

Jesus Redefines What It Means to Be Blessed

- That day in our Gos must be an awsm day for apstls! In morn, they're up on mntsd w/J; he spcfcly calls them be his 12 apstls. So now they get follow J ev day: hear tchns, see mircls, learn fr him. Then in aftrnn (where today's Gos picks up), J takes'm down mnt little ways to level plain; huge crwd gathrs; talking 1000s! **Vs. 17b.** J very poplr here in early days/min; ppl travlng fr all over to hear prch & be healed by him. **Vs. 18-19.** Almost like pwr emanng fr body! They could sense it; just trying touch robe. He's healng ppl like crzy: "Disease cured, dmn gone, leprsy heald, sight restrd, you walk/talk again." And if you're one apstls, you're like: "I'm w/that guy; I work for him; we're on same team." Was awsm day. Apstls must've felt very blsd!
- When do you have days just awsm, when look at life, say "Man, I'm really blsd"? Is it when hold your little newborn baby in arms; or when hold hands w/V-Day swthrt, or when tog w/all grndchldrn – that when feel blsd? When body hlthy, and fam hlthy, that feel blsd? When look at home/garage, all stuff that fills h/g? Or when look at job, retrmnt acct, all abndnc God has pourd out on you thruout life – is that when you say, "This awsm. I am truly blsd"?
- It's true, those are blessngs fr God to be thnkfl for. But, is having all that wndrfl abndnc really what means be blsd? Is fam, hlth, wth most imp ways God blesses his ppl? And if don't have those thngs, mean not truly blsd? That's often how we define what means be blsd. We'll say: here's wthy prsn, very blsd; here's fam strggl finncly, not as blsd – bec in our minds: more/bttr, less/wrs. Even apstls that day probly thought: lots ppl, mrcls, glory – this what means be blsd.
- But today J turns that wrldly thnkng upside down and shows us blessedness fr God's point/view. Just bec smthng looks like a blessng fr wrldly prspctv doesn't mean actly is blessng in kngdm/God. And likewise, just bec smthng looks bad even terrible fr w/p doesn't mean actly curse in kngdm/God. Today J upends this notion that more/bttr, less/wrs. He uncovers for us a new set of definitions: what does it really mean be cursed, and blsd, in kingdm/God. Today J redefines what means be blsd.
- Lsn: **vs. 20a**; so what J says next is meant for bels (you/me): love Lord, know J Sav, & want live way God wants them live in kngdm/God. **Vs. 20a.** Then what follws: 4 blessngs/beatitds, follwd by 4 crspndng woes/curses. W/these 4 pairs blessngs/woes, J comply redefins what means be blsd. **Vs. 20b, 24.** Usually think wth as blessng; but here J curses wth, calls povrty blessng. **Vs. 21a, 25a.** Have you eaten a meal yet today; this wknd? J curses that; says bttr to be hungry. **Vs. 21b, 25b.** What's so bad re being happy, or so good-sad? This is oppst how we thnk. **Vs. 22.** Really? How can that be good? And **vs. 26a.** Why? How bad? But that's what J saying here; turning our convntnl way lookng at blessngs upside down and redefining for us what means be blsd.
- Now, let's clear up few possbl misundrstdngs. 1) J not saying wrong/sinful to have \$, eat food, be happy, or receive praise. J self fed ppl, laughd w/ppl, & praisd ppl. And there many bels in Bible who wthy. So having these gifts: not inherntly sinful. 2) J not sayng being poor, hngry, sad, or disrspctd is what gets you into hvn, as if your salvtn depends on how much you struggle thru life here on earth. That'd fly in face evthng else Bible says re how saved grace/faith/Xp, who died cross, rose dead save wrld fr sin, and evone who bels in him has etrn life. Fact is: there'll be rich & poor ppl in hvn, just like rich & poor in hell. Not your hlth, wth, or happnss that detrmns your etrnty – only your faith/Xp.
- BUT (and this J's real point here), do not think being rich, well fed, happy, praised is what means be trly blsd. And flip side, do not think being poor, hngry, sad, disrspctd necsrly means you're less blsd. Instead, realize that God actly uses hardshps/setbcks/sad times in order bless us. Smtms trbls we face in life are actly blessngs fr God. And so, what may seem bad to us fr wrldly perspctv (being poor, hngry, sad, hated; facing any kind hardshps) – those may actly be blessngs, sent fr God, to us, in love! And not accidntly either (as if God: "Oh, rats; I see smthng bad hapnd to you; that's bummer; let me work on that for you; I'll get it taken care of) – but but purposefully & lovingly!

- This reminds me when J: **“Whoever wants be my disc must deny selves and take up cross and follow me” (Mk 8:34)**. Bearing a cross hurts; it’s painful/hard. But God defines cross bearing as a blessing. Why just sang, *“Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken”* – which, by way, if didn’t notice, actly has line: *“Go [get away fr me], then, earthly fame & treasure! Come, disaster, scorn, & pain! In your service pain is pleasure; w/your favor loss is gain” (CW 465:3)*. Part of mature Xianty: undrstndng that when God places a cross of setback/hardshp into our lives – thorn/flesh – and asks us (as indivs, fams, cong) to go thru diff times, that cross, thorn/flesh, is not curse/punshmnt; actly a blessing.
- Now I know: right now, there’s part evone us that’s screaming: that’s crazy/ridclous; most backward Bible tchng ever heard in my life – that bad-good, good-bad. How in wrld can these crosses/hardshps actly be blessings? How can J actly say that you’re blsd when you’re poor, hngry, sad, hated? How can any good posbly come from suffrngs that J wants me believe are blessing?
- Know what I’d say: I don’t know. Don’t know how God’ll work good fr: spouse dying or fam mem getting cancer; fr you losing job or living lonely life; fr getting bullied school or folks getting divrcd; or fr any other cross you bear. Don’t know how any that can be good, or why God would let it hap. In fact, answer why is probly best left behnd curtain, in holy/holies of mind/God. And notice: in this psg, J doesn’t say why; doesn’t explain how crosses can be blessings.
- Instead, J points us to future, to our future in hvn. **Vs. 23a**. That’s his ultmt goal – not that we have happy/hlthy/wlthy life here on earth, but that we get to hvn. That’s why J came earth, died cross, rose fr dead, & workd faith in hrts – to bring us to hvn. And if there’s anythng in this life that’s strangle-holding our faith or obstructng our path to hvn (such as being rich, well fed, happy, praised); and if J takes that away fr us, for purp/strngthnng faith & getting us to hvn – call that a cross, or call blessing. So for instnc, if my \$ is causing me turn away fr Lord, and he takes my \$ away so that I return to him, that’s a blessing! Or if my good hlth causing me trust in self more than God, and takes away my good hlth & let’s me get sick, so that now I trust in Xp alone, that’s a blessing! May seem countrintv fr a wrldly prspctv. But that’s why J uncovrs truth for us: that God has etrnal perspcv on how blesses us.
- So, today J redefines what means be blsd. As a bel in J, as a baptd mem fam/God, connected to Xp by faith and set free fr sin by his death/res, you are blessed! And since you know that in Xp you are blessed, with sins washd away & home waiting for you in hvn – be thankful for the earthly gifts that God graciously gives you (like food, wlth, joy); but don’t let them get in way your faith. Don’t let them blur your kngdm perspcv. You have J, so you have evthng. So no matter what crosses you’re bearing in life right now, w/J you are truly blessed.

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 coastal region around Tyre and Sidon, ¹⁸ who had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. Those troubled by impure 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 people 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 ancestors 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 everyone speaks well of you, for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets.