

"KINGDOM OF GOD"

unit 23 | session 4



CHRIST CONNECTION

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught His followers what it looked like to live as citizens of His kingdom. Just as Jesus came into the world to do the Father's will, we too are to live for Him and represent His kingdom here on earth.

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to dig in and read all of the content on this timeline.

Luke 6

OUR REWARD IS IN HEAVEN

LUKE 6:20-26

20 And he lifted up his eyes on 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 shall be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. 22 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! 23 Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers 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 shall be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. 26 Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets."

OUR WAY IS COUNTERCULTURAL

LUKE 6:27-36

27 "But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. 29 To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either. 30 Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. 31 And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them. 32 "If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. 33 And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. 34 And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount. 35 But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. 36 Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful."

MAIN POINT.

The way of Jesus calls us to live counterculturally.



THEOLOGY CONNECTION

SIN AS SELFISHNESS

When we sin, we are acting out of a selfish attitude and mindset that assumes our action will lead us to more happiness than if we were to obey God. Because sin is revealed in our tendency to be “curved inward” toward self, it is the opposite of love. Love looks outwardly to place others before oneself, operating from the mindset that others are more important (Phil. 2:3). Where sin selfishly seeks personal gratification and happiness, love works for the joy of others in the hopes of making others happy in God.

DISCUSSION

OUR REWARD IS IN HEAVEN

LUKE 6:20-26

- The disciples would face trials and persecution. How do these verses help prepare them? And us?
- ♥ • What distracts us from valuing eternal rewards more than earthly rewards?
- How is God’s kingdom opposite from the world? What part of this passage challenges you most? Why?

OUR WAY IS COUNTERCULTURAL

LUKE 6:27-36

- 🧠 • What does it look like to “love your enemies”? Why is this so difficult?
- ✝ • How are we “sons of the Most High” if we love our enemies? What if we don’t love our enemies?
- 📖 • Can love and selfishness coexist? Explain.



**HOW DO WE LOVE OUR ENEMIES IN OUR DAILY LIVES?
HOW DO WE BALANCE THIS WITH STANDING UP
FOR OURSELVES?**

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Have you ever heard the advice, “Don’t put all your eggs in one basket”? This advice is another way of saying that we should have a backup plan or have other options. But when it comes to following Jesus, this advice isn’t helpful. Jesus warned that we can never serve two masters (Matt. 6:24). When we place our faith in Jesus and begin following Him, we commit to serving Jesus only—not Jesus plus something else. We will battle the temptation to serve lesser “gods”—idols of this world, like sports, social media, popularity, self-image—rather than worshiping and serving our Creator. We search for peace and joy in these things, when Jesus taught that we can find peace and joy only in a relationship with Him. Money falsely promises security and invites us to give our lives to accumulate more. Material possessions give us temporary happiness. Food promises satisfaction and invites us to enjoy more of it. Our hearts may long for lesser “gods,” but Jesus reminds us that nothing worldly can go with us into eternity. He calls us to deny ourselves and to find true satisfaction in Him—peace and joy worldly circumstances can’t diminish.



DAY ONE

LUKE 6:20

“Blessed are you. . .” This is an important phrase to understand for this week’s lessons. “Blessed” in the context of our passage means to experience a deep joy because God looks at you favorably—with grace, love, and mercy. Jesus explained that the poor are blessed, for the kingdom of God is theirs. Matthew’s account adds, “Blessed are the poor in spirit” (Matt. 5:3). So, Jesus may have meant that those who are poor financially, as well as those who are poor in spirit, are blessed by God. If you’ve experienced financial struggles in your family, then you know how difficult this is. The idea that blessing and poverty can work together feels radical and difficult to grasp. But Jesus reminds us that we can’t hope in money for our satisfaction or our comfort; instead, we hope only in Him. We can have worldly riches yet be utterly poor if we don’t have a relationship with Jesus. He reminds us that we have something greater than this world: His kingdom! What a tremendous reward waiting for those who hope in Jesus instead of the things of the world!

Financial struggles are real and difficult, but our struggle with sin runs more deeply, oppressing us and robbing us of the abundant life Jesus promised for believers. Being poor in spirit is the humble recognition that we are completely bankrupt without Jesus—completely unable to enter God’s kingdom. When we admit that we are poor in this way—that we desperately need Jesus to free us from sin—then we are richly blessed because He welcomes us into His family and shares His eternal inheritance with us. The beauty of this beatitude is that while we may be poor in a worldly sense, we are rich because we know Jesus (Phil. 3:7-9). A relationship with Him gives us all we need to be content (Phil. 4:12-13).

- **WHY MUST WE ALL RECOGNIZE THAT WE ARE “POOR IN SPIRIT”? WHAT MAKES US RICH?**
- **WHY IS IT HARD TO REMEMBER WE’RE BLESSED WHEN LIFE IS DIFFICULT? WHAT CAN YOU DO TO SHIFT YOUR MIND TO THE HOPE OF HEAVEN INSTEAD OF WORLDLY COMFORT?**

PRAY

FATHER, THANK YOU FOR CARING ABOUT ME WHEN
LIFE IS DIFFICULT. HELP ME REST IN THE PEACE
AND JOY OF KNOWING THAT I’M A CITIZEN OF
YOUR KINGDOM.



DAY TWO

LUKE 6:21a

Think back to a time when you were very hungry. Maybe it was before Thanksgiving dinner because you hadn't eaten anything all day. Your stomach felt empty, and even smelling the delicious food made your stomach growl. Hunger is the topic of today's verse and a topic most of us can understand.

Jesus explained that those who are hungry now are blessed because they will be filled. Jesus likely meant two things: First, those who lack physical food on earth are not forgotten by their heavenly Father. He doesn't delight in our suffering and feels compassion for those in need. One day, those who are hungry will never be hungry again. What a blessing! Our God is not so far away from us that He doesn't see and deeply care for our needs. Additionally, Jesus pointed to spiritual hunger; in Matthew's account of this beatitude, Jesus explained that those who hunger or thirst for righteousness will be satisfied (Matt. 5:6). Hunger for righteousness is a good kind of hunger—a hunger that God satisfies here and now. When Jesus saves us, He gives us His righteousness as our own (Phil. 3:9). Even more, by the Spirit, He begins a process called sanctification, through which we are made more like Him every day (2 Cor. 3:18). Ultimately, we will be made perfectly righteous when Jesus returns one day. Until then and while we wait, we can hunger for righteousness and allow God to fill us. We can rest in knowing that our good Father cares for our physical needs too. If you struggle to hunger and thirst for God, you may be too consumed by worldly comforts. Ask God to help you hunger and thirst for Him instead, and He promises to fill you—now in part and one day, fully.

- **WHAT KEEPS YOU FROM HUNGERING AND THIRSTING FOR GOD?**
- **WHAT STEPS CAN YOU TAKE THIS WEEK TO GROW IN DESIRING GOD?**

PRAY

**FATHER, THANK YOU FOR BEING NEAR AND FOR
CARING ABOUT MY NEEDS. HELP MY HUNGER FOR
RIGHTEOUSNESS TO INCREASE DAILY SO THAT I CAN
BE MORE LIKE YOUR SON.**



DAY THREE

LUKE 6:21b

Can you remember the last time you cried? Maybe you cried tears of joy, but more often, our tears come from a place of sadness. The world can be so cruel sometimes, and the very nature of life involves pain. As followers of Jesus, we can know that our sadness won't last forever. And even now, the Holy Spirit comforts us and reminds us of eternity, when tears and sorrow will cease (Rev. 21:4). Jesus explained that even though we will certainly experience pain on earth, we have joy that comes from knowing Him—from knowing we will one day be with Him forever in everlasting joy.

Your heavenly Father cares about your tears and your pain, so much that He sent His Son for you. Jesus experienced tremendous pain during His time on earth. He felt the same feelings we often feel. In fact, the prophet Isaiah called Him a man of suffering (Isa. 53:3). Our Savior not only cares for our pain, but He has felt our pain. He is a Savior to whom we can run for comfort when we hurt. Jesus told His disciples that in this world, they would have all kinds of trouble but to remember that He had overcome the world (John 16:33). What does this mean for us? Following Jesus doesn't secure us an easy or comfortable life, free from sadness or pain. However, following Jesus will be worth it; one day, we will be with Him in a place where sadness and pain are no more. One day, all that hurts and is wrong here will be made right. Praise God!

- **WHEN LIFE IS HARD, DO YOU RUN TO THE LORD FIRST OR TO OTHER THINGS? WHAT ARE SOME SPECIFIC WAYS YOU CAN RELY ON THE LORD WHEN LIFE IS PAINFUL?**
- **HOW DOES KNOWING THAT JESUS FELT SADNESS AND PAIN HELP US WHEN WE SUFFER?**

PRAY

**FATHER, THANK YOU FOR CARING WHEN I FEEL
SORROW. HELP ME RUN TO YOU WHEN LIFE IS FULL
OF SADNESS. HELP ME TO TRUST YOU FULLY.**



DAY FOUR

LUKE 6:22

Think back to a time when someone made fun of you or when you were left out of something others were doing. You likely felt let down, discouraged, or embarrassed. You probably didn't feel joy, right?

When Jesus says that we are blessed for being hated, excluded, or insulted because of our devotion to Him, we probably struggle to agree. It seems so upside down compared to what we feel. Responding to insults with joy and gratitude isn't natural. However, Jesus tells us that the prophets before Him were hated because of their faithfulness. Jesus Himself was crucified because of His faithfulness to obey the Father. So, when we are excluded or hated because we faithfully follow Jesus, then we follow in the footsteps of the prophets and Jesus Himself. And this can produce joy because we are sharing in Jesus's suffering (1 Pet. 4:13). We imitate Jesus in a real way when we lift up His name, despite being hated or misunderstood. Is this easy? No, it's truly not. Is it always worth it? Yes, absolutely! If we follow Jesus and seek to live according to His commands, we will be persecuted (2 Tim. 3:12). So, being hated or excluded because of Jesus is great evidence that we are truly seeking to follow Him. Sometimes, our suffering can be evidence of our faithfulness, helping us to take joy in all circumstances. The joy that comes from following and knowing Jesus doesn't depend on circumstances. And even when the world rejects us because we live differently, we can rejoice in knowing that we're reflecting Jesus by living as a light in darkness.

- **HAS ANYONE EVER MADE FUN OF YOU FOR FOLLOWING JESUS? HOW DID YOU RESPOND?**
- **HOW CAN YOU GUARD AGAINST SADNESS OR ENVY WHEN YOU ARE EXCLUDED FROM THINGS BECAUSE YOU'RE A CHRISTIAN? HOW CAN YOU BE JOYFUL IN THESE MOMENTS?**

PRAY

FATHER, THANK YOU FOR THE PRIVILEGE OF BEING EXCLUDED FOR FOLLOWING YOU. HELP ME IN THESE MOMENTS TO RESPOND WELL AND TO JOYFULLY FOLLOW JESUS, EVEN WHEN I'M EXCLUDED FOR DOING SO. YOU'RE WORTH THE COST.





DAY FIVE

LUKE 6:24-26

We naturally desire comfort and praise. You may think that if only you had more money, more food, more achievements, or more recognition, then you would finally be happy. We try to fill the God-shaped holes in our lives with material possessions, worldly pleasures, and even relationships. But these things will never satisfy us because God designed us to need more—to need Him.

Jesus flipped the script. Instead of pronouncing that blessings flow from worldly comforts or status, He pronounced woes, or the opposite of blessing! Being rich, being full, and receiving the praise of other people won't fulfill us. Now, if we're honest, this concept seems strange. Certainly, having money, being well fed, or receiving praise isn't sinful. However, if we place our hope in any of these things, we have gone terribly wrong. The beatitudes show us that our eternal hope is not found in this world but in Jesus alone. Our satisfaction can't be found in material things because God created us to be satisfied in Him alone. Think of it this way: If what gives you peace or joy can be taken away, then you're depending on something earthly for what only God can provide. Anything and anyone besides Him will come up short. Jesus very clearly showed us that while being rich isn't sinful, if being rich tempts us to put our hope in money, then we're better off being poor. If being full moves us to seek our highest good in food, we are better off hungry. If being praised by others causes us to think too highly of ourselves, then we are better off being excluded and rejected. C.S. Lewis once said, "If we find ourselves with a desire that nothing in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that we were made for another world."² Praise God! Our hope is in Jesus, and our citizenship is in His kingdom—a kingdom that can never be shaken!

- **WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO PLACE YOUR HOPE IN SOMETHING? WHEN HAVE YOU PLACED YOUR HOPE IN SOMETHING OTHER THAN JESUS?**
- **HOW CAN WE ENJOY EARTHLY BLESSINGS IN A WAY THAT GLORIFIES GOD?**

PRAY

FATHER, THANK YOU THAT MY ONLY HOPE IS JESUS CHRIST. HELP ME TO RELY SOLELY ON HIM FOR MY SATISFACTION AND TO ENJOY EARTHLY THINGS RIGHTLY. I WANT TO GLORIFY YOU WITH ALL I HAVE INSTEAD OF SEEKING MY OWN COMFORT.