in these next verses, he shows us what following him will look like. We see verse 12, that Jesus goes out on a mountain to pray.

Again, the time's not given to us. Verse 12, in these days, in these days of confrontation, in these days when Jesus was teaching, he went out to the mountain to pray.

And all night, he prayed to God, we're told. Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, Jesus Christ, in very nature, God, still felt it necessary to pray. [9:10] Still felt it necessary to set aside time to be with his Father. Notice this wasn't a hurried time of prayer. It wasn't five minutes when the crowds weren't annoying him.

It wasn't five minutes when no one was looking healed. It wasn't five minutes where he wasn't teaching the crowd. It wasn't five minutes when people weren't pressing in all around him. Rather, he went out all night and prayed. He went, as we see time and time and time again in the Gospels, he went to a secluded place and prayed. And spent as much time as possible in prayer. We've said it before and we'll say it again, but what a great example this is to us.

What a great example our Savior sets for us. If Jesus needed to do this, if Jesus in very nature God and very nature man set aside time to pray, then how much more do we need it?

[10:14] If the sinless, spotless Son of God did this, then how much more as sinful fallen human beings do we need it? How often is our prayer time crammed into whatever time we can find between the stresses and strains of life?

How often is our prayer time crammed into when the kids are napping? How often is our prayer time crammed in amongst the other things that we have to do? The piles of laundry, the commute to work, crammed into those ten minutes of peace that we can find in a day?

I'm not saying this to scold you. I'm not saying this to make you feel bad. I'm not saying this to try and put you down. But merely to point out the pattern of our Savior who set aside conscious, deliberate time to be in communion with the Father.

Who took time out to go to a secluded place where he knew that he wouldn't be disturbed? That might mean for us getting up half an hour earlier before the kids so that we know we're not going to be disturbed.

It might mean for us staying up half an hour later at the end of the day again so that we know that we won't be disturbed. It might mean for us turning the mobile off so that those texts and WhatsApp and notifications aren't continuously coming through.

[11:42] We need to make time to be alone with the Lord. One of the things I think we comfort ourselves with is we say, well, we're so busy today. I mean, there's so much to be done.

There's so much good things to be done. We're too busy. But yet Jesus wasn't exactly living the life of Riley here, was he? Jesus wasn't exactly living in the lap of luxury here, was he? Jesus wasn't exactly a man who was just laying back taking things easy.

But he made prayer and fellowship with the Father a priority over everything else. The day comes, we're told, verse 13. And he called his disciples to him.

And from this group he called 12 who he named apostles. I've been a Christian now for 18 years probably. And I can honestly say that I've never seen this before.

I always assumed that the 12, as they become known, were kind of the only followers of Jesus. That the 12 were those kind of first group who gathered around Jesus, the first group who recognized who Jesus was.

[12:55] We see him calling some of them from his work, from their work to come and follow him. We see him calling tax collectors, we see him calling fishermen to leave behind their means of living and come and follow him.

I always assumed that it was just those 12 and the others. Yet Luke tells us here that there's a bigger crowd. There's a bigger crowd of followers. There's a bigger crowd of disciples.

And from these, Jesus chooses 12 to be his apostles. Jesus chooses these 12 whom he would send. They talked today about football being a squad game.

You know, games come that thick and fast. There's that many different competitions to play in that you can't really afford to only have a squad of 10 or 11 players. But the bigger squad that you have, if you have maybe 25 players in your squad, that bigger squad is trimmed down for any one match. And so to hear the bigger group of disciples, the bigger group of people who are following Jesus are being trimmed down or being funneled down into this 12 who would become apostles.

[14:05] disciples. And as we read the list, there's a pretty unlikely bunch. They're a pretty unlikely bunch, aren't they? There's fishermen, there's tax collectors, there's a zealot, we're told, and even, even a traitor, Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor, verse 16.

It was an unlikely bunch. They had very little else in common. Save the fact that 11 of them at least saw Jesus as the Messiah.

They saw Jesus as the King. They saw Jesus as the Savior. And it's a reminder to us that the Church of Jesus Christ is a diverse organization.

It isn't just for white people. It isn't just for black people, Asian people. It isn't just for rich or for poor or for manual laborers or for skilled workers. But the Church of Jesus Christ is diverse.

The thing that unites us as believers, the thing that holds us together as believers, isn't our political persuasion. The thing that holds us together as believers, isn't what income bracket we fall into.

[15 : 14] It isn't where we were born or who our people are. But the thing that unites us, the thing that holds us together is Jesus Christ. That we're sinners saved by grace.

The Church, just as the original apostles were, should be an unlikely bunch. That as people look into our church, as people look in to see us as believers, they should say, what on earth holds them together?

What on earth keeps them together? And of course, the answer is Jesus. Secondly, however, we want to remind ourselves that Judas is amongst those who are chosen, despite the fact he's a traitor.

Judas is amongst those who are called, despite the fact he would later betray Jesus. Now here we are in the Free Church of Scotland, the separatist, a pure denomination.

But this reminds us that there will always be wheat and weeds in the visible church. This reminds us of the great truth that the Westminster Confession teaches us that the purest churches under heaven and earth are subject to mixture and error.

[16 : 28] When we see denominations perhaps losing their way, when we see denominations perhaps going back on what they used to believe, we need to remind ourselves that there are good people in them, that there are people who belong to Jesus Christ, that there are people there who we will one day spend eternity with.

When we're tempted to pat ourselves on the shoulder, when we're tempted to say, aren't we doing brilliantly? Isn't our denomination just fantastic? And it is. We need to remind ourselves that we're subject to mixture and error.

that there will always be wheat and weeds growing together. That's the first thing we see then is this unlikely bunch. Secondly then, we see an unsettled crowd, an unsettled crowd.

And we see that in verses 17 through 19. So Jesus has called this unlikely bunch together. Jesus has brought these 12 disciples together. And we see as we come to verse 17 that the crowd is somewhat unsettled.

Jesus comes with the apostles and a great crowd of his disciples. Notice again the size of the following that Jesus has. Verse 17. He stood with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem in the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon were there with him.

[17 : 50] These are the people who are there because they're sick. These are the people there because they're looking for a show. These are the people who are sort of viewing Jesus as a traveling circus. They've come from Tyre and Sidon to see him.

They've come from Tyre and Sidon to see what's going on. The crowd were told want to touch him. They want to be healed of their diseases. Verse 18.

And then whenever the crowd touched him verse 19 power came out from him and healed them all. It makes Jesus sound like some sort of live wire.

It makes Jesus sound that if you touched him you would get a bit of a shock from him. But let's imagine being one of the crowd. Let's imagine having that disease that perhaps no one else knows about.

Let's imagine being one of the crowd who've struggled all our life with this illness. And suddenly there's a man who can help you. Suddenly there's someone who can do something for you.

[18 : 48] The doctors have tried and failed. Your friends have tried and failed. You've heard about this Jesus. and you know he's the only one who can help.

What would you do? You'd do everything in your power to lay hold of Jesus. You'd do everything in your power to push and fight and elbow your way to the front.

To lay hold of the one who could heal you. To touch the one who could do something for you. The one who could help you. You wouldn't rest until you touched him.

Each of us this morning is sick. Each of us this morning has a disease that we can do nothing about. The doctors can't help us. This disease is worse than the coronavirus.

It's more contagious than the coronavirus because each of us inherited it at our birth. And only Jesus can help us this morning. That disease is of course sin.

[19 : 53] That rebellion against God the rightful king and ruler of our lives. Each of us this morning has that disease right at the heart of who we are. Right in the center of our being.

So what are you going to do? You can sit here in your sickness. You can sit here in your disease and know that one day it leads to death. You can do nothing. Ignore all the warning signs. Ignore all the messages that you hear. Ignore the problem and hope that it goes away. But we've seen recently how that ends haven't we? In our nation we've seen how that ends with people dying. Or you can do everything to lay hold of Jesus. The one who can heal you. The one who can help you this morning. Only Jesus can heal you.

Only Jesus can help you. Only Jesus can cure the problem of your sin. Come and take hold of him by faith this morning. Come and ask him to forgive your sins.

[21 : 02] Come and lay hold of his righteousness this morning. Come and know his healing power from sin. because only he can help you.

Come and see him because only he can help you. We've seen an unlikely bunch. We've seen an unsettled crowd. Then thirdly finally we see an upside down kingdom.

An upside down kingdom and we see that in verses 20 through 23. Having chosen his apostles having chosen his disciples if you like having chosen this this close group from the bigger group that had gathered having dealt with elements of the crowd that were unsettled we're told verse 20 what are we told by Luke?

Jesus and he Jesus lifted up his eyes on his disciples and said he's about to teach them what it's going to mean to be part of his kingdom.

He's going to teach them what it means to follow him truly and really. Now what we read here is very similar to the material we read in Matthew chapter 6 that sermon on the mount that so called sermon on the mount and that leads some people here to speculate that these two accounts are actually the same that it's the same material recorded here.

[22 : 27] I'm not convinced however Matthew's teaching we're told takes place on a mount the sermon on the mount kind of gives it away a little bit whereas we're told here that Jesus had come down and stood on a level place verse 17 Luke's account of Jesus' teaching here is much shorter than that that we read on the sermon on the mount.

Some people will say well how likely is it that Jesus would use the same material how likely is it that Jesus would preach the same sermon twice? well this is by no means an endorsement of it but I often use the same material twice if I go to preach somewhere and I haven't preached before I'll use a sermon that I've preached somewhere else.

Jesus knew man that John tells us Jesus knew what was in man he knew how humanity worked there's that old saying that the repetition is the mother of all learning that hearing things over and over and over and over again is the way to get them ingrained into your brain is the way to make sure that they've gone in to your brain.

So I have no difficulty believing that these are two separate accounts covering similar material that Jesus knows and is teaching his disciples again and again and again what it means to belong to his kingdom how his kingdom will be fundamentally different from any earthly kingdom.

And as we come to verse 21 then we notice the upside down nature of this kingdom don't we?

Blessed are you who are hungry for you shall be satisfied blessed are you who are poor for yours is the kingdom of God verse 21 blessed are you who weep now for you shall laugh verse 22 blessed are you when people hate you these are things that people didn't consider especially blessed aren't they even today no one was walking around the streets of Nazareth saying God has blessed me with poverty no one was walking around the streets of Nazareth saying God has blessed me with hunger but it's the upside down nature of the kingdom that's being highlighted it's the reversal of the kingdom that's being highlighted it's important to say that there's nothing especially blessed in being poor in itself there's nothing about being poor that means that people will automatically become Christians or will be saved by God outside of Jesus

[25 : 00] Christ there's nothing inherently blessed about being poor but rather the key to understanding this upside down kingdom is verse 20 because who are these words addressed to verse 20 he lifted up his eyes on his disciples and said Jesus knows that his disciples are poor and

without resource he knows that they can't do anything without him and without the father and so it's they the poor it's they the hungry it's they who will be hated by man who look to God that will have their situation relieved it's those who look to God whom God will act in favour of how often the rich are dependent on themselves their money will sort out their problems but it won't whatever's needed can be bought but it can't can it friends the important thing this morning isn't how much is in our bank account what labels on the clothes we wear what car we drive what type of house we live in the important thing this morning is that we're part of this upside down kingdom that we come to know Christ personally by faith the one who can save us from our sin the one who can settle our fears the one who calls us as an unlikely bunch of sinners together to be his people if we're looking to him this morning if we're trusting in him this morning if we know the peace and joy of sins forgiven this morning then we're truly blessed

Christ doesn't matter if we're poor because we're rich in Christ doesn't matter if we're hungry because we fed on the bread of heaven we mourn of course we do and weep but not as those without hope if we're trusting in Jesus Christ this morning if we know Jesus Christ personally this morning then we're truly blessed no matter anything else Amen