

Study Guide: Jesus Says Otherwise (Luke 6:20-26)

Summary

Jesus begins the Sermon on the Mount with the Beatitudes, teaching that true happiness (makarios) is found not in worldly wealth, power, and fame, but in spiritual qualities and conditions that the world considers undesirable. Through the Beatitudes and their corresponding woes, Jesus reveals that the Kingdom of God operates on "backward truths" where happiness comes through recognizing spiritual bankruptcy before God, hungering for righteousness, mourning over sin, and living with humility and mercy, not through the pursuit of worldly success. Meanwhile, those who find their satisfaction in worldly riches, comfort, and acclaim are warned of coming judgment.

Key Points

1. Happiness is in the Hunger (Luke 6:20-21)

- **The Poor in Spirit:** True blessing comes from recognizing complete spiritual bankruptcy before God and understanding that we have nothing to offer Him in ourselves. This recognition opens us to receive the riches of God's grace through Jesus Christ.
- **Those Who Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness:** Happiness belongs to those who desperately desire right standing with God and right living. This hunger implies a lack, a need, and an appetite for God's righteousness—which can only be found in Christ.
- **Those Who Mourn:** Godly sorrow over sin—both personal sin and the sin of the world—leads to repentance and everlasting life. The comfort that comes from Christ is everlasting, unlike the fleeting comforts of the world.

2. Happiness is in the Humble (Matthew 5:5, 7-9)

- **The Meek:** Those with soft hearts, gentle and peaceful dispositions will inherit the earth. Meekness is not weakness but humble strength that trusts God rather than relying on personal power.
- **The Merciful:** Those who show forgiveness and compassion will themselves receive forgiveness and compassion. Mercy triumphs over judgment.
- **The Pure in Heart:** Inward purity and transformation of the heart—not mere outward appearance—is what God desires. Those whose hearts are cleansed by Christ will see God.
- **The Peacemakers:** True peacemakers work redemptively to restore right relationships, engaging conflict not to avoid it but to bring reconciliation between people and between people and God.

Key Verses

- **Luke 6:20-26** — The Beatitudes and woes in Luke's account
- **Matthew 5:3-12** — The fuller account of the Beatitudes in Matthew
- **Mark 8:36** — "What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?"
- **James 2:5** — "Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom?"
- **2 Corinthians 7:10** — "Godly sorrow produces repentance that leads to everlasting life"

- **James 2:13** — "Mercy triumphs over judgment"
- **James 3:13-18** — The wisdom from above produces peacemakers

Points for Further Study

1. **The Overlap of Worldly Riches and Spiritual Poverty:** Examine the story of the rich young ruler (Matthew 19:16-22) and how his wealth prevented him from following Jesus.
2. **Matthew vs. Luke's Beatitudes:** Compare the differences between Matthew's and Luke's accounts. Why does Matthew add the qualifications?
3. **The Paradox of Mourning and Joy:** Explore the connection between Godly sorrow and joy. How can mourning over sin lead to happiness? Study 2 Corinthians 7:10 and Psalm 32:10-11 in depth.
4. **Meekness as Strength:** How does Jesus model meekness in His own life? How is meekness different from weakness?
5. **Peacemaking vs. Peacekeeping:** Distinguish between these two concepts. Study Jesus's statement in Matthew 10:34-35 about bringing division. How can peacemaking sometimes require conflict?
6. **The Role of the Book of James:** James's letter is an exposition on the Sermon on the Mount. Read through James and identify how it applies the principles taught in the Beatitudes.
7. **The Kingdom of God's Inversion of Values:** Examine other passages where Jesus teaches about the Kingdom operating on "backward truths" (e.g., Matthew 20:26-28, Mark 10:45, Luke 22:26-27).
8. **Spiritual Bankruptcy and Grace:** Study Romans 3:21-24 and Ephesians 2:8-9. How does understanding our spiritual bankruptcy lead to receiving God's grace?

Questions for Discussion

1. **On Spiritual Poverty:** What does it mean to be "poor in spirit"? Can a wealthy person be poor in spirit? Can a materially poor person be spiritually rich? Share examples.
2. **On Hunger for Righteousness:** What does it mean to "hunger and thirst for righteousness"?
3. **On Godly Sorrow:** What's the difference between godly sorrow and worldly sorrow?
4. **On Mercy:** Jesus teaches that the merciful will obtain mercy. How does this principle work in practice?
5. **On Purity of Heart:** What does it mean to be "pure in heart"? How is this different from outward morality or religious performance?
6. **On Peacemaking:** What's the difference between being a peacemaker and being a peacekeeper? Can you think of situations where true peacemaking requires confrontation?
7. **On Kingdom Values:** Which Beatitude is most difficult for you to apply? Why? Choose one Beatitude. How can you more fully live out this quality in your life this week?