

Luke Chapter 6 contains what is known as the Sermon on the Mount. It speaks of two groups of people—the blessed and the cursed. All of humanity is in one group or the other. They are either in the place of God's favor or in a place of His disapproval.

The people in each group are distinguished by how they view *themselves* (Lk. 6:20-26) and how they view *others* (Luke 6:22, 23, 29-36).

How the Blessed View Themselves (Lk. 6:20, 21):

In the previous verses (Lk. 6:20-21), Jesus described those who are blessed as those who recognize their spiritual poverty (cf. Matt. 5:3), who hunger for righteousness (cf. Matt. 5:6), and who mourn over their own spiritual deficiency. The blessed view themselves as needy, powerless, and helpless; They are conscious of the sin within them, so they beg for mercy from God.

How the Cursed View the Blessed (Lk. 6:22, 23):

Verses 20 and 21 tell how the blessed view themselves; verses 22 and 23 tell how the world views the blessed. The world hates, ostracizes, insults, and scorns the blessed. This is the fourth beatitude, the blessing of rejection.

Rejection and persecution are spoken of throughout the New Testament. Before sending the disciples out, Jesus told them in Matthew 10:16-18 (cf. Lk. 9), "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves. But beware of men, for they will hand you over to the courts and scourge you in their synagogues; and you will even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. . . Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. You will be hated by all because of My name. . . "

In John, Chapters 15 and 16, Jesus told His disciples:

15:18 "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you.

15:19 "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.

15:20 "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.

15:21 "But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me.

. . .

15:23 "He who hates Me hates My Father also.

. . .

16:1 "These things I have spoken to you so that you may be kept from stumbling.

16:2 "They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God.

16:3 "These things they will do because they have not known the Father or Me.

The world loves their sin so much that they will do all that is in their power to remove the messenger who confronts them about it. They hated Jesus for this very reason, and will hate those who align themselves with Him. Being hated for loving Jesus is also a blessing for it demonstrates that we belong to Him.

How the Cursed View Themselves (Lk. 6:24-26):

Unlike the blessed who see themselves as needy, hungry, and hopeless, the cursed see themselves as rich, satisfied, and in no need of anything. The cursed are accepted by the world while the blessed are hated by it.

6:24 "But woe to you who are rich, for you are receiving your comfort in full.

6:25 "Woe to you who are well-fed now, for you shall be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.

6:26 "Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for their fathers used to treat the false prophets in the same way.

"Woe" is an exclamation of pain and pity for misfortune that awaits someone in a certain condition (Bock, 583). It is an expression of grief or denunciation. It forms a stark contrast to the blessings just pronounced (Lk. 6:20-23).

Jesus reverses the world's perspective and values. What the world loves, Jesus curses.

Woe to you who are rich:

Just as the needs of the poor provide an analogy to those who are in spiritual need, so the rich are used to picture those who think they are spiritually wealthy. Many in the church of Laodicea had this perception of themselves and were rebuked by Jesus for it. In Revelation 3:17-18 He says, "Because you say, 'I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,' and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see." The blessed see themselves as wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked; they are the ones who turn to Christ to obtain spiritual wealth, sight, and clothing. The cursed do not sense their true condition; they say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing." Jesus pities the future that awaits these delusional people when their real condition is exposed; the only comfort they will receive is the comfort in this life; they will have nothing in the age to come.

Woe to you who are well-fed now:

The second woe (6:25a) contrasts those who have spiritual hunger (Lk. 6:21) to those who are satisfied in their own spiritual achievements. The “well-fed” are content with their own self-righteousness. They do not feel the hunger that the sinner feels, because they don’t think that they are the sinner. The fact that they do not sense any need for mercy demonstrates that they do not know what they are really like in the eyes of God. Sadly, their condition is a woeful one.

Jesus illustrated this attitude in the story in Luke 18:10-14. There He said, "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Woe to you who laugh now:

The third woe (6:25b) follows closely after the previous one. The cursed laugh and enjoy life now. This contrasts the blessed who mourn (Lk. 6:21). If the mourning spoken of earlier is the mourning over sin, then this is the opposite; those described here sense no need of repentance. They are content with themselves. Though they laugh now, they will have a rude awakening in the future when their sins are exposed (Rev. 20:12-15; Matt. 12:36; 16:27; Jn. 5:28, 29; Ro. 2:5, 6; 2 Cor. 5:10, etc.), and they realize that their opportunity to receive mercy has passed them by forever.

The gist of this verse is expressed in James 4:8-10: “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.”

- Isaiah 65:13-14 “Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Behold, My servants will eat, but you will be hungry. Behold, My servants will drink, but you will be thirsty. Behold, My servants will rejoice, but you will be put to shame. Behold, My servants will shout joyfully with a glad heart, But you will cry out with a heavy heart, And you will wail with a broken spirit.’”

Woe to you when all men speak well of you:

The last woe (6:26) contrasts 6:23. The world hates the blessed because of their attachment to Jesus, yet they speak well of those who have rejected Him. This is a grievous state to be in, for it demonstrates that the individual is separated from their only hope of life and eternal joy.

IN SUM:

Perhaps we could paraphrase these verses as meaning, “Woe to you who don’t know that you are spiritually destitute, hungry, oppressed, and blind. Woe to you who have rejected Christ, your only hope. Woe to you, for you think you will be blessed, but you will receive eternal poverty, hunger, and sorrow.”

How the Blessed View the Cursed (Lk. 6:27-36):

If the first test of a true disciple is how one views himself, then this is the second test. A true disciple is one who loves his enemies.

**6:27 "But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,
6:28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.**

Jesus begins verse 27 by saying, “But I say to you who hear.” This contrasts those who have the ability to hear the word of God and respond to it to those who don’t. 1 Corinthians 2:14 says, “a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.” The one who is not saved has no capacity to understand, to believe, and to act on divine truth. Jesus is thus talking to people who have spiritual understanding. He is talking to those who are in the place of the blessed. The blessed are not only known by their perception of themselves, they are known by their love for their enemies.

Loving one’s enemy was a virtue in the OT. For example, Job, in defending his own righteousness before God, asked, “Have I rejoiced at the extinction of my enemy, or exulted when evil befell him? No, I have not allowed my mouth to sin by asking for his life in a curse” (Job 31:29-30). Exodus 23:4,5 states, “If you meet your enemy’s ox or his donkey wandering away, you shall surely return it to him. If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying helpless under its load, you shall refrain from leaving it to him, you shall surely release it with him.” Proverbs 25:21 says, “If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink.” Leviticus 19:18 also says, “you shall love your neighbor as yourself.” The Jews, however, had twisted this verse and interpreted “neighbor” as “fellow Jew.” They then taught that one should hate your enemies. Jesus said your neighbor is anyone who comes across your path (Lk. 10) and responded to their misinterpretation in the expanded version of this verse in Matthew 5:43-48:

“You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.’
[this is what the Jewish people had been erroneously taught; this is what they had heard being said]. But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? If you greet only your

brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?
Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

In Matthew 5:45, Jesus demonstrates that even God loves His enemies, for He gives rain and sun to both the righteous and the unrighteous alike. In other words, the impartial goodness of God, evidenced in His giving the sun, rain, and fruitful seasons to all inhabitants of the earth is not something that happens by chance, nor is it something that God must do; it is an act of God's will. This means that God is deliberately and consciously acting in goodness toward His enemies. Jesus then concludes, if God loves His enemies and we are His children, we should reflect the character of our Father by loving our enemies as well.

We are to be holy because God is holy (Lev. 19:2; I Pet. 1:14-16). We are also called to be loving because God is love (I Jn.4:7, 8), and perfect because God is perfect. Of course, we should not assume that Jesus means that we can be equal to God. Rather, the “perfection” is a resemblance. “We are said to be perfect, as He is perfect, when we aim at the same object” (Calvin, Commentary). When we give free and pure kindness without any expectation of personal gain, or when we show goodness toward others even when they are ungrateful or hostile toward us, our love resembles the perfect love of God.

The disciple of Jesus is to show practical kindness toward those who have no claim on their affections, who do not evoke any sense of delight, and are actually seeking their harm. There are three concrete actions the blessed are to take to show love toward those who hate them.

1. **Do good to them** - This means acting to do good in the other person's life in every way possible.
2. **Bless them** - To bless means to speak goodness and blessing into the person's life, even if they curse us. Our speech about them is to be kind and gracious.
3. **Pray for them** - On the cross Jesus prayed, “Father, forgive them.” In Acts 7:60, when Stephen was being stoned, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" No greater examples can be found of those who loved their enemies than these.