

# Get Real

## Luke 6:17-26

### INTRO:

I don't know about you, but I realize that I see things through the lens of my **likes** and **dislikes** and **baggage** and my **personality**.

### PAUSE

This morning we are thinking about getting real.

This means seeing things through a kingdom bias.

Jesus speaks a new world into being, challenges the world's definitions of **"the facts of life,"** and describes a new reality called the Kingdom of God.

Because of Jesus, Christians disagree with the world's definitions of reality, because we see things through a Kingdom bias.

As disciples of Jesus, we are to live into the new reality that Jesus calls into being.

### PAUSE

ME:

**Do you ever get a little upset with other drivers on the road?**

*I sure do!*

It has to do with thinking I drive perfectly, and maybe sometimes I do drive pretty well, *but never perfectly!*

But . . . I **think** I drive perfectly.

And it is true others do make mistakes . . . a lot.

So do I, if I'm honest.

## PAUSE

We all have these things called **cognitive biases** that change how we see things.

They say a **cognitive bias** is an error in thinking that affects the decisions and judgments that people make.

Some of these biases are related to memory.

The way you remember an event may be biased for a number of reasons and that can lead to **biased thinking** and **decision-making**.

Other cognitive biases might be related to problems with **attention**.

Since **attention** is a limited resource, people have to be **selective** about what they pay **attention** to in the world around them.

Because of this, subtle biases can creep in and influence the way you **see** and **think** about the world.

WE:

**Do you ever make mistakes when you're driving?**

Be honest.

*Let's pray together and see what Jesus has to say to us  
this morning about seeing life through a kingdom bias:*

**PAUSE**

GOD:

***Luke 6:17 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.***

Now, Jesus is about to talk about **happy people** and **doomed people**.

**Which sounds better to you?**

Before you answer, let's read about these happy and doomed people and find out which you'd rather be:

***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 "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.*

## PAUSE

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**Does this sound at all familiar?**

**Does it remind you of the Sermon on the Mount?**

It's actually known as **the Sermon on the Plane** and is definitely parallel to the **Sermon on the Mount** in Matthew 5.

There are some differences though.

The blessings are presented in a different order here than in Matthew.

The **"you"** switches from plural to singular to plural again.

Luke's God is **"kind to the ungrateful and wicked people."**

While Matthew's God "**makes the sun rise on both the evil and the good and sends rain on both the righteous and the unrighteous.**"

So for both of the sermons, God is abundantly merciful, *even maddeningly so!*

What I mean is that here is a God who takes sides with those we like to exclude or put down.

Here is a God who blesses those we curse and curses those we bless.

This passage focuses on the *nature of a gracious, forgiving God*, a God who takes sides with the oppressed and puts down the proud and the rich.

And . . . Jesus doesn't give any **action steps** in his **Sermon on the Plane**.

They are implied, though, as a response to a vision of God.

## PAUSE

**So what's going on?**

**What is real?**

Every time we Christians gather, just like this morning, that is the question to consider, "**What is real?**"

Don't be too content with what you think is there, because the world as it appears before your eyes **may be more shadows than truth**.

**"The good life consists of a lifelong dedication to the pursuit of a reality, at all costs,"** says popular psychiatrist M. Scott Peck

*The world is always telling Christian's to get real!*

To the world, much of what we do seems sadly out of touch with the **"real world."**

These are those who say, **"Well, I think prayer is fine, but sometimes you just have to get real."**

Or, **"You Christians need to get your head out of the clouds of heaven and face facts."**

**But who is it who gets to define reality?**

**Who gets to name the true facts of life?**

Think about it, we can only live in the world that we see.

So arguments about **what's what** in the world, about what is real tend to be arguments around some basic questions:

- **What do you see?**
- **What's going on?**
- **Who is in charge?**
- **Why are we here?**
- **Where are we heading?**

Jesus comes down to the level place and begins to preach.

**And again we may think, haven't we heard this before in the mountains in Matthew?**

But this sermon is a bit different than that.

Again, Jesus doesn't tell us anything that we are to do.

*Many of us come to church looking for just that, for Jesus to tell us what to do through **the preacher**, through **the music**, through **the Bible readings**.*

But this sermon was about people who are **blessed** and people who are **cursed**.

Jesus doesn't tell people what they are to do to be blessed;

He announces that certain people are blessed and that others are cursed.

So, this sermon isn't really about us, it's not about who is in and who is out, or about who is behaving correctly and who is misbehaving.

*Jesus' sermon is about God.*

So . . . let's change the title of Jesus' sermon from the **"Sermon on the Plane"** to the **"Sermon about the Nature of God."**

God is the merciful one who is **"kind to the ungrateful and the wicked."**

Maybe you thought if God is good, then that means that God punishes the wicked and the ungrateful.

***Well, think again, says Jesus!***

It's easy to be kind to people who are grateful for the kindness that we show them.

It's easy to do nice things for good people.

But this God that we've got is different from us.

God is kind and good to the bad and the ungrateful.

## PAUSE

In the story about the prodigal son, Jesus introduces us to an incredibly gracious and kind father.

When the older brother wants to know why in the world his father throws a huge homecoming party for the returning son, the father replies, **"we had to celebrate and be glad because this brother of yours was dead and is alive. He was lost and is found."**

Maybe that is overstating it just a bit.

The facts are, the younger brother was not **"dead"**; he was out on a binge.

And he wasn't really **"lost."**

He didn't forget the way home one day after school.

Instead, he ran away from home, took his father's hard-earned money, and headed west for a good time.

Which makes it all the more unusual . . .

**(for the older brother, not unusual, but exasperating)**

that his father is throwing a huge party to welcome home an ungrateful and wicked son.

But remember, *we were warned!*

As Jesus says, **God is kind precisely to the wicked and the ungrateful.**

And if we thought that God was in the business of punishing the wicked and stringing up the ungrateful,

***then God's mercy and extravagant forgiveness is exasperating to us too.***

***It is confusing, unsettling, and exasperating to find out that God does not fit our idea of God.***

## **PAUSE**

We have to notice that the part of Jesus' sermon we're looking at today is *just a series of declarations.*

Jesus is simply stating the facts of life, the way things are, reality.

- **Blessed are the poor**—The same people, whom we overlook, disregard, despise, and consider failures.
- **Blessed are the hungry**— the same hungry people whom we assume must be lazy or incompetent or they wouldn't be asking for handouts.
- **Blessed are those who weep**—The same whiners and complainers who are always acting like they've had it worse than everybody else.
- **Blessed are you when people hate you**—because you are abrasive, holier-than-thou, self-righteous, the way so-called “religious” people often are.
- *God – this God—blesses those whom we tend to curse.*

Then Jesus gets **serious** . . . as he curses the rich, the content, the happy, and the morally upright.

*(In short, people like most of us)!*

...

*But, of course, there's no need for us to spend time on all that, right?*

It was probably a total shock that day, *for all the good, churchgoing, Bible-believing folks to see God described in a way that didn't fit their Sunday school images of God.*

It was a shock just as real as climbing up out of the darkness of a deep, dark cave into the blinding light of the reality of the noonday sun.

***Maybe Jesus is onto something!***

*Perhaps the point of preaching is **not** first to tell people what to **do**, **but to tell them how to see.***

- The **acting** follows the **seeing**.

Maybe that's why Jesus begins this sermon with a healing, as a sign that a whole new world is breaking into the old world.

A new reality is shining through the darkness where those on the bottom are now brought up to the top, and those who are poor, weeping, and depressed are put at the center of what God is up to in the world.

So Jesus' sermon doesn't tell you to go out and do anything,

*though you're probably thinking of something that you need to do because of it!*

That's why Christians live as we try to live.

Not simply because Christ has commanded us to live in a certain way.

We live in a certain way because of the way we now know the world to be.

We want to get in step with the way things are, with reality, **now that God in Christ has entered the world.**

*Let me show you what I mean.*

I read about a cardiac nurse.

She assists in the surgery and the care of people who have seriously ill hearts.

Many of her patients don't make it through the risky surgery.

Some of her patients have a very difficult time with the recovery.

It can be depressing, difficult work for her as a nurse.

Someone asked her how she keeps going.

**"Walks in the park."** was her reply.

She explained that she takes an hour off for lunch and goes for a walk in the park.

She sees people who are **happy** and **healthy**.

She sees **children playing and older people** sitting on benches having a great time talking with each other.

***She is reminded that this is how things are meant to be.***

***This is the real world.***

It helps her keep going in very difficult situations.

**So . . . are her walks in the park and escape from reality, a trip into Never Neverland?**

No, they are actual encounters with reality, a sober look at the way things really are.

This is the way things are meant to be and it keeps her going in the shadowy world where it is easy for her to forget **what's what**.

Maybe that's why we gather for worship every week, to be reminded of **what's what**.

To get a **vision**, to receive a **picture** of reality now that God in Jesus Christ has reached out to us.

We need to live like Jesus is living in us and through us and not just walking beside us.

THE BOTTOM LINE:

***Jesus came to give us the ability to see the world through a kingdom bias.***

YOU:

Here are some ways you can begin to apply this to your life today.

Here are your Action Steps to try this week:

- **See.**

Look for ways that you see the Kingdom of God in the world already.

Jesus gives us the ability to see things through a Kingdom bias.

If you can't see anything, close your eyes, breath in, open your eyes and try again.

- **Live.**

Begin living your life like you are in the Kingdom of God, *because you are!*

It began with Jesus bringing it to the world and it can grow daily through us living in response to God's sacrificial love.

WE:

*Imagine that we could see more and more of the Kingdom at work in the world...*

*Imagine if we lived more and more like we were in the Kingdom of God as it is and as it will be...*

We need to begin living like Jesus is living in us and through us and not just waking beside us!

## PAUSE

CLOSE:

In the middle of Jerusalem, the members of the Baha'i faith have built a beautiful, terraced garden.

It is elegantly furnished with beautiful flowering fountains.

Bahais from all over the world have contributed to its creation.

Its beautiful terraces are a stark contrast to the **bustling and sometimes violent streets of Jerusalem.**

**What good does this garden do?**

**Why have they built it?**

It is an escape from the real world, a means of separating themselves from the realities, the facts of life in sadly conflicted Jerusalem.

The Bahais, who have suffered terrible persecution in places like Iran and Iraq,

say that their garden is **their depiction** and **their reminder** to everyone . . . of the world as it was created to be, as it is supposed to be,

as it will be when God gets God's way with the world.

The garden is open to everyone as a sign, a signal, and a picture of what is real.

*I think Jesus, the preacher on the plain, loves that about this garden . . .*

*Let's pray to Him now for eyes to see it . . . and lives to live it . . .*