



Feb. 17, 2019 [Luke 6: 17-26](#) & Jer. 17: 5-8

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More [Fr. Beck](#) (with permission)

Stone, Naomi. [We Are Blessed to be a Blessing](#)

Rolheiser, Fr. Ron. [The Struggle for Wholeness](#)

ENTERING THE SCENE:

Here we find Jesus in Luke's gospel giving the people the secrets to living a blessed life as well as warnings about what to avoid. He also tells us what to expect when we take his advice seriously so that we won't be surprised. We are told that great numbers of people crowd around him with things that needed healing. It seems that it is only when we admit that something is lacking that we are moved to reach beyond our comfort level to that which promises what we now know that we need. Let us reflect some this week to sort out what needs healing in our lives and bring it to Jesus.

Luke 6: 17-26

17 He went down with them and stood on a **level place**. A large crowd of his **disciples** was there and a **great number** of people from all over **Judea**, from **Jerusalem**, and from the coast of **Tyre** and **Sidon**, 18 who had come to **hear him** and to be **healed** of their diseases. Those troubled by **evil spirits** were cured, 19 and the people all tried to **touch him**, because **power was coming from him** and **healing** them all. 20 Looking at his **disciples**, he said: "**Blessed are you** who are **poor**, for yours is the **kingdom of God**. 21 **Blessed are you** who **hunger** now, for you will be **satisfied**. **Blessed are you**, who **weep** now, for you will **laugh**. 22 **Blessed are you** when men **hate** you, when they **exclude** you and **insult** you and **reject your name as evil**, because of the Son of Man. 23 **Rejoice** in that day and **leap for joy**, because great is your reward in **heaven**. For that is how their fathers treated the **prophets**. 24 But **woe to you** who are **rich**, for you have already received your **comfort**. 25 **Woe to you** who are **well fed** now, for you will go **hungry**. **Woe to you** who **laugh** now, for you will **mourn and weep**. 26 **Woe to you** when all men **speak well of you**, for that is how their fathers treated the **false prophets**.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Knowing when a prophet is a true or false one can be a vitally important thing when we are choosing what to do and who to listen to. What helps you pick the right person to listen to?

PRAYER: Great healer Jesus, you put before me the "secrets" of God's heart. You reveal in these blessings and woes what I need to know in order to live fully in love. You also hold nothing back so that I am forewarned and therefore fore armed to resist the 'wisdom' of the 'world' for the wisdom of heaven. Help me as I learn to trust your teaching. Amen.

WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

LEVEL PLACE: Luke, the evangelist of the common folk, has Jesus preaching in a place that has no part higher than another.

How does this contrast with Matthew who has this episode on the mountain? What might Luke be telling me by placing his beatitudes in this setting?

DISCIPLES: To be a disciple means to enter into an activity, exercise, or a regimen that develops or improves a skill.

If I had been a disciple that day, what would I have learned?

GREAT NUMBER: It takes relatively little time for the numbers of people attracted to Jesus to develop.

If I were alive then do I think I would have been in the crowd that day? Why?

JUDEA / JERUSALEM / TYRE / SIDON: The people come from near and far to check in on what Jesus was saying and doing.

How far would I travel to have a personal experience of Jesus?

HEAR HIM / TOUCH HIM: Christians believe that Jesus was a "hands on" experience of God. Humans need to hear, touch, and see for themselves in order to accept something as real.

Have I ever said; "It must have been easier to believe in Jesus' day"? Do I struggle with not being able to "put my hands on Jesus"?

HEALED /EVIL SPIRITS: It was believed that only God could make someone whole, restore to health, free people from evil, or cleanse and purify them from evil spirits.

Is there anything I need to be healed today? What helps me get in touch with God's healing power?

POWER WAS COMING FROM HIM: The people experienced a marked ability to do or act with strength, might, and force in Jesus.

Have I ever been in the presence of someone who exhibited a source of power that seemed unusual? What was it like?

BLESSED ARE YOU: Jesus was teaching that people would be divinely or supremely favored and fortunate if they accepted his understanding of God.

What makes the people fortunate if they accept his understanding of God? What makes me divinely favored if I accept Jesus' understanding of God?

WOE TO YOU: Jesus was warning that grievous distress, affliction, or trouble was the outcome that awaited those who failed to listen to his teaching about God.

Why would failing to listen to Jesus cause people 'woes'?

HUNGER /SATISFIED / HUNGRY / WELL FED: We often learn best when someone gives us examples of something. Jesus contrasts the hungry with the well fed and satisfied to teach about God to the people that day.

What were the people hungry for? Do I think anyone who was satisfied was there that day? If not, why not?

POOR / RICH /COMFORT / KINGDOM OF GOD / HEAVEN: Here is another set of contrasts. The poor were often uncomfortable and longed for the time when they would be in God's kingdom where there was no want or need. The rich were already in their own kingdom of freedom from want and need.

Who do I identify with most easily; the poor or the rich? Why?

WEEP /LAUGH / MOURN / REJOICE / LEAP FOR JOY: We weep and mourn over our woes. We laugh and leap for joy over our blessings. Jesus was touching on all the possibilities and connecting them with God.

What was the last time I wept, laughed, mourned, rejoiced or leapt for joy? Does this reading help me to connect with God?

HATE /EXCLUDE /INSULT / REJECT: All these words were very familiar to the poor and the sick of Jesus' day. They will also become very familiar to the disciples as time goes on as well.

Have I ever experienced any of these realities because of my belief in God?

NAME AS EVIL / SPEAK WELL OF YOU: Once again we find Jesus using polar opposites to make his point. In the Mediterranean culture, your good name/honor was everything, and it was worth dying for to vindicate your name.

Is there anything in choices that I make because of faith, which evokes a negative or positive response from others? Compare any that you find.

PROPHETS / FALSE PROPHETS: A prophet was a spokesperson for God. A false prophet was most often caused the people to turn away from God.

Who are the prophets for me today? Who are the false prophets today? How I you tell which is which?

PARALLEL TEXTS: Lk. 6:17f // Mt. 4:24f; Mk. 3:7-12; 6:56; Lk. 4:41; Lk. 6:19 // Mt. 14:36;

Lk. 6:20-3 // Mt. 5:1-12; Lk. 6: 24 // Is. 5:8-12; Amos 6:1; Lk. 6:25 // Prov. 14:13; Is. 65:13f; James 5:1;

OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK: Jer. 17:5-8; [Ps. 1:1-6](#); 1 Cor. 15:12, 16-10; Lk. 6:6, 17, 20-26

Revised Common Lectionary: Jer. 17:5-10; [Ps. 1: 1-6](#) Cor. 15:12-20; Lk. 6: 17-26

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:

The Beatitudes of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount are an unparalleled testimony to the glory of freedom from attachment. The blessedness they promise comes not just from heroic battles with one's addictions, but from being unwillingly deprived of their gratification. The poor, the grief-stricken, and the persecuted, for example, have had no choice; they suffer and they need human help, yet, in a way, they may be closer to freedom because they have less to be attached to. Thus Jesus' words not only issue a call to relinquish attachments; they also point out that we cannot do it alone. Liberation finally must come through grace, not solely through one's own efforts. Jesus taught people to pray for grace: "Lead us not into temptation and deliver us from evil, for thine is the power. . . ." May, Gerald G. M.D. [Addiction and Grace](#) . N.Y. Harper & Row, 1988. Pg. 114.

Didiche: Chapter 1. The Two Ways and the First Commandment. There are two ways, one of life and one of death, but a great difference between the two ways. The way of life, then, is this: First, you shall love God who made you; second, love your neighbor as yourself, and do not do to another what you would not want done to you. And of these sayings the teaching is this: Bless those who curse you, and pray for your enemies, and fast for those who persecute you. For what reward is there for loving those who love you? Do not the Gentiles do the same? But love those who hate you, and you shall not have an enemy. Abstain from fleshly and worldly lusts. If someone strikes your right cheek, turn to him the other also, and you shall be perfect. If someone impresses you for one mile, go with him two. If someone takes your cloak, give him also your coat. If someone takes from you what is yours, ask it not back, for

indeed you are not able. Give to everyone who asks you, and ask it not back; for the Father wills that to all should be given of our own blessings (free gifts). Happy is he who gives according to the commandment, for he is guiltless. Woe to him who receives; for if one receives who has need, he is guiltless; but he who receives not having need shall pay the penalty, why he received and for what. And coming into confinement, he shall be examined concerning the things which he has done, and he shall not escape from there until he pays back the last penny. And also concerning this, it has been said, Let your alms sweat in your hands, until you know to whom you should give.

(The Didache (pronounced /ˈdɪdʌkiː/; [Koine Greek](#): Διδασχί, *Didachē* "Teaching";^[1] [Modern Greek](#) [ðiða'xi]) is the common name of a brief [early Christian treatise](#) (dated by most scholars to the late [first/early second century](#)^[2]). It is an anonymous work not belonging to any single individual, and a pastoral manual "that reveals more about how [Jewish-Christians](#) saw themselves and how they adapted their Judaism for [gentiles](#) than any other book in the Christian Scriptures."^[3] The text, parts of which may have constituted the first written [catechism](#), has three main sections dealing with Christian lessons, rituals such as [baptism](#) and [eucharist](#), and Church organization. It was considered by some of the [Church Fathers](#) as part of the [New Testament](#)^[4] but rejected as [spurious](#) or non-canonical by others,^[5] eventually not accepted into the [New Testament canon](#) with the exception of the [Ethiopian Orthodox Church](#) "broader canon" which includes the [Didascalia](#) which is based on the *Didache*. The [Catholic Church](#) has accepted it as part of the collection of [Apostolic Fathers](#).)

The parable, then, operates on the shock of revealing the ambiguity of a hidden value (the norm of judgment). ...But the hearers and readers would be shocked. Traditional patterns of conservative behavior are not just "inoperative" now, but lead to ruin. Dishonorable actions are praiseworthy. The world has been turned upside down. What appeared morally correct and praiseworthy may be wrong and shameful; conversely, what appears risky and reprehensible may be morally correct. With the revelation of the master's will and the dispelling of ambiguity, another feature emerges, namely, reversal of status. Indeed, many scenes in the gospels turn precisely on the ambiguity of cultural expectations and their reversal. For example:.... dishonored is honored/honored is shamed (Matt 5:3-15; Luke 6:20-26) These patterns are not to be taken lightly as "paradoxes," but as perceptions of a painfully ambiguous world. Pursuing the wrong course leads to ruin. Individuals are warned that they are living in an ambiguous world where things are truly other than they appear. Appearances are deceiving; the stakes are very, very high. This parable, then, functions precisely on the shocking revelation of a secret norm of correct behavior whose truth cannot be known until too late.

#(3173) "Deception, Ambiguity, and Revelation: Matthew's Judgmental Scenes in Social-Science Perspective"

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Tyre: is about 150+ miles north of Jerusalem and the most famous seaport of ancient Bible lands. It is located twenty miles south of Sidon, on an island three quarters of a mile from the mainland. It had two harbors, one on the north and one on the south, and its walls were exceedingly high, especially on the landward side.

Here artisans made bronze, silver, and other artistic wares, and here was manufactured the purple dye that made Tyre famous. Its merchants trafficked with the many lands of the Mediterranean and even with the far away British Isles. Tyre became a "city of renown, peopled by men of the sea" (Eze.26: 17).

Kings and military men from many countries laid siege to Tyre, but were unable to take the city until, in 333 b.c., Alexander the Great besieged and took it after seven months. But Tyre rose slowly again and became a center of trade in Roman times. In recent centuries, however, the place has been small. Its harbors are strewn with ruins and are little more than "a place to spread fishnets" (Eze.26: 14).

Blessed are those who are wealthy and understand that their riches are from the Lord, for he who understands this will also be able to do some service. Shepherd of Hermes. Similitude 210. (*The Shepherd* of Hermes, a strange allegory written sometime in the second century, had a great vogue in orthodox circles and was even included in some copies of the New Testament (it is found in the Sinaitic Codex). The theology of the Church must have been very elastic at a time when such a book could enjoy popularity and implicit, if not explicit, ecclesiastical sanction, for its Christology does not seem to square with any of the Christologies of the New Testament, or with those of contemporary theologians whose occasional documents have reached us. *The Shepherd* speaks of a Son of God; but this Son of God is distinguished from Jesus. "That Holy Spirit which was created first of all, God placed in a body, in which it should dwell, in a chosen body, as it pleased him.")

GOSPEL OF THOMAS: "Congratulations to the poor, for to you belongs the Heaven's imperial rule."

Saying 54: [The Gospels that Didn't Make the Cut](#): by Robert J. Miller in Bible Review; Aug. 1993. Pg. 25.



Memories of this gospel are quoted in several non-canonical texts of the early church. Athenagoras, pleads to the emperor Marcus Aurelius in the year of 177 CE that Christians should not be condemned merely for their name but only for criminal offenses. In chapter 11 he says: "Moreover, by showing that the teachings themselves, to which we are attached, are not human, but were declared and taught by God, we can persuade you not to hold us for atheists. What, then, are these teachings in which we are reared? " I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven, who makes his sun to shine on the evil and on the good, and sends his rain on the just and on the unjust."...Ehrman, Bart. [After the New Testament](#). NY. Oxford Univ. Press. 1998. Pg. 68

An early church father named Justin, in his Dialogue with Trypho, maintains that the Jewish Scriptures point directly to Christ. In chapter 96 he says: " But when neither they nor you will listen to us, but you do all in your power to force us to deny Christ, we resist you and refer to endure death, confident that God will give us all the blessings which he promised us through Christ. Furthermore, we pray for you that you might experience the mercy of Christ; for he instructed us to pray even for our enemies, when he said: 'Be kind and merciful, even as your heavenly Father is merciful.' Ehrman, Bart. [After the New Testament](#). NY. Oxford Univ. Press. 1998. Pg. 114.

In the mid second century, a book called "The Second Epistle of Clement we find in chapter 13: "When, for instance, they hear from us that God says, "It is no credit to you if you love those who love you, but it is to your credit if you love your enemies and those who hate you," when they hear these things, they are amazed at such surpassing goodness. But when they see that we fail to love not only those who hate us, but even those who love us, then they mock at us and scoff at the Name. Ehrman, Bart. [After the New Testament](#). NY. Oxford Univ. Press. 1998. Pg. 367.

Lk. 6.17-49: Sermon on the plain (Mt 5-7). 17: Level place, contrasts Matthew's "Sermon on the Mount." 6.20-23: Beatitudes (Mt 5.3-12). For the form, see Ps 1.1; 34.8; etc.; blessed (Gk "makarioi") corresponds to Heb "ashrei," "fortunate"; see Ps 1.1. 20: You poor, compare Matthew's "poor in spirit." Jewish tradition regards the poor, the hungry, etc. not as cursed or impure but as deserving recipients of divine and earthly care (e.g., Deut 15.11; Isa 49.10; Jer 31.25; Ezek 34.29). 22: Exclude you, see Isa 66.5. Son of Man, 5.24n.; here, Jesus. 23: Their ancestors, e.g., Neh 9.26; 2 Chr 13.15-16. 6.24-26: Woes. 24: Luke describes the rich who refuse to give alms (6.30n.) and encourages extreme generosity (11.41; 12.13-21,33-34; 16.13,19-31; 18.18-30; see 1 En. 94.8); the condemnation of wealth is stronger in this Gospel than in, e.g., 1 Tim 6.10 and Heb 13.5 (where the issue is "love of money"; see also, e.g., Hab 2.5). See 6.30n. Pg. 113. [The Jewish Annotated New Testament](#)

In addition to the rise of the opposition, the Galilee section of the narrative introduces the group of disciples. Here we also have the apostles named and set up as a group as a distinct element in the narrative drama. The Twelve are named, selected as a cadre within the larger group (7:12-15). In Luke 6:17-49 their introduction is followed by an extended teaching as a discipleship program. A briefer version of Matthew's Sermon on the Mount, this Sermon on the Plain follows the call of the Twelve. These twelve apostles will assume a major role in the book of Acts, but they make their first appearance here. In addition, the sermon begins the instruction to discipleship, which carries forth the promise of reversals announced in Mary's Magnificat. Luke's version of the Beatitudes and the Woes makes this point succinctly (6:20-26). In addition to the naming of the Twelve (6:12-16), the call of Peter receives special attention. This is not the first time the two have met. Jesus has already healed Peter's mother-in-law (4:38-39).Pg. 142. Beck, Robert. [Jesus and his Enemies](#).

One's mind, once stretched by a new idea, never regains its original dimensions." Oliver Wendell Holmes

In an article by Marcus Borg and Ray Riegert in Bible Review, Oct. 1999, titled "East Meets West: The Uncanny Parallels in the Lives of Buddha and Jesus, we find: "If anyone should give you a blow with his hand, with a stick, or with a knife, who should abandon any desires and utter not evil words." (Majjhima Nikaya 21.6) The Buddha lived some 600 years before Christ. This is but one of the many teachings that parallel the teachings of Jesus.

Some scholars today suggest that John the Baptist lived with the Essenes for a while but left when he couldn't accept their exclusivity and negativity. The Essenes regarded poverty as a value whereas normative Judaism sees it as neither shameful or something to be proud of. One thinks of Lk. 3:11 in John's preaching. Two articles in Biblical Archaeology Review 1-2/04 beginning on page 32 explore this connection.

The beatitudes promote a vision of Christian character that was perfectly embodied and exemplified by Jesus. Pg. 62. Harrington, Daniel -Keenan, James [Jesus and Virtue Ethics](#). NY. Sheed & Ward Book. 2002.

For some reason, the most vocal Christians among us never mention the beatitudes. But, often with tears in their eyes, they demand that the Ten Commandments be posted in public buildings. And of course that's Moses, not Jesus. I haven't heard one of them demand that the Sermon on the Mount, the beatitudes, be posted anywhere." - Kurt Vonnegut

Jesus tried to show us what God is working toward: a win/win worldview, which the first writers rightly called "good news"! Win/lose is bad news, even for the so-called winners. (Could you be perfectly happy for all eternity if you believed your loved one was simultaneously burning in hell?) God's love is unconditional both in this world and the next, which non-dual consciousness sees immediately. The only torturing going on is inside of us. My hope is that non-dual thinking, the contemplative mind, will give us the eyes to see the way the mystics and saints saw, the way Jesus saw, which allowed them to love their enemies, to include the foreigner, to heal hurts, and to forgive themselves and others. Without it, I see little hope for the future, but only people continuing to torture people, since after all, God apparently tortures people. The Good News is non-understandable, will always be distorted, and will always be a win/lose scenario apart from the contemplative mind, which is the wonderful and eternal "mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16). Rohr, Richard: Exploring the Naked Now

Blessed are you if you contemplate the Lord until you are radiant; the Lord will make his face shine in yours for the glory of all Pg. 251. Olivera, Bernardo, O.C.S. O. [The Search for God: Conference, letters, and homilies.](#) Kalamazoo, MI. Cistercian Pub. 2002.

If I am asked to give up something I value very much to a stranger, I do it, if at all, only as cost of much inner struggle; but to give the same thing to someone I love is no struggle at all; I am happy to give it, and should be less happy if I valued it less. Gerald Vaun

We know that love cannot but be involved in the suffering of what it loves; but God is love; therefore God cannot but be involved in the suffering of what he loves; but he loves all his creatures; therefore he cannot but be involved in the sufferings of all his creatures. (Thibault in Helen Waddell's Peter Abelard)

Withstanding the tension between opposites until we know it is "enough" releases us from the swing between one extreme and the other. Helen Luke

When we bless, it is God's deep and vast goodness, or God-ness, in us that blesses another. When we bless, we touch another with the touch of this God-ness. - Joyce Rupp, The Cup of Our Life

Makários is the Greek word for "blessed" and its root "mak" means to "become large or long." If we understand blessings as an act of God, God enlarges us with the benefits that God gifts, bestows, or confers on us. It takes our eyes of faith to recognize God's presence to and favors towards us. So, perhaps, when I say, "blessings" to you, I really mean, "May your days be marked by a faith that helps you recognize God's favor toward you, how God insistently and preciously bestows God's love on us." David Lichter, D.Min.

"Blessing involves relationship: one does not bless without investing something of oneself into the receiver of one's blessing. And one does not receive blessing oblivious of its gracious giver. A blessing spirituality is a relating spirituality. And if it is true that all of creation flows from a single, loving source, then all of creation is blessed and is a blessing, atom to atom, molecule to molecule, organism to organism, land to plants, plants to animals, animals to other people, people to people, and back to atoms, molecules, plants, fishes." - Matthew Fox [20th C.], Original Blessing

The Beatitudes are descriptions of a mature human person much more than prescriptions for other-worldly salvation. They offer something astoundingly new to human consciousness, which is a lifestyle based on vulnerability, mutuality, service--and thus a willingness to be usable for God, history, healing, and one another. (Mt. 5: 1-12) Richard Rohr

63. There can be any number of theories about what constitutes holiness, with various explanations and distinctions. Such reflection may be useful, but nothing is more enlightening than turning to Jesus' words and seeing his way of teaching the truth. Jesus explained with great simplicity what it means to be holy when he gave us the Beatitudes (cf. Mt 5:3-12; Lk 6:20-23). The Beatitudes are like a Christian's identity card. So if anyone asks: "What must one do to be a good Christian?", the answer is clear. We have to do, each in our own way, what Jesus told us in the Sermon on the Mount.[66] In the Beatitudes, we find a portrait of the Master, which we are called to reflect in our daily lives. http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20180319_gaudete-et-exsultate.html

Sometimes we have to "step over" our anger, our jealousy, or our feelings of rejection and move on. The temptation is to get stuck in our negative emotions, poking around in them as if we belong there. Then we become the "offended one," "the forgotten one," or the "discarded one." Yes, we can get attached to these negative identities and even take morbid pleasure in them. It might be good to have a look at these dark feelings and explore where they come from, but there comes a moment to step over them, leave them behind and travel on. Henri Nouwen

Wisdom is not just knowledge (i.e. data, facts, information), but putting knowledge in larger frames, and frames where I and my groups are not the reference point. It's connecting new information with other perspectives and goals than my own. Wisdom is the combination of momentary text and full context. Knowledge is about words and definitions. Wisdom includes what is written between, above, and below the lines. Fr. Richard Rohr

"If you observe anything evil within yourself, correct it; if something good, preserve it; if something beautiful, foster it; if something sound, maintain it; if sickly heal it. Read unwearingly the precepts of the Lord and, sufficiently instructed by them, you will know what to avoid and what to pursue. - St. Bernard of Clairvaux -

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Grana, Janice, Ed. [Images](#). Winona, MN. St. Mary's College Press. 1976. BENEDICTION: Page 144.
Mitchell, Stephen. [The Enlightened Heart](#). NY. Harper & Row. 1989. SEEING: Page 45. HONEY BEE: Page 66.