

# Luke 6:12-49 The Beatitudes : Life in the Kingdom



## A. Choosing of the Twelve Apostles (Luke 6:12-19)

1. Following the confrontations with the Pharisees and scribes, Jesus now faces an important decision. His enemies have dramatically increased and one day they will kill Him. What is Jesus to do? He prays all night. Then He chooses a little band of men who would carry on His work after He is gone. Choosing the twelve apostles was such an important decision that it brought Jesus to prayer all night asking the Father, "Who?" Choosing leaders requires the divine relation.
2. What were the Twelve chosen men like? (1) They were an 'average lot' mostly. Jesus loves to work with 'ordinary people' still today. (2) They were a 'mixed lot' - 'fighters' (zealots), 'businessmen' (tax collectors), 'fishermen' (typical blue collar workers), 'brothers' (Peter/Andrew & James/John), 'one southerner' in the mix - Judas Iscariot, i.e. 'man of Karioth', a town in Judea (Josh 15:25), who betrays Jesus.

## B. The Beatitudes in Luke (Luke 6:17-49)

1. Luke's Beatitudes and Matthew's Beatitudes
  - a. The Beatitudes are Jesus' practical guide for 'Kingdom Life', and is the key to discipleship. Matthew's version is called "The Sermon on the Mount" and is longer than Luke's version. Luke's Beatitudes is on the "Plain", but there is no conflict between them. Whether it is a "mount" or "plain" depends on the perspective of the recorder, whether he was looking up or looking down. Or Jesus may have taught the same topic on two different occasions.
  - b. The secret to life is 'relationship'! The beatitudes are about THREE RELATIONSHIPS everyone must grow in: (1) 'within ourselves'; (2) 'with others'; (3) 'with God.' The key to true happiness consists of (1) 'achieving happiness within ourselves'; (2) 'achieving harmony with others'; (3) 'achieving holiness before God.' Jesus takes each of these areas and shows us how to lead a 'life governed by the King.'
2. What was Jesus' congregation like here? It was a large crowd consisting of TWO groups.
  - a. Group 1 - 'Those who were following Jesus for who He was', i.e. 'disciples' who followed Jesus their teacher. From this group of disciples (6:17) the Twelve were chosen to be apostles.
  - b. Group 2 - 'Those who came to Jesus for what they needed Him to do for them,' e.g. healing, deliverance from evil spirits. A great multitude from Judea & Jerusalem and from Tyre & Sidon came to Jesus because power went out from Him to heal them all. They were yet to make up their mind about the Kingdom of God, i.e. 'discipleship' - living life God's way.
  - c. *Which group do you belong to?* The Lord graciously ministered to both groups. But the secret of 'life in God' belongs to His disciples only - those who follows Jesus for who He is. Jesus' teaching in the Beatitudes is the clearest manual for Christian discipleship.
3. Right relationship within yourself is one secret to happiness according to Jesus (6:20-26)
  - a. Jesus was looking down at the large congregation of people (6:20). Some were poor, some rich; some were in deep pain, others were at ease; some were popular, some not popular, etc. To the shock of this mixed crowd Jesus started teaching the secret of happiness, "O, how happy are you who are poor, hungry, sad, and persecuted because of the Son of Man." Then He said, "O how terrible and tragic are you who are rich, well fed, chasing life's fun, at ease and popular with everybody, because a day is coming when all these things will be turned upside down for you."
  - b. But who wants to be poor, hungry, weeping and persecuted? Most people's unspoken mission in life is 'to be rich', 'to enjoy good food', 'to have lots of fun', and 'to be popular'. But Jesus' outlook on life is diametrically opposite to everything we believe in and pursue. Why? Just one reason - those who are poor, hungry, weeping and persecuted are well aware of their 'need for God', i.e. they are 'poor in spirit' (Matt 5:3). The rich of this world tend to be 'self-sufficient' and often unaware of 'their desperate need for God.'

Many poor people were already following Jesus as His disciples, and some had become even poorer because of their decision to follow Him. *'What did Jesus promise to His followers?'* Fearless life of faith; joy in the midst of pressure; incalculable blessing in the life to come (and also in this life) along with persecution (Mark 10:28-31). Jesus warned, if all men speak well of you all the time, beware something is wrong – you might be a false prophet! "If you feel like weeping today and in pain, if you are unpopular among your friends for the sake of the Son of Man, rejoice and leap for joy because your reward is great in heaven!" And you are standing with the true prophets of old.

- c. What is Jesus' definition of happiness? True happiness doesn't depend on your 'present feelings', which is only a brief shadow. True happiness depends on the reality of your eternal future in God! Which would you rather have? Enjoy easy life now, and go without the glory, honour and true riches that comes from God and is for eternity? Or face challenges in this life, but find glory, honour and true riches that is yours to keep forever? Who is the truly happy person? Somebody said, "If you really want the secret of happiness, follow Jesus until it hurts." Unspiritual men with myopic vision of life cannot accept this truth.
4. Harmony with other people - Concern and Criticism for others (6:27-42)
- a. These two things often determine our success in relationships. How deep is your concern for others, and how harsh is your criticism of them? Jesus is talking about concern for our enemies (6:27-36). Not just for our family, friends, loved ones, but those who hate us, curse us, criticise us and stab us in the back. Anyone can do good to those who do good to them. That is nothing special or godly. Jesus is talking about loving those from whom there will be 'no return for your investment.' This is the secret to happiness because this is 'godliness' or 'God-likeness' "and your reward will be great!" (6:35). *'To return good for good is human; To return evil for evil is animal; To return evil for good is satanic; To return good for evil is divine.'*
  - b. The Golden Rule: The school of Hillel taught, "What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbour." (*Shabbath 31a*). But Jesus said, "Do to others what you want them to do to you." (6:31). Love is not a matter of feeling. It is something we decide and do. There are four different words for love in the biblical language: 'Storge' (family affection); 'eros' (romantic); 'philia' (friendship); 'agape' (unconditional love). Agape is not found naturally; we don't fall into it; it is something we either do or don't do.
  - c. Jesus is talking here about our criticism of friends (6:37-42). Most of our criticism is directed at the people near us. Who criticised someone from Africa or Europe this week? We tend to become critical of our friends and those near us. It is much easier to become critical of our own church, our own government, our own brothers etc. When we put down others a little bit, we feel we are quite a bit better than them. But the disciples of Jesus must to grow deeper and beyond our sinful human nature if we want to know the true blessings of relationship.
  - d. Critical spirit and blindness: (1) Two people with sticks are walking together and both are blind. Suddenly one takes a leading position to boldly lead the other, as if he can see and knows the way. We can see the ditch ahead, but they cannot. Both fall into it and are injured. This is how critical spirit operates. Just like the blind man emboldened to lead another blind man, and both fall into a ditch and hurt themselves. (2) Jesus was a carpenter and must have seen many splinters. What is the worst place to get a splinter? In the eye! Someone is determined to take out a tiny splinter out of his little brother's eye, but he himself has a huge log lodged in his eye and blinding it, and his brother is horrified and resists him. We cannot easily see glaring faults in ourselves, but we can readily see tiny faults in others. Often we are just seeing the log in our own eyes.  
  
Jesus said, "For with the same measure (of judgement) you use, it will be measured back to you." (6:38) On the day of judgment all God has to do is to play back the tape of how we criticised others. That would be enough to condemn ourselves. So Jesus teaches us, "Don't criticise your friends so easily." It doesn't mean we don't exercise 'discernment'. Judging here means condemning and writing someone off as hopeless. Only God can make the final judgment.
5. Holiness before God (6:43-49): Jesus gives us two more illustrations - 'tree' and 'building a house'
- a. A tree can only produce after its own kind. This is a law of nature. It is also the law of human nature. What you really are inside, that is what you will produce in your life. 'Figs & Grapes' are contrasted with 'thorns & bramble bush'. (*Judges 9:7-15*) It is a lesson on 'proud heart' and 'humble heart'. We all build a 'treasure box' in our hearts. It is filled with what we have 'stored up in life' - what we value the most. That treasure

box in your heart is where your speech flows from, and ultimately the type of the fruit you will bear in your life. What is that treasure box filled with? Is it 'good' or 'evil'? Listen to your speech, for out of the 'abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.' (6:45)

- b. Jesus now moves His illustration from 'fruit' to 'foundation'. Jesus is talking about the 'secret to holiness before God.' It is not in the number of sermons we've heard, because merely hearing great teaching doesn't make us holy. 'What we do with what we hear will make us holy'. Jesus as a carpenter must have seen disasterous houses without proper foundation. Foundation is the 'invisible part' of the house, and temptation is there to take a short cut. But without a proper foundation, under pressure the whole house will collapse. And pressure will come in life - financial loss, friends' betrayal, relationship failure etc. Do you have a firm foundation to your faith? Nobody will see your foundation, except you and God. Laying a firm foundation will require investment of time and effort, not 'legalistic works' but 'obedience of faith'. You begin to put into practice what you hear today - small things - then your life will stand. This is the secret to holiness before God. We are all builders for eternity. Each one has been given time (life) and tools (truth) to build with. Some will be found wise, and others will be found foolish when all is finally revealed.
6. Just like the teacher – A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher (6:40). Everything Jesus taught, He lived it perfectly. Three years after He gave this teaching Jesus pleaded for those who flogged Him, mocked Him and nailed Him to the cross, "Father forgive them for they do not know what they do." A few weeks later, one of Jesus' followers was being stoned to death. And just like his teacher, Stephen said with his last breath, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin."

It is possible to live this way, not by our strength, but by following Jesus who now lives in us by His Spirit. Amen.

### C. Discussion

1. Why did Jesus pray all night in Luke 6:12? Have you ever prayed all night? What was the reason? (You may want to join one of GI's Friday Night Prayer 10pm-4pm!)
2. What was Jesus' congregation like when he taught them the Beatitudes? (Luke 6:17-20) Which group in the crowd describes you as a Christian? Why?
3. What is the secret to happiness according to Jesus? (Luke 6:20-26) In what ways is Jesus' teaching shocking and revolutionary even to His disciples? Do you agree with Jesus' teaching on the 'truly blessed people'? Why?
4. What are the secrets to achieving harmony with others? How does this truth apply to your life right now?
5. What is the secret to holiness? What is your assessment of your 'foundation' to faith? In which area of your foundation, do you need prayer and encouragement?