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The passage under consideration, [Luke 6:17-26](#), contains the initial part of Luke's version of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. The entire sermon in Luke is from verses twenty through forty-nine. The much longer Matthean version is found in .

## I. **Context**

Once more, let me repeat the critical importance of understanding the contextual levels for the passage under consideration. This includes the historical aspect and the literary aspect.

### a. **Historical**

The **compositional history** of the Lukan gospel has been explored two lessons ago in this series of studies taken from the third gospel. I will simply copy that material into this lesson for the benefit of those without access to it from the previous lesson.

Regarding the compositional history of the Gospel of Luke, let me summarize a lot of Lukan scholarship by the following. William Beard in the *Interpreter's One Volume Commentary on the Bible* (iPreach online) summarizes the basic issue this way: "According to tradition this gospel was written by Luke, 'the beloved physician' and travel companion of Paul (Col. 4:14; Philemon 1:24; 2 Tim. 4:11). Actually the tradition is not very old. It appears first in the writings of Irenaeus, who was a theologian living in Gaul during the latter part of the 2nd cent. The Muratorian fragment (ca. A.D. 200), a document which presents an official list of Christian scriptures, supports the same conclusion." With the acceptance of this early church tradition -- although not all do and since the gospel itself makes no effort internally to identify its author -- then the issue becomes trying to locate a setting for the writing of this gospel. Again Bill Beard summarizes quite effectively these questions:

"The exact date and place of the writing of this gospel cannot be ascertained. Since the author uses Mark as a source and since he seems to have accurate knowledge of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans (19:41-44; 21:20-24; see pp. 1029-31) he evidently wrote after A.D. 70. He must have written before 140, when his gospel was included in the canon of the heretic Marcion. Since the situation of the church reflected in the gospel fits well the political situation of the reign of the Emperor Domitian (81-96), a date from about 85 to 95 is most likely.

According to one tradition Luke wrote his histories in Rome. Another locates his writing in Greece. Since there is a correlative tradition that the evangelist died in one of the Greek provinces, this latter tradition has better support. Any of these locations assumes the traditional authorship and bears the same burdens. Perhaps all we can say is that the gospel was written from some locale where Greek was the primary language and where cultured readers like Theophilus (1:3) would be at home."

According to [Luke 1:1-4](#), this gospel -- and subsequently the book of Acts (cf. Acts 1:1) -- were dedicated to a Theophilus who as a patron supported the cost of producing these documents as well as the making of copies of them for distribution to various Christian communities in the late first century world. Evidently [Theophilus](#) was a wealthy Roman who had become a Christian and wanted to contribute to the spread of Christianity by supporting Luke's writing of these two documents. The gospel preface ([Lk 1:4](#)) suggests the purpose of the document was "so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you

have been instructed.”

The Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts together stand as a two volume testimony of the beginning of the Christian religion with its founder, Jesus Christ, and the first three decades of the beginning of this movement in its spread from Jerusalem to Rome from AD 30 to AD 61. The author was closely associated with the apostle Paul. For the gospel account Luke made use of a variety of sources, as he indicated in [Lk 1:1-3](#), since he was not personally present with Jesus during his earthly ministry. Modern scholarship generally concludes that among these sources are the gospels of Mark and perhaps also Matthew, although more likely the material in Luke, that is also found in Matthew, may very well be drawn from a common, unknown source. That is generally called the Q document from the German word Quelle meaning source. Thus with at least Mark and Q in front of him, along with notes from interviews with various people around the earthly Jesus, Luke set out to tell his story of Jesus in a way that would enhance understanding of the enormous significance of this Jewish carpenter from the little village of Nazareth in the northern Palestinian province of Galilee. As best as we can determined, this happened sometime in the 70s or perhaps early 80s of the first Christian century, possibly while Luke was living in Rome.

Thus Luke in recounting the episode of Jesus teaching some forty years or so after it happened turned to his sources in order to reconstruct the scene. Mark wasn't any help since the second gospel contains no mention of this episode. As best as can be determined, Luke drew primarily from his Q source, along with some uniquely Lukan sources. Remember that Q stands for the German word Quelle and means 'source.' This label refers to materials found common between Matthew and Luke, but not contained in Mark. We will make note of the specifically Q material during the study of the scripture texts.

Regarding the internal history aspect, several questions emerge. Just when did Jesus do this teaching? At the beginning of ministry in Galilee? Toward the middle? Or at the end of the Galilean period? Second, where did this event take place? Could we go to a map of ancient Palestine and confidently locate a spot on that map? Of course, all this presupposes that such an event took place. A considerable segment of Biblical scholars see both Matthew and Luke bringing together bits and pieces of the teachings of Jesus that were uttered at various times in different places and putting them together in a concentrated expression in order to give a more wholistic picture of the essential teachings of Jesus. Thus the geographical setting for the 'sermon' is created artificially, and not intended by either author to be taken as alluding to one particular point in time at a specific location in Galilee. This possibility seems to me to be more likely with the Matthean material than with the Lukan material. But, I'm still inclined to see this as a specific event that took place at a point of time in Jesus' ministry in Galilee.

To be sure, both gospel writers are giving us an interpretative summation of what Jesus said, not a word for word six o'clock news reporting of his words. That this is the case is apparent from a simple reading of the texts. It takes one less than three minutes to read the Lukan text, and barely over five minutes to read the Matthean text. No preacher or teacher in either modern or ancient times would go to the trouble of gathering a large crowd together in order to speak to them less than five minutes before sending them on their way. This literary strategy of both gospel writers can be additionally confirmed from a number of more literary sources, especially arising from a study of ancient patterns of both speech making and the recording of speeches by others long after they had been given.

Thus the two historical questions needing an answer are: When did this take place? And where?

Some help can be gleaned from a look at my [Summary Life of Christ outline](#) posted at Cranfordville.com.

	<b>Matthew</b>	<b>Mark</b>	<b>Luke</b>	<b>John</b>
III. <b>Galilean ministry</b>				
	<b>4:12-18:35</b> (51%)	<b>1:14-9:50</b> (53%)	<b>4:14-9:56</b> (24%)	<b>4:46-7:9</b> (15%)
A. Phase One: To the Choosing of the Twelve				
	<b>4:12-12:21</b>	<b>1:15-3:19a</b>	<b>4:14-7:50</b>	<b>4:46-5:47</b>
B. Phase Two: To the Withdrawals from Galilee				
	<b>12:22-14:12</b>	<b>3:19b-6:29</b>	<b>8:1-9:9</b>	-
C. Phase Three: To the Departure to Jerusalem				
	<b>14:13-18:35</b>	<b>6:30-9:50</b>	<b>9:10-56</b>	<b>6:1-7:9</b>

A quick comparison of the Matthean text ([Matt. 4:23 - 7:29](#)) and the Lukan text ([Luke 6:17-26](#)) in the above outline reveals that both gospel writers place this event toward the beginning of Jesus' public ministry in Galilee, although there is some variation in the sequence of events between the two gospel writers, as illustrated in the [Detailed Life of Christ outline](#):

**Matthew**

- 17. Prophetic preaching 4:12-17
- 18. Four fishermen called 4:18-22
- 19. Preaching and healing tour in Galilee 4:23-25
- 20. - 47. Sermon on the Mount 5:1-7:29**
- 48. Leper cleansed 8:1-4
- 49. Centurion's servant healed 8:5-13
- 50. Peter's mother-in-law healed 8:14-17
- 51. Conversation with would-be follower 8:18-22
- 52. Calming the storm 8:23-27
- 53. Gadarene demoniacs healed 8:28-34
- 54. Paralytic healed and forgiven 9:1-8
- 55. Calling of Matthew 9:9-13
- 56. Question about fasting 9:14-17
- 57. Ruler's daughter and a woman healed 9:18-26
- 58. Two blind men healed 9:27-31
- 59. Mute demoniac healed 9:32-34
- 60. Tour of Galilee with compassion for people 9:35-38
- 61. The Twelve chosen 10:1-4

**Mark**

- 04. The Gospel of the Kingdom 1:14-15
- 05. Four fishermen called 1:16-20
- 06. Sabbath exorcism at Capernaum 1:21-28
- 07. Peter's mother-in-law and others healed 1:29-34
- 08. Preaching and healing tour in Galilee 1:35-39
- 09. Leper cleansed 1:40-45
- 10. Paralytic healed and forgiven 2:1-12
- 11. Calling of Levi 2:13-17
- 12. Question about fasting 2:18-22
- 13. Plucking grain on the Sabbath 2:23-28
- 14. Man with withered hand healed 3:1-6
- 15. Withdrawal and more healings 3:7-12
- 16. The Twelve chosen 3:13-19a

**Luke**

- 21. Popular teaching 4:14-15
- 22. Rejection at Nazareth 4:16-30
- 23. Sabbath exorcism at Capernaum 4:31-37
- 24. Peter's mother-in-law and others healed 4:38-41
- 25. Preaching tour in Galilee 4:42-44
- 26. Fishermen called 5:1-11
- 27. Leper cleansed 5:12-16
- 28. Paralytic healed and forgiven 5:17-26
- 29. Calling of Levi 5:27-32
- 30. Question about fasting 5:33-39
- 31. Plucking grain on the Sabbath 6:1-5
- 32. Man with withered hand healed 6:6-11
- 33. The Twelve chosen 6:12-16
- 34.-40. Sermon on the Plain 6:17-29**
- 41. Centurion's servant healed 7:1-10

Kenneth Grayston in the article "Sermon on the Mount" in the *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (iPreach) has a helpful summation:

Matthew's account of the public ministry of Jesus begins after the death of John the Baptist. Jesus left the seclusion of Nazareth and began to announce in Capernaum the near approach of the kingdom of heaven. His first public act was the choice of four disciples; then he set out on a tour of Galilee, proclaiming the kingdom both by teaching and by healing various kinds of sufferers (Matt. 4:12-25). So far, Matthew follows the pattern laid down by Mark, though reserving Mark's examples of healing for later use; but now he expands the teaching theme and, between Mark 1:39 and 40, inserts the Sermon on the Mount. The discourse is absent from Mark, though there are parallels to six of the separate sayings in different Markan contexts. The effect of Matthew's procedure is to throw into great prominence the connection between the teaching of Jesus, the proclamation of the kingdom, and the gathering of disciples.

Luke's account of the public ministry begins in Nazareth itself with a synagogue sermon announcing the imminent fulfillment of promises made through Isaiah. The narrative shows how these promises were at once taken up in exorcisms and healings, and how Jesus' interpretation of them started a growing conflict between himself and the Jewish authorities (Luke 4:14-6:11). In all this Luke follows Mark quite closely, except that he has his own remarkable account of Peter's call; and at 6:12-16 Luke comes to Jesus' appointment of the Twelve after a night spent in prayer in the hills. Then the healing theme is again mentioned but not illustrated; it is now the turn of teaching in a short discourse (Luke 6:20-49), which was no doubt intended by the author to be closely related to the hostility which Jesus had encountered. Almost all the sayings in this discourse have parallels in the Sermon on the Mount, but in different order and sometimes differently phrased. Three verses have parallels elsewhere in Matthew; only four verses are quite without parallel. One brief saying has a Markan parallel.

Now regarding the location of this event geographically. In each gospel account is a broad indication of location:

Matt. 5:1 (NRSV): "1 When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him."

But Luke 6:17 (NRSV) has a slightly different statement: "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.”

Both references are very generalized and thus create difficulties in pinpointing the precise location of this speech. Luke places it -- in the broader context of [6:12-15](#) -- in the same area where Jesus and his disciples had withdrawn for a time of prayer and Jesus' commissioning of the Twelve. When Matthew gets to describing this commissioning episode in [10:1-11:1](#), he makes no indication about where it took place. Early church tradition usually locates the site near Capernaum, as is reflected in the statement in the [Easton's Bible Dictionary](#) (online): “The mountain here spoken of was probably that known by the name of the ‘Horns of Hattin’ (Kurun Hattin), a ridge running east and west, not far from Capernaum. It was afterwards called the ‘Mount of Beatitudes.’” If accurate, then it would be found on a map of Galilee below northwest of the city.



<http://www.keyway.ca/htm2002/index.htm>

## b. Literary

From a literary standpoint, the nature of this passage from Luke is the primary thing that we'll examine. The first section of 6:17-26 is found in verses 17-19 and comprise what is usually labeled a summary narrative. This type of literary form typically summarized patterns of activity over a stretch of time, and in the synoptic gospels they are used to characterize patterns of ministry activity by Jesus. Luke 6:17-19 only partially follows this pattern. After the initial statement, "He came down with them and stood on a level place," the rest of the statement follows typical summarizing patterns that are found throughout the synoptic gospels.

The second half of the passage, 6:20-26, is composed of two type of materials: beatitudes (vv. 20b-23) and woes (vv. 24-26). Both are prayer expressions and invoke either divine blessing or divine wrath upon individuals who meet certain conditions that are defined in the blessing or woe. David Scaer in the [Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#) has a helpful summation of the blessing:

Condition or state of being in God's grace or favor. The Bible contains the words "bless, " "blessing, " and "blessed, " but not the noun "blessedness, " although the idea of a spiritual state of beatitude in which believers enjoy God's fellowship permeates the Bible. Bless translates the Hebrew asre [אַשֶׁר] and baruk [בָּרַךְ] and the Greek eulogetos [eu] oghtoʋ] and makarios [makario"]. All are used of believers, but only baruk and eulogetos [eu] oghtoʋ] of God. These words suggest divine protection, evoking believers' trust in their benefactor. They know God as the origin of every good thing in both this life and the next. The English word "blessedness" is derived from the root word for "blood" and suggests something set aside through sacrifice and in the Bible through Christ's sacrificial death for sins. Every aspect of the Christian life is embraced by blessedness with no credit assumed by the person experiencing it. It is purely God's grace.

The traditional beatitude form in the ancient world was mostly the so-called third-person beatitude [blessed are they...] and followed a formulaic pattern: blessing ---> subject designating prerequisite condition, --->causal statement giving the foundation of the blessing and also defining its content. Two distinct types of this form existed in ancient Jewish tradition: (1) the so-called wisdom beatitude using a present tense verb in the causal segment [for they are...] and the (2) apocalyptic beatitude using the future tense verb [for they will be...]. The first invoked God's blessings during the life time of the one measuring up. This is the most common pattern of the beatitudes in the Old Testament beginning with Psalm 1. During the inter-testamental era between the Old and New Testaments, Jewish expectation of a coming messianic deliverer of the covenant people Israel became a significant part of religious belief. Consequently, the tradition arose that the divine blessing was largely future and connected to the coming kingdom of God that the Messiah would establish once he came. Both these types of beatitudes surface in the pages of the New Testament. See my discussion of this literary form at [Cranfordville.com](#) for more details.

The second beatitude form that surfaces is the second person beatitude [Blessed are you...]. The formula changes largely by omitting the causal statement and shifting the prerequisite condition to a temporal clause [whenever you...]. This type of beatitude, common in Jewish tradition, also surfaces in the New Testament.

The woe [οὐαί] form is used [some 32 times](#) in the New Testament. It characteristically follows the same patterns as the beatitude forms above, with the second person form dominating. The nature of the expression is to invoke God's wrath and punishment upon the individual who follows a defined pattern of sinful behavior found in the form (Mt. 11:21, NRSV): "Woe to you, [Chorazin!](#) Woe to you, [Bethsaida!](#) For if the deeds of power done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." Sometimes the mention of the targeted group, here the cities of [Chorazin](#) and [Bethsaida](#), is sufficient to conjure up associations of sinful conduct.

In our Lukan passage, something creative takes place. Luke creatively blended the third and second person beatitudes into a single expression in the first three of his beatitudes, and then returns to the pure second person beatitude in the fourth one. And he creates the same pattern in the four woe forms, since they stand in exact parallel to the beatitudes defining the opposite spiritual reality.

Matthew contains the textbook illustration of the full range of the beatitude form in 5:2-12 with eight third person forms, and a ninth second person form attached to the eighth third person form as an emphasis and amplification. In his eight beatitudes, the first and the eight ones are wisdom forms [for theirs is...], and the second through the seventh are the apocalyptic forms [for they will be...]. Interestingly, the causal

statement in the two wisdom forms is exactly the same: “for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.”

## II. Message

Our passage stands at the beginning of Luke’s sermon and is comprised of a narrative introduction (vv. 17-19), and the summary introductory words of the sermon (vv. 20-26).

### a. The Touch of Jesus, vv. 17-19

#### Luke 6:17-19 (NRSV)

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. 18 They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. 19 And all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them.

#### The Greek New Testament

<sup>6:17</sup> Καὶ καταβάς μετ’ αὐτῶν ἔστη ἐπὶ τόπου πεδινοῦ, καὶ ὄχλος πολὺς μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ, καὶ πλῆθος πολὺ τοῦ λαοῦ ἀπὸ πάσης τῆς Ἰουδαίας καὶ Ἱερουσαλὴμ καὶ τῆς παραλίου Τύρου καὶ Σιδῶνος, <sup>6:18</sup> οἱ ἦλθον ἀκοῦσαι αὐτοῦ καὶ ἰαθῆναι ἀπὸ τῶν νόσων αὐτῶν· καὶ οἱ ἐνοχλοῦμενοι ἀπὸ πνευμάτων ἀκαθάρτων ἐθεραπεύοντο, <sup>6:19</sup> καὶ πᾶς ὁ ὄχλος ἐζήτητον ἅπτεσθαι αὐτοῦ, ὅτι δύναμις παρ’ αὐτοῦ ἐξήρχετο καὶ ἰᾶτο πάντα.

#### Comments:

At the beginning of this pericope allusion is made to Jesus descending down from the mountain with the Twelve disciples whom he had just commissioned to carry his message (NRSV): “12 Now during those days he went out to the mountain to pray; and he spent the night in prayer to God. 13 And when day came, he called his disciples and chose twelve of them, whom he also named apostles: 14 Simon, whom he named Peter, and his brother Andrew, and James, and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, 15 and Matthew, and Thomas, and James son of Alphaeus, and Simon, who was called the Zealot, 16 and Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.” Luke alone mentions that these men were designated as apostles (v. 13), a term that would come to have very significant meaning in the life of Christianity. After this momentous event, Jesus then moved to an open place where large crowds could be accommodated.

Luke mentions that these individuals had come from widely differing places. [Tyre](#) and [Sidon](#) were Gentile towns located northwest of Galilee on the Mediterranean coast. [Judea](#) was the southern most province of Palestine with [Jerusalem](#) as its capital. Thus Luke underscores the widest diversity of people coming from considerable distances to hear Jesus and to be healed of their diseases. Verse 19 underscores that touching him was a key to the healing experience. We moderns need to remember the huge implications of fellow human beings [touching](#) one another in ancient Jewish society where ceremonial impurity that disqualified one from worshiping God in the temple could come about through the wrong person touching you. These people seeking to touch Jesus were ritually impure and thus unclean. Any devout Jew would have been mortified by being touched by such people, but not Jesus. Just the opposite was happening. No impurity that God despised was here; rather the power of God flowed through touching Jesus to the sick in order to make them well. A very important point is being made by Luke here.

What can we learn from this? Several possible things. Most importantly perhaps is the universal appeal of the gospel. Our Lord stands ready to touch all who will come to him for healing and life. As his followers we need to do everything possible to encourage all to come to him.

### b. Blessing and Curse, vv. 20-26

#### Matt. 5:1-12 (NRSV)

1 When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. 2 Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

3 "Blessed are the poor in

#### Luke 6:20-26 (NRSV)

20 Then he looked up at his disciples and said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. 21 "Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. "Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. 22

#### The Greek New Testament

<sup>6:20</sup> Καὶ αὐτὸς ἐπάρας τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ εἰς τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ ἔλεγεν, Μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοί, ὅτι ὑμετέρα ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ. <sup>6:21</sup> μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες νῦν, ὅτι χορτασθήσεσθε. μακάριοι οἱ

spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. 5 "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. 6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. 7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. 8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. 9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. 10 "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 "Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

"Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. 23 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. 24 "But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. 25 "Woe to you who are full now, for you will be hungry. "Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep. 26 "Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.

κλαίοντες νῦν, ὅτι γελάσετε. <sup>6:22</sup> μακάριοί ἐστε ὅταν μισήσωσιν ὑμᾶς οἱ ἄνθρωποι καὶ ὅταν ἀφορίσωσιν ὑμᾶς καὶ ὀνειδίωσιν καὶ ἐκβάλωσιν τὸ ὄνομα ὑμῶν ὡς πονηρὸν ἕνεκα τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. <sup>6:23</sup> χάριτε ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ καὶ σκιρτήσατε, ἰδοὺ γὰρ ὁ μισθὸς ὑμῶν πολὺς ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ· κατὰ τὰ αὐτὰ γὰρ ἐποίουν τοῖς προφήταις οἱ πατέρες αὐτῶν. <sup>6:24</sup> Πλὴν οὐαὶ ὑμῖν τοῖς πλουσίοις, ὅτι ἀπέχετε τὴν παράκλησιν ὑμῶν. <sup>6:25</sup> οὐαὶ ὑμῖν, οἱ ἐμπεπλησμένοι νῦν, ὅτι πεινάσετε. οὐαὶ, οἱ γελῶντες νῦν, ὅτι πενθήσετε καὶ κλαύσετε. <sup>6:26</sup> οὐαὶ ὅταν ὑμᾶς καλῶς εἴπωσιν πάντες οἱ ἄνθρωποι· κατὰ τὰ αὐτὰ γὰρ ἐποίουν τοῖς ψευδοπροφήταις οἱ πατέρες αὐτῶν.

#### Comments:

Comparison between Matthew's eight beatitudes and Luke's four reveals some interesting insights. Realization also that Luke exactly parallels each beatitude with its reverse counter point in a woe is important for the interpretative process. We will focus on the Lukan side of the texts and bring Matthew into the picture where relevant.

#### Matthew 5:3-12

<sup>3</sup>Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
*for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

<sup>4</sup>Blessed are those who mourn,  
*for they will be comforted.*

<sup>5</sup>Blessed are the meek,  
*for they will inherit the earth.*

<sup>6</sup>Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
*for they will be filled.*

<sup>7</sup>Blessed are the merciful,  
*for they will receive mercy.*

#### Luke 6:20b-22

<sup>20b</sup>Blessed are you who are poor,  
*for yours is the kingdom of God.*

<sup>21a</sup>Blessed are you who are hungry now,  
*for you will be filled.*

<sup>21b</sup>Blessed are you who weep now,  
*for you will laugh.*

#### Luke 6:23-26

<sup>24</sup>But woe to you who are rich,  
*for you have received your consolation.*

<sup>25a</sup>Woe to you who are full now,  
*for you will be hungry.*

<sup>25b</sup>Woe to you who are laughing now,  
*for you will mourn and weep.*

<sup>8</sup>**Blessed are the pure in heart,**  
*for they will see God.*

<sup>9</sup>**Blessed are the peacemakers,**  
*for they will be called children  
of God.*

<sup>10</sup>**Blessed are those who are per-  
secuted for righteousness' sake,**  
*for theirs is the kingdom of  
heaven.*

<sup>11</sup>**Blessed are you**  
*when people revile you and  
persecute you and utter all  
kinds of evil against you falsely  
on my account.* <sup>12</sup>Rejoice and be  
glad, for your reward is great in  
heaven, *for in the same way they  
persecuted the prophets who  
were before you.*

<sup>22</sup>**Blessed are you**  
*when people hate you, and  
when they exclude you, revile  
you, and defame you on ac-  
count of the Son of Man.* <sup>23</sup>Re-  
joice 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.*

<sup>26</sup>**Woe to you**  
*when all speak well of you,  
for that is what their ancestors  
did to the false prophets.*

Four areas of Christian discipleship are addressed by Luke: (1) poverty/wealth; (2) hunger/plenty; (3) sorrow/joy; (4) persecution/praise. The first three of these are structured in the blended third/second person form, and the last one in a pure second person form.

When one looks at the composite picture painted by Luke a clear impression emerges that he highlights the ministry of Jesus to the outcasts, the so-called 'am ha'arez. M.H. Pope in the Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible ('Am Ha'arez) has a helpful description:

In rabbinic literature the term 'Am Ha'arez appears as a contemptuous designation of those whom the rabbis regarded as immoral, irreligious, and ignorant of the law. Accordingly the general view has been that the term refers to the masses, proletariat, the common people who were too burdened with making a living to be much concerned about ritual purity. The antipathy between the common people and the Pharisaic elite is well known. Jesus took the side of the common folk in his attacks on the Pharisees (Mark 7:1-5; Luke 6:1-5; 11:37-41). The feelings of the Pharisaic elite find expression in John 7:49, where the word ὄχλος, "crowd," is applied with contempt to the ignorant masses who do not know the law.

The religious establishment castigated the poor and peasant level of Jewish society, but Jesus focused his ministry on them and encouraged them with the message of God's love and care. To be sure, it's not mere poverty that God blesses here. [Careful study](#) of the background will reveal a simple piety that characterized most of these folks. That is, they were dirt poor but also had a spiritual sensitivity that religious establishment Jews in Jesus' day didn't possess. Consequently Jesus spoke to them, and they responded in massive numbers.

From these blessings/warnings some important insights arise.

(1) The Kingdom of God must never be equated with wealth and earthly power. Poverty can become a blessing, if it awakens us to the need of God. Wealth can become spiritual suicide, if it blinds us to our desperate need of God.

(2) Spiritual fullness is far more important than physical fullness. If our physical hunger opens us up to being fed the riches of God's blessings, then it has become our blessing. Conversely, if we eat to our heart's content now and that keeps us from hungering for the things of God, then our food has become our curse.

(3) We need to become dead serious about our sin. Weeping and mourning in realization of our failures is the path to indescribable joy in the forgiveness of God. If our partying good times now prevents us



from seeing our sinfulness and need of forgiveness, the our laughing now is the killer bullet in the game of spiritual Russian roulette.

(4) Persecution is not to be avoided and the praises of others sought. When we take a solid stand in obedience to Jesus, we can expect opposition. After all, Jesus experienced it. My seminary mentor at SWBTS years ago, Dr. Jack MacGorman, used to paraphrase this beatitude in the Matthean form with these words, “Blessed are those who, when it costs to stand, are not looking for a chair.” Conversely, human praise is usually empty and meaningless. The bottom line issue for Luke in this couplet of blessing/woe is that the only words of praise that matter are those that come from God. And human words, whether they be condemnations or praises, can never be equated with God’s words of blessing or condemnation. In fact, most of the time they will be the reverse.

Luke has some powerful declarations for us in his interpretation of Jesus words that day in Galilee. They should challenge us to the very core of our being, and if we will take them to heart, they will change our life forever.

