

# Luke 6-12-26

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] We'll be in Luke 6 at page 862 of the Church Bibles. A number of years ago, I read a really moving account of a couple that adopted two little! Russian boys from an orphanage out there. And the way they tell the story, it's incredibly moving. But they describe at the start about how their first visit, the orphanage was overcrowded and filthy. And there was this awful smell in the air. And I guess if you were to imagine what an orphanage would be like, those things are no real surprise. The thing that they said though that surprised them was the silence. All of these little children, the whole place was absolutely jam-packed and there was not a peep of noise. It was so unnatural.

The reality is if no one ever comes when you cry, why would you bother? You learn pretty quickly that it's a waste of time. Physically and emotionally, these boys had an awful life.

The most moving part of the book, however, for me was when they told the story of how they brought the boys home for the first time. And they went in and they cleaned them up and dressed them in nice new clothes and brought them out. And they went to get into the car to take them to the airport. And as the car drove away from the orphanage, the boys fell apart, started screaming, trying to get out the door. They wanted to go back to the orphanage.

There was a whole new life available to them. There was a whole vast array of opportunities open before them.

But because it was unknown, it was too much for them. It was frightening and it terrified them and they wanted to go back.

[ 2 : 0 6 ] They wanted what was familiar, even if it was awful. They wanted that rather than stepping into the unknown. We have our own versions of the same thing.

Maybe we're in a rut and we're unhappy, but we won't step out of the rut because the rut is familiar and we know it and we know how to operate in that system. And the thought of stepping out of it into any alternative, well, we're fearful of the unknown.

And this can especially be the case when it comes to following the Lord Jesus. Perhaps we have experienced the struggles that our sin brings in life.

We know that we don't have all the answers. We know that we aren't in control of our life. Our appetites seem to always get the better of us. We know that we need help. We may even believe that Jesus is God's son and that we can be reconciled to God through his death and resurrection. Perhaps we even know intellectually that that would be the answer to many of our problems. But we won't take the step to put our faith in him because we're scared of what that will mean for our lives.

[ 3 : 2 5 ] That's what Jesus requires of us. It is that we let go of the control that we want to have of our lives. It's like we say we take our hands off the steering wheel of our lives and we allow him into the driver's seat so he can take it wherever it goes.

And that's too much for us. And so we don't take the step. And it's not just in coming into the Christian faith. Many of us profess faith in Christ but we still kind of keep him at arm's length. We fit him in around the rest of our lives. We look back or hold on to our old life because it's familiar. Sure it was destructive. We know that it wasn't the right way to live.

We know that it didn't honor God and it was rebellious in the world that he has created. But our old life is familiar. We knew how to operate back there.

And we aren't sure if we give ourselves fully to Christ. If we surrender every single corner of our lives to him. Well will that actually do us any good?

[ 4 : 3 3 ] The truth is we're afraid to be truly Christian. So what do we need in these situations? What do we need when that is the case?

What do those newly adopted boys need when fear took hold in their hearts? They needed to know that they were being given a new life. They needed to know that they were in the hands of parents

who would protect them.

And they needed to know that those parents would care for them no matter what lay ahead in their lives. And that is what is happening in our section of Luke 6 this evening.

For two weeks if you've been here on these Sunday evenings we've seen the reluctance of the religious establishment of the day to accept that Jesus is God's King who is bringing in his kingdom. The old religious order, old Israel has rejected Jesus and the new era of joy and blessing that he has brought in.

And this evening as we come to verse 12 in Luke chapter 6 Jesus shows us what he will do about this. And what this new thing will mean for those who follow him.

[ 5 : 46 ] I have come to do a new thing, you remember, new wine, old wineskins, all that kind of thing. I've come to bring the kingdom of joy and blessing. And there's this group that keep resisting, that keep trying to trip him up, that keep trying to resist him.

And he says, well, here's what's going to happen. And it starts first of all, point number one, with renewal. Renewal. He chooses his new people. Verse 12.

Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor. Now these men aren't simply a dozen of Jesus' closest friends. Nor, as verse 17 tells us, are they the only people who were following Jesus at this early stage.

No. Out of this large crowd, men and women, who had resolved that they are going to follow Jesus, he chooses these 12 to be apostles. Apostle means sent one.

That is, one who has been sent with the authority to speak and act for someone else. Like an ambassador. The authority to speak and act on behalf of their country. That kind of thing.

[ 7 : 21 ] But the fact that there are 12 is key to what Jesus is doing here. Some people have pointed out that there are differences in the list of names across the gospel writers. But that is because the number is more important than the names.

By ordaining 12, Jesus is making a really emphatic statement that he is establishing a new people of God. In fact, the emphasis that Luke puts on Jesus' prayer, that is his wholehearted dependence on the Father before he makes this choice, makes clear that this is God's work.

It is God establishing a new Israel. So just as the old Israel was founded on 12 sons of Jacob, 12 tribes, here the new Israel, the new people of God in Christ, will be founded on these 12 apostles.

There is, of course, continuity between old and new. And the New Testament church is often referred to in the language of Old Testament Israel. Think of the 12 tribes of Israel.

He uses that language in Luke 22. Peter talks about a holy nation and a royal priesthood. Those are Old Testament categories. But there is also discontinuity with the broken, stiff-necked old Israel.

[ 8 : 36 ] And these men will be the founders of the new people of God. This is a foundational moment. The last words we heard last time, if you look at verse 11, they were the Pharisees plotting to get rid of Jesus.

And these men are going to carry on his mission after his death. The church in every generation stands on the shoulders of these men.

Every gospel-preaching church in the world is built on this foundation. The International Presbyterian Church, you and me here this evening, we are here because Christ chose this group and built his church on their ministry.

So it's really important. We're reading the Gospels and we see the opposition of the old Israel. We recognize that that does not bring about the end of God's plan.

Jesus here is bringing renewal. So he calls forth a new Israel, the church that will triumph in history as the gospel spreads to every corner of the earth. But, as we said at the start, leaving the rotten orphanage for the promise of a new life was distressing for those boys.

[ 9 : 47 ] And being called to the new life that these men have been given here would have been equally unsettling. I can imagine that as Jesus called them to him, as he called them together and he said, you're going to be my apostles, that there was more than a little bit of uncertainty.

Is he sure he's picked the right people? I imagine that there was fear. I imagine as they looked into the future with all of the unknown that was ahead of them, that they were fearful.

So what do they need? Well, first of all, they need to be reminded exactly who it is that is calling them. That's our second point. If he starts with renewal, he then moves to reminder.

Reminder, he shows his power. So in verses 12 to 16, we see again the humanity of Jesus. He's laboring in prayer with his father. He's choosing the 12. But in 17 to 19, we see the compassion and

power of the great king as he moves among the people.

Verse 18, And those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. And all the crowd sought to touch him, for power came out of him and healed them all.

[10:57] Since the start of chapter 5, this is a familiar picture. We've consistently seen Jesus demonstrate his power and authority. From the beginning of chapter 5, there was calling, cleansing, healing, forgiving, providing, healing.

The Son of Man is unmistakably in the midst of these people. But he has just called and commissioned this group of 12 men to be the foundation of the new people of God. And so what he's doing here is he moves among the vast crowds, continuing to show compassion and to heal the broken and the sick.

He gives them a tangible reminder, a very tangible reminder of who it is that has called them to be apostles. The one who has chosen them is the one with the power to push back the powers of darkness.

The one who has chosen them has all authority in heaven and on earth, and he can be trusted. He's calling them to do something radical, and he's giving them a demonstration of his power so that they can know that he will be with them.

Again, I think this is very important, because we feel the weakness of the church in our day. We can easily ask the question, is God's plan really on track?

[12:13] He has promised that he will disciple the nations, that the gospel will advance, that the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. Well, we're not really seeing that. Is his plan really on track when we live in a nation that treats the weakest in society the way we do?

Is he really building his church where the state church embraces all kinds of things that are contrary to his word? Well, if we belong to the people of God through faith in Christ, we belong to the one who has all power and authority, and he can be trusted.

There are circumstances in our lives where I think we wonder whether the Lord knows or whether the Lord cares about what is happening to us. And if you were to push us and we were to be dead honest, we would say, I don't really think I can trust the Lord with this situation.

The reason that I know that's the case is because we so often take matters into our own hands. When things are difficult, when opposition comes our way, when we don't get what we want in life, so often we try and manipulate the situation so that we do.

And what does that say except that we don't trust the Lord? When our mental health is deteriorating, when our bodies are breaking, when our lives are in turmoil, and we wonder, is this maybe a bit beyond him?

[13:45] Now, of course, if we were asked that question, we would say, no, of course, God is almighty. He's sovereign. But in our heart of hearts, we wonder, is our situation beyond him or has he forgotten us?

Well, look again. Verse 18, those who were troubled with unclean spirits, those who were emotionally tormented, all the crowd, power came out from him, healed them all.

Do you need this reminder this evening? You know, don't you, that the Jesus of the Gospels is the same Jesus who is exalted to the Father's right hand in heaven, and he is the same Jesus who is present with us here by his Holy Spirit.

This Jesus is building his church. He has compassion on his people. He has the power to change your life.

So whatever is going on, here's the reminder that you need to trust him. You can trust him. So Christ is making all things new through his church, and he is the son of man who has the power to carry out this plan.

[15:14] But Jesus doesn't stop there. He doesn't just remind his apostles of his power. He also offers reassurance for the life that they have chosen. That's our third point, and that's the main thrust of what we're looking at.

He starts with renewal. He moves to reminder. And then thirdly, we have reassurance. He makes his promise. Luke's Beatitudes here, when we come to verse 20, they seem to be more specific to the immediate context than Matthew.

So Matthew says, blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. It's a general truth, but these statements here are addressed to this group that are standing right in front of Jesus.

So verse 20, blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. These men and women have left everything to follow Jesus.

We saw in chapter 5 how some of these apostles literally walked away from their family fishing business to follow Jesus in faith. And what he does here is assure them that they've made the right call.

[16:21] You don't think that there were times when the radical nature of the call on their lives that Jesus gives, there weren't times when they went, you know, the fishing business was pretty tidy.

It's a fair bit easier than this. We knew what we were doing back there. Jesus says, you are poor because you have left everything to follow me. And I want to reassure you that you possess the kingdom of God as a result.

He'll move to reassurance about the future with his next breath, but he starts with the fact that even in the midst of their struggles, they are full citizens of the kingdom of God. Again, do you need to hear that this evening?

The sacrifices that you have made to follow Jesus, whatever they have cost you in material terms are worth it because you have gained the kingdom of God which is beyond price.

Some people preach this as an exhortation to material poverty. Only the poor receive the kingdom, but it's actually a reassurance that the cost of following Jesus is worth it.

[17:31] It's worth it. He calls us to take up our cross and follow him. He calls us, yes, to give up everything, to lay all that we have at his feet.

All that I have is yours, Lord Jesus. My time, my money, my family, my life, my health, everything. It is yours. Do with it what you will.

And whatever that costs us in material terms, he says here, you can gladly let it go because you have been given one thing that ultimately matters and that is the kingdom of God and you cannot lose that and it is worth far more than anything that you can have here.

It is a great reassurance. And it is a great reassurance that actually liberates us to sit loose to whatever we have in material terms, to live with open hands and to be generous.

We're going to get to more of that next week, Lord willing. Here's the thing. Life is gained in God's kingdom by giving it away. Blessed are you who are poor for yours is the kingdom of God.

[18:44] But this reassurance isn't just in the present. It reaches forward as well. Look at verse 21. Blessed are you who are hungry now for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now for you shall laugh.

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. You're hungry now because you've considered following me to be of greater value and worth than your basic needs.

You're weeping now because you have heeded the call to follow me and life as a follower of Jesus is cross-shaped so it inevitably is marked by hardship and grief.

You are hated, you are rejected, you are repulsive to some people and your good name is maligned all because you have chosen to leave everything to follow me and I want to reassure you that you are not just blessed now because of this.

It's not just that you're a citizen of the kingdom of God but a day is coming when your hunger will turn to satisfaction. A day is coming when your tears will become tears of laughter and all the hatred that people have directed at you will give way to vindication and you will rejoice.

[19:56] Do you hear this? Are you hungry because you lost everything when you came to Christ?

I know that's true for some of us. Are things tight for you because obedience to Christ caused you to lose your job? Do you have little available to you because you've chosen to be so generous to others for the sake of the gospel?

God sees it and a day is coming when you will be satisfied. Weeping verse 21 weeping over our sin weeping over the sins of our nation weeping for the unborn and the trafficked weeping over the lost weeping over those members of our family who face nothing but a lost eternity weeping because of disease in our world and divorce and death and all of these awful things there have been times in my life when I've wondered if I would ever laugh again.

God sees it all and a day is coming when all of that sorrow will turn to joy. One author has said the people who laugh loudest and longest will be the ones who suffered most for their faith.

Eternity will be full of the laughter and joy of Christian martyrs. Opposition 22 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.

[ 21 : 56 ] When you are maligned for your Christian faith you took a stand because God's word required you to take a stand and it destroyed your reputation.

It torpedoed you professionally. However personal however nasty however destructive that gets Jesus says rejoice.

Really rejoice actually verse 23 leap for joy kind of rejoicing. You have to be a very strange person to act like this. People turning on you people sully your name people telling the world through social media that you aren't just annoying but you're actually wicked.

Who rejoices at that? We were all told from childhood sticks and stones may break my bones but names will never hurt me. That's nonsense and we all know that.

We all remember things that people have said to us many years ago that have stayed with us. I certainly feel that way. I can't remember there's loads of punches on the nose I don't remember at all.

[ 23 : 12 ] That's why it's so big. But it's true isn't it? Sticks and stones could break our bones but names particularly when it's lies particularly when we've done the right thing devastates us.

So how do you rejoice? Well you're either a sociopath where you know that God sees it all and he is keeping score.

and one day it will end and you will receive a heavenly reward that you couldn't ever imagine when you were going through it all.

When you were going through it all. After all if you're reviled for following Jesus for being obedient to his word you're on the right track because as it was for him so it is for his followers and all of that opposition is on the clock and one day it will all cease.

So we're reassured we're reassured in the present we're reassured about the future but we're also reassured about those who have not made the sacrifices that we've made.

[ 24 : 44 ] This often plays out again if we're honest this plays out in our minds. I can get it that the future is going to be great but is it possible that it could be great now as well as in the future?

Is it possible to have the good life now and the good life then? Well Jesus is clear verse 24 but woe to you who are rich for you have received your consolation.

Woe to you who are full now for you shall be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now for you shall mourn and weep. Woe to you when all people speak well of you for so their fathers did to the false prophets.

The sense of the word woe here is like alas or how awful how awful to you who are full now.

Jesus is pointing here to those who have chosen present comfort and prosperity who have chosen the good life according to this world over the kingdom of God.

[ 25 : 50 ] And it's a reassurance to the disciples because as they look at those who haven't chosen to follow Christ but whose lives seem much better than theirs they don't go hungry.

They don't weep over the brokenness of the world because they never have to experience any of it. And they're always laughing and they're always having people tell them how great they are. And we hear that.

We hear that description and we think oh that would be nice. But Jesus says no actually it would be tragic. And reassuring these disciples there is a warning for those who think that that is the right path for life.

he says how awful it would be to live that way because it is the worst trade that you can possibly make because it is so short sighted. The fleeting pleasures that this life offers even in their most extravagant forms are precisely that.

They're fleeting. So you better enjoy whatever it is now because the pleasure in the moment is all there is.

[ 27 : 02 ] But know that the hunger and the weeping they are coming. That's what Jesus says. Not only that I think worst of all the sense of profound regret over rejecting Jesus' offer of life in him the life that is truly life that will haunt you for eternity which is a very long time.

How awful indeed. I suppose the obvious thing to say is so don't go there. Don't go there.

Choose Christ instead. Put your faith in Christ. Give your life up to him and you will receive the kingdom and you will receive the blessing of new life that changes your present experience because it reassures you about a glorious future.

It changes your present experience because it assures you of a glorious future. Well in their fear and uncertainty those little boys needed to know that they had a new life that they were in safe hands and that their future was secure and Jesus shows us here that it is the same for us. If you've put your faith in him he has called you into his new people. We have received the kingdom. We are citizens of God's kingdom now. and he has the power to care for us and we can live with joy in the midst of all of the trials because our future is secure and that future will be unimaginably wonderful.

[ 28 : 34 ] Let's pray.