

# Blessing and Woe

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[ 0 : 00 ] In fact, his mouth felt really itchy. In fact, it started to cause a bit of a reaction inside his mouth. And he's thinking, this is not good. And he quickly looks at the back of the bag.

And he's looking here, and he's looking at the ingredients. And it says right at the end there, may contain traces of peanuts. A very large reaction for him.

Fortunately, he stopped eating, and it wasn't too bad. But there was some children at the college that I was at. So severe was their reaction to the peanut.

So severe. We had to change all the rules about where you could have, like the playground rules for all the little kids. Because even just the smell of a peanut could kill the child.

So severe was the reaction. A small little peanut. I see a teacher nodding there. In the schools nowadays, it's all throughout the schools.

[ 1 : 07 ] Everyone needs to be so careful about the peanut. A very large reaction from a very small little thing. A man 2,000 years ago.

Do you think that's a big reaction? A man 2,000 years ago caused far, far greater reactions in people's lives. Far greater reactions.

We're looking at Luke at the moment. Luke chapter 6. We'll be working through Luke 6 and 7 in the evening for some time.

But if you were to read prior to this point in Luke 6, you would have seen a man by the name of Jesus. And as he's walking around, he did some incredible things.

But one of the great things that you notice is the reaction that he had in people's lives. Crowds came to see him. They were flocking to see him. So great were the crowds at times.

[ 2 : 06 ] He had to go to deserted places to get some peace and some solace and some time out. What an incredible reaction. So many people coming to visit him from all over the place, all over the region.

Yet we saw last week a very strong reaction to Jesus as well. If you remember at the end of last week, in chapter 6, verse 11, we saw that the Pharisees there, in light of the information that Jesus has just shown them, that he has authority, authority of the Sabbath, in light of this information, rather than following him, they are in a mindless rage.

They are ready to explode. They can't believe this. Here is this man, Jesus, who has just showed that he has authority, and yet they just want to do away with him.

And they start planning to get rid of him. Look at the two reactions to this one man, Jesus. Do you know this reaction to this one man, Jesus, a person some 2,000 years ago, has continued on from that point.

A very large reaction to one man. We're going to be thinking about that tonight. So before we do that, let's pray. Father, as we come to your word tonight, we do pray that you'll be with each one of us.

[ 3 : 42 ] Father, that you help us to have ears to hear. Father, not only ears to hear, but Lord, that we'll put these things into actions in our lives. Father, as we come to see this man, Jesus, again, help us to understand how we should react to him.

We pray this in your son's name. Amen. You might like to get your Bibles open to page 837, because that's where the Bible reading was, and that's where I'll be preaching from tonight.

The peanuts are rather salty, so I just need a little bit of water. Jesus knows the reaction to the Pharisees.

He knows that his days are numbered. He knows that he's going to give himself up to death. He knows that his time is coming. So he also knows that it's time to start planning for the future.

It's time to start choosing people who will continue on the work once he is gone. And so tonight, we see where Jesus chooses 12 men out of a very large group of disciples that are following him.  
[ 5 : 00 ] He chooses 12, and then he goes down onto the plains, and he continues his ministry, and as a part of that ministry, he starts preaching a sermon about what it is to be a disciple.

What does it mean to be a disciple? We're going to look at that tonight. Let me read from verse 12. Now during those days, when we pick up there now during those days, it's meant to remind you of what has just happened with the Pharisees, and the fact that they're out there to get Jesus. Now during those days, he went out to the mountain to pray, and he spent the night in prayer to God. And when day came, he called his disciples and chose 12 of them, whom he also named apostles.

Note there, that in light of what has just happened, in this turning point in the book, where the reaction to Jesus is so strong that they're out to kill him, at this turning point, what does Jesus do? He goes up to a mountain, and he prays. He knows it's time to act. But rather than acting straight away, he goes to God in prayer. Now just a little side here, I think these are very important words.  
[ 6 : 12 ] What type of issues are you facing at the moment? What's going on in your life? Have you got exams coming on at the moment? Have you got to make some very big decisions? What's going on in your life?

Is there chaos reigning? Note Jesus' reaction in the midst of this. What does he do? He goes up and he prays. He seeks God's guidance.

He seeks God in the midst of this. So Jesus goes up and prays. Then after the night of praying on the mountain, just a little aside, many people think that this idea of going up on top of the mountain is significant.

I think there may be some significance in that in many instances through the Bible, the mountain was a place where divine revelation came. So you think back to Moses, where it was on the Mount Sinai that God gave information, gave the Ten Commandments, and God spoke with Moses. Well, it could be that. But it certainly meant, I think, meant to make you think about these things. But the fact is, he did go up the mountain, and he comes back down, and then he chooses 12 of all the disciples that he's called to him.

[ 7 : 27 ] So these disciples, which are many, as we've seen throughout this book so far, many have come, and they're all around him. He's called them all together, and he starts choosing. Just a small band.

12 of them, in fact. And he gives them the name Apostles. Well, let's have a little look at this list. I don't want to go through all the details on every person in this list.

But it's interesting just to note a few things about who are the people that Jesus chooses. So the first one we see there is Simon, whom he named Peter. Now, if you flip back a couple of chapters, at the beginning of chapter 5, we see there that Jesus has actually called Simon, who was called Peter, who was a fisherman.

So here we see Jesus calling a fisherman to be one of his 12 disciples, 12 apostles. Then there was James and John. They're also, as a part of that chapter 5, we see that they were fishermen as well. Then we see there that we've got Andrew and James. I'm sorry, Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter. Then we've got Philip and Bartholomew.

[ 8 : 34 ] Then note there that the next one in verse 15 is Matthew. Well, if we flip back a little bit, we also see that Matthew was a tax collector, viewed by many as a sinner. An odd mix of people, wouldn't you say, to have some fishermen and a tax collector.

Well, the list goes on. Then we've got Thomas there. Here's the next one in the list in verse 15. We see there that Thomas later on, when we look later on, he's very sceptical, this Thomas.

He's a person that wants a lot of proof. When Jesus rises again, he says, no, look, I'm not going to believe until I actually see Jesus. He's a bit of a doubter.

Doubting Thomas. Another odd one to pick. Then we look there, we've got James. The only information we've got there is son of Alphaeus. Then we've got Simon, called the zealot.

A bit of a political revolutionary. He's a bit of a zealot. He's out there. Then we've got Judas, son of James. And then one of the most interesting characters we've got at the end there, Judas Iscariot.

[ 9 : 37 ] And we even note there, who became a traitor. Jesus chooses, in the midst of his twelve, a traitor, knowing full well that he's a traitor.

It's no accident. He's got opposition, even in his ranks. Yet we know that God's got his hand on the whole situation. That this is God's choice.

This is a hand-picked team. A divinely appointed team. Now I don't know about you, but this seems like a very odd team. I don't know what it was like for you at school, but when they were picking teams at lunch break to play soccer, or picking teams to play some type of sport, did you ever notice how it was always the weedy, runty little people that were always left?

Well, that was me. I was one, thank you Paul, I see another there. Paul was another. I was one of those weedy little runts, and that everyone else would get picked, and then I'd be the last one, and you'd be sort of, you know, me, me.

I sort of look at this list, and I sort of think, gosh, so many people there, and Jesus chooses this lot, this ordinary looking lot of people.

[11:02] Yet Jesus does choose ordinary people to be his disciples. apostles. We'll see a little bit more reason why later on.

Then he calls them apostles. Here are the ones that are the authorized representatives of Jesus. These are the special twelve, the ones that Jesus is going to spend time with, who will continue his ministry once he is gone.

But note also, I think that when Jesus is talking about choosing twelve, twelve apostles, I think it's an indictment on Israel's leadership. If you note, as we've just noted before, the Pharisees, there they are, they kick up a stink about Jesus.

And here's Jesus picking new leaders for the church. It's a bit of a slap in the face. Well, the band are gathered together to carry on Jesus' work.

The disciples then, descend off the mountain, we see in verse 17. 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, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon.

[12:18] Jesus continues his ministry. He's picked his twelve. They've come down off the mountain. And again, look at the reaction to Jesus. People come flocking in. Not only is there the great crowd of disciples, those who are following Jesus, trying to learn from him, but all of a sudden there are people coming from all directions.

We've got people from Judea, it says there. It's got people from Jerusalem, from the coast of Tyre and Sidon. When we look at this group, it isn't meant to give us the picture that it's a very large group and also from a very large area.

It's also a very diverse group. For as you know, Jerusalem was the religious centre. When you look at Tyre and Sidon, we see there some of the Gentiles possibly being in amongst that lot.

Gentiles who are outside of God's people. We also see that Judea is in the area of Palestine. An interesting group. There would have been some there that would have been followers of Jesus and others that wouldn't have.

But we do see a great variety of people. Differing acceptances of Jesus and there they are. And there is Jesus. Now in verses 18 and 19, we're given the reasons why they're there.

[13:34] They come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. And those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. And all in the crowd were trying to touch him.

For power came out of him and healed all of them. Here we see the reason why they came. They're attracted to Jesus because of his power.

His authority. Look at the great deeds that he is doing there. The miracles that he is performing in healing people. They're coming just to touch him that they may be healed.

They just want to touch him. It's a great emphasis we see here on Jesus' healing ministry. Here we see Jesus having power and authority. We see that his kingdom which he has spoken about before breaking in.

Here we see Jesus bringing in about the new order. Bringing in about his kingdom. The kingdom that was predicted. Here we see Jesus breaking it in.

[14:41] Here we see God giving generously to people. What a stark difference we have here in the crowd between the crowd and the Pharisees. The Pharisees if you remember from last week there they were spying out Jesus.

Trying to work out how they could get hold of him and trap him. But here is this group of people eager to be healed and to be administered to.

They're seeking Jesus out. What a great difference there is there. A great reaction. Difference in reaction. Well we note also that it's not just the healing that they've come for.

We also note that they came to hear him. If you look there in the beginning of verse 18 they had come to hear him. Well what follows in the rest of this chapter from verse 20 is a sermon that Jesus gives.

Many call it the sermon on the plains. There are many links between this sermon and the sermon on the mount in Matthew. Some think it's the same sermon but abbreviated.

[15:48] Some think it's a different one. Whatever it happens to be I tend to think that there are many links between the two. That they may have come from a common source.

But the writer here Luke has written down this particular part for us to learn from. So it's important that we look at what we have here to try and learn what Jesus is saying. I think part of what Jesus is saying in terms of this sermon he's saying that it's okay to be healed but if you want to be fully healed if you want to have full healing then you need to hear what Jesus has to say.

You need to understand what it is to be a disciple of Jesus. A follower of Jesus. For that's what this sermon is about. The sermon is about what does it mean to be a disciple?

What is the nature of discipleship? And we see there that it's more than just words. We see that discipleship is a way of life. It's a call to love.

But I don't want to give away the rest of the sermon. We've got three more weeks on this sermon. I'm going to let other people speak about those things. Tonight I'm only going to be looking at the first part of this sermon. Verses 20 through to 26.

[17:10] So let's have a look at this sermon. What does it tell us about the nature of discipleship? What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus? The first thing that we note in verse 20 is who is the audience that Jesus is speaking to?

Then he looked up at his disciples and said, he's looking up at his disciples. He looks up. He's aiming the sermon at those who are disciples. But remember, there is a very large crowd there. There are many people from many different areas, a variety of people. It's not just a sermon for the disciples in trying to help them to understand what being a disciple is about.

It's also trying to help those come and see the call of God, to come and see what it is to follow Christ. In a way, it's a sifting sermon.

It's again, pulling those people on either side, those who follow Christ and those who don't. Well, the sermon begins.

[18:17] Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.

Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you, revile you and defame you on account of the Son of Man. Looking at the disciples, he says, blessed are you to the disciples. Those who are following him, blessed are you. This notion of blessed is a notion of the idea that to be congratulated. The idea of congratulations.

This is great. You've got something great here. It's an inner sense of happiness, of good fortune, some good fortune. It's those who we admire are blessed.

So, for example, after the Olympics, you might go, congratulations, Ian Thorpe. That was fantastic. You are, you're blessed. Congratulations, that's great.

[19:20] Well, people go up to you and go, oh, you've got a baby and they go, you are really blessed in having a little child like that. Congratulations. But the notion that Jesus brings out here of being blessed is even greater than that.

Greater than being world champion. Greater than having a child. Congratulations. Why are you congratulated? Congratulations for those of you who are poor.

It's an odd thing to say, don't you think? You're poor. Congratulations. That's great. That's really good. You're a blessed person. You are. Now, if we look back, we see the disciples.

They're indeed very poor people. They are a people who left everything. Simon, who was a fisherman, left everything, left his nets and followed Jesus straight away.

He is very poor. But when Jesus speaks about the poor, he's not just talking about those who are financially poor. He's also talking about those who are socially poor as well.

[20:28] Because it picks up the idea of Israel. Israel was a people that were seen as poor. They were the poorer brothers compared to the people around. Socially, they were the misfits.

But it's even more than that. Jesus picks up the idea of the poor being those who are also spiritually poor. This is what Jesus is trying to pick up here, this sense of congratulations those of you who recognise that you have nothing to offer God.

Nothing whatsoever. You can't bring anything to God. You recognise your utter poverty before God when you look at yourself.

That's the person to be congratulated. A person who recognises they are poor before God. They have nothing. Jesus says congratulations to you for recognising that.

Why? For yours is the kingdom of God. Yours is the kingdom of God. The present may be bad at the moment. You may be literally poor.

[ 21 : 43 ] You may be socially outcast. But if you know that you are spiritually poor and that you have great need of trusting in God, congratulations because yours is the kingdom of God.

Note the second one. Blessed are you who are hungry now for you will be filled. This picks up this same idea of being poor. Congratulations for being hungry. Congratulations.

You can imagine the disciples being quite hungry. I guess not having anything. They may have been literally quite hungry. But again I think it's picking up the notion of those who recognise that they are spiritually hungry.

That they are lacking. That they need God to provide for them spiritually. If you recognise that you will be filled.

This notion of being filled of God filling up is the idea of the great banquet that God provides for those in his kingdom. The notion of being filled forever.

[ 22 : 48 ] That great messianic banquet that place where Jesus is reigning and this is an incredible banquet. Those who hunger now are there's a great banquet coming.

Blessed are you who weep now for you will laugh. Blessed are you. Congratulations if you're feeling a little sad at the moment. I don't think Jesus here is trying to pick up, you know, trying to idolise being really sad and that we should all the time be sad and that type of thing.

Jesus is picking up the idea here. Those who weep, those who are sad because of the persecution that you're under because you face great hardships in the face of great rejection and ridicule and loss.

He's saying if you're in that category for the sake of God, well, congratulations. There will come a time when you will laugh.

You can see the disciples standing there listening to all this. They've already seen part of this happen with Jesus. They're already starting to see some of these things come to light for themselves.

[ 24 : 04 ] Jesus goes on. Congratulations when people hate you, when they exclude you, when they revile you, when they defame you on account of the Son of Man.

Congratulations if they persecute you. That's great. because you know that your reward is in heaven.

Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven, for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets. Jesus is saying here, congratulations if you are being persecuted. Again, he's not saying trying to idolise, go out there and get yourselves beaten up. I don't think he's saying that, but he's saying for the sake of God's kingdom, if you are hated, excluded, reviled or insulted, cast out on account of Jesus, then there is great blessings from God coming towards you. I think in verse 23 we see this notion here of a command. We are to rejoice in that day, rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for your reward is great in heaven.

[ 25 : 27 ] He gives us two reasons why we should be jumped for joy, leap for joy. The first is because of the heavenly reward that Jesus talks about here.

He's not holding out a little carrot and saying here's the carrot, come on, put up with it because there's his great carrot at the end. I think part of the thing is, I think Jesus is trying to say that God knows about your hardship, God knows about your commitment and he will honour it one day. He knows what is behind your service and he will reward it. The second thing that we see there at the end of verse 23, the second reason why we are to leap for joy in the day of persecution is because this is what happened to their ancestors, what the ancestors did to the prophets.

This has been happening for a long time. God's prophets have been persecuted. Should we expect anything different? Well, then Jesus goes into the woes.

Here, Jesus is lamenting over people. Jesus is feeling very sad for many people. He says, but woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.

[ 26 : 47 ] Jesus feels sorry for those people out in the crowd. Woe to you who have got it all now, who are rich, those who have got it all, who think they don't need God. As we look through Luke, we see instances where this notion is picked up again and again.

Riches can be a great hindrance from us entering into God's kingdom. For when we have great things in our resources, we tend to not rely on God, but ourselves.

Woe to you who are rich, for you received your consolation. It doesn't mean that if you do have riches that you're not going to get there. It's just saying it's going to be much more difficult.

Those who trust in their own resources, the resources that you've got now, that's it. That's your reward, what you've got now. But those who trust in Jesus, their reward is yet to come.

Woe to you who are full now. For you will be hungry. There will come a day when you will be hungry for those who don't trust in Jesus. Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep.

[ 28 : 09 ] Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets. Jesus laments over these people, those who trust in themselves, those who think that their future is here and now.

This is it. I've got it all. I don't need God. And they rely on themselves. At the heart of this, we notice it's those who trust in the Son of Man, who understand that the present reality, that there is a God who is alive and that he is sovereign.

And in light of this God, they put their trust in him. And they know that their future is secure. Note the great themes of reversal here.

The great themes of reversal from what our society says is important and those that are not. You can imagine the crowd standing there and the disciples listening to these words.

For the disciples, I imagine it would have been words of great encouragement. Great encouragement. To know that their future was secure. To know that they were now a part of the kingdom.

[ 29 : 25 ] But for those who didn't know Jesus, who weren't followers of Jesus, I guess it would have caused a different reaction. It would have made them think about whether they want to follow him or not.

As we read through the rest of Luke, we see that Jesus does die. But in his death on the cross, it is there that he takes the punishment.

It is there that he brings about our future. For when he rose from the dead, he was the first one to enter the kingdom of God, to be the great king.

He is the one there ruling over all. And those who are united to him, they enjoy the great benefit of being a part of the kingdom now. When we look at the disciples as we follow through here, we see that they fail time and time again.

But in the end, we see that they come to understand who Jesus truly is. We see that they become ear and eyewitnesses of Jesus, of his public ministry, and they become guarantors of the Christian tradition.

[ 30 : 39 ] we see that they see that Jesus is indeed Lord and that he is risen. And they become the leaders of God's church.

And at the end of the book, we're told that Jesus tells them to go out and make disciples of all nations and all peoples. And so they go out and they start proclaiming who Jesus is and they start making disciples.

In fact, this book of Luke is a part of that process. They're witnesses to what they have seen about Jesus, about his resurrection. And we have these words.

And throughout history, people start reacting to this man Jesus. Some react and recognise their great need. Others don't.

How do you react to Jesus, to this message that we have before us? Shen spoke earlier about her reaction to the message of Jesus and her great need to follow him.

[ 31 : 48 ] Can you call yourself a disciple? Are you one that trusts fully in Jesus? If you are a disciple, then don't be surprised at the suffering that you may be facing, the difficulties that you may be facing.

For the present, we know, may be difficult, but our future is secure. What about those who are not sure whether they're a disciple, a follower of Jesus? These are strong words.

