

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Luke 6: 17-26

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the Bible again. This week, we are going to read Luke Chapter 6 and today we will read verses 17 to 26.

Before we move on, let us briefly review what we covered yesterday. We talked about how, before Jesus chose the twelve apostles, He went up on the mountain and prayed all night, and in the end selected twelve men. We also said that these twelve can be divided into three groups.

The first group consists of four fishermen: Peter, Andrew, James, and John. They had previously followed John the Baptist, and through John the Baptist's introduction they came to follow Jesus. They were also the ones who had followed Jesus the longest. In the Gospels, we see that Peter was an impulsive person, very natural and outspoken in his temperament. As for James and John, they were known as the "sons of thunder," which shows that they had very fiery and quick-tempered personalities. This was the first group.

The second group, as we mentioned, were those whom the Lord personally called: Philip, Bartholomew (also known as Nathanael), Matthew, and Thomas. This group tended to be more independent thinkers. For example, when Jesus saw Nathanael, He said that he was a true Israelite indeed. Matthew was a tax collector, someone despised by the Jews, because tax collectors often oppressed their own people, served the Romans, and took personal profit in the process. Thomas was the one who, after Jesus' resurrection, insisted on seeing with his own eyes before he would believe; he was more of a skeptic. This was the second group.

The third group seemed to be strongly politically minded, eager to see the earthly nation of Israel restored. Among them was Simon the Zealot. These four included

James the son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed the Lord.

These twelve men were not only very different in temperament, but from a human perspective, they seemed almost impossible to put together. Just imagine how Matthew could possibly get along with Simon the Zealot. One was an extreme nationalist who wanted to oppose the Romans at every turn, while the other made his living by working for the Romans and exploiting his fellow Jews. Yet under God's sovereign authority, Jesus chose these twelve men to continue His earthly ministry. What was completely impossible for man, Jesus accomplished by spending more than a year training them. In the end, apart from Judas Iscariot who betrayed Him, the other eleven all became people who could stand on their own, and ultimately changed the world. Therefore, Jesus' method of training disciples is absolutely a model we should learn from.

In addition, the way He chose His coworkers is also something we should pay close attention to. He did not choose people who were highly similar, people who naturally felt easy to work with together. Instead, He deliberately put all kinds of people together, allowing each one to be transformed in life, until they could finally be sent out by Him to reach all kinds of different people.

Verse 17-18: "And He came down with them and stood on a level place with a crowd of His disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear Him and be healed of their diseases, as well as those who were tormented with unclean spirits. And they were healed."

Jesus prayed on the mountain, and there on the mountain He chose twelve from among the many disciples and called them apostles. After that, He came down the mountain. Going up the mountain was for prayer, for drawing nearer to God, and for disciple training. Coming down the mountain marked the beginning of direct contact with the crowds and the training of His disciples in the context of real life.

When He came down from the mountain, He stood on a level place, and there on the plain He began to teach His disciples and a great multitude of people.

By that time, Jesus had already gained considerable fame, so people from various regions came to Him, bringing their needs. They hoped their diseases would be healed and that unclean spirits would be cast out. Everyone wanted to touch Him, because power was coming out from Him.

From verse 20 through the end of the chapter, we have Jesus' teaching to His disciples and to the people. This section is commonly referred to as the Sermon on the Plain. It appears somewhat similar in content to Matthew chapters 5 through 8, which we usually call the Sermon on the Mount, but the two are not exactly the same. In Matthew chapters 5 through 8, the Sermon on the Mount takes place after Jesus brought His disciples up onto a mountain and taught them there; that teaching is recorded beginning in chapter 5. In Matthew's Gospel, the account of Jesus choosing the twelve apostles is recorded later, in chapter 10.

In Luke's Gospel, however, the sequence is different. Jesus first chooses the twelve apostles, then comes down the mountain, and only after that does He begin to speak to His disciples and the crowds who were following Him. Therefore, the occasion and background are different, even though the content is very similar. Perhaps we can understand this passage as marking the beginning of Jesus' disciple training. In Matthew's Gospel, Matthew emphasizes that Jesus came to establish the kingdom of heaven, so he places the "constitution" of the kingdom right at the beginning, presenting it through Jesus' teaching to the disciples.

In Luke's account, the emphasis is more on how, after the twelve disciples had already been chosen, Jesus led them to serve among the crowds and to learn while ministering in the midst of the people. When we read the words spoken by Jesus, we must be clear about who His audience was, so that our application of His teaching can be more accurate.

Verse 20: “Then He lifted up His eyes toward His disciples, and said: ‘Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.’”

From verses 20 through 26, we can regard these words as what Jesus spoke specifically to the twelve disciples, even though other crowds were also present nearby. Beginning with verse 27—“But I say to you who hear:” and continuing to the end of the chapter, Jesus was speaking to the crowds as a whole, including His disciples. Then in chapter 7, verse 1—“Now when He concluded all His sayings in the hearing of the people, He entered Capernaum” this further confirms that within this section of teaching, verses 20 to 26 are directed primarily to the disciples, while verses 27 through the end are addressed to all the people. Within Jesus’ words to the disciples in verses 20 through 26, there are four contrasts presented.

Verse 20, 24: “Then He lifted up His eyes toward His disciples, and said: ‘Blessed are you poor, For yours is the kingdom of God. But woe to you who are rich, For you have received your consolation.’”

If we interpret this with the Beatitudes in Matthew as the background, Jesus here is speaking to His disciples and saying: you who are poor in spirit are blessed, for yours is the kingdom of God. What does it mean to be poor in spirit? It means that inwardly we are continually being emptied; in our spirit we constantly sense that we are lacking; inwardly we remain humble. In other words, Jesus is telling His disciples that in the process of learning to serve, when you consistently feel that you are insufficient, that you are poor, that you are not capable in yourself—if you can have such an awareness—you are blessed, because the kingdom of heaven belongs to you.

The kingdom of God is God-centered. Everything that we have, in itself, is completely inadequate for service in God’s kingdom. Only when we recognize our own insufficiency, and are willing to empty ourselves of everything, can we receive grace that comes from God. It is within that grace that we are able to serve. On the other hand, “But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation”. If in this present age you are rich—having everything, enjoying everything—you

have already received the comfort you are meant to receive. As a result, you will have no share in the kingdom of God.

Verse 21a, 25a: “Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be filled.” “Woe to you who are full, For you shall hunger.”

Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness shall be filled. Especially when we come before the word of God—when we come to read the Scriptures and to pray—if we always sense that we are lacking, if we always feel hungry, then God, in His grace, will surely cause us to be filled. Therefore, every time we come to read the Bible, we should first ask God to give us a good spiritual appetite, so that within us there is a hunger and thirst for righteousness. In this way, God’s word will be easily opened to us, and we will also be ready to receive God’s word as our supply, so that we may be filled.

On the contrary, when you feel that you already have enough, that everything is fine, and when you feel satisfied, then woe to you, because you will be hungry. As the Scripture says, “Woe to you who are full, for you shall hunger” May God grant each one of us a heart that continually hungers and thirsts for righteousness.

Verse 21b, 25b: “Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.” “Woe to you who laugh now, For you shall mourn and weep.”

Why is there mourning here? It should be mourning for our own spiritual condition, for the spiritual condition of the church, and for the spiritual condition of the whole nation. We mourn because we realize that we fall short of God’s standard. When you mourn over such a condition, you will fast for it, you will pray for it, and you will be willing to commit yourself to it in order to change that spiritual condition. In the end, you will be turned to joy and laughter. As the Scripture says, “Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh”.

On the other hand, if you are rich in this present age, and in all your worldly circumstances you feel satisfied, joyful, and full of laughter, then woe to you, because you will mourn and weep. As the Lord says, “Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep”. It seems that the Lord is telling His disciples not to be satisfied with their present condition, but to keep pressing forward. Those who are able to continue pressing forward in this way are the ones who are truly blessed.

Verse 22: “Blessed are you when men hate you, And when they exclude you, and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man’s sake.”

Jesus knew very clearly what His disciples would encounter when He sent them into the crowds. People would reject them, hate them, and insult them for the sake of the Son of Man, that is, for the sake of Jesus. If you receive such treatment, you are blessed.

Verse 23: “Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven, for in like manner their fathers did to the prophets.”

When we engage in heavenly work, we should not expect worldly people to support us or encourage us. You will encounter many obstacles and many difficulties. When you are in such situations, do not be discouraged at all; instead, you should rejoice and leap for joy. Why? Because your reward in heaven is great. For their fathers treated the prophets in the same way. You who are disciples in the New Testament are just like the prophets whom God sent in Old Testament times to warn the people of Israel. Just as the Israelites mistreated those prophets, you also will be misunderstood and mistreated by the people around you. When you fall into such circumstances, you should rejoice and leap for joy, because your reward in heaven is great.

Verse 26: “Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets.”

On the other hand, when everyone speaks well of you and everyone likes you, you must stop and seriously reflect and examine yourself: are the words you are speaking truly entrusted to you by God? Have you gradually become a false prophet?

False prophets always seek to please the crowd. A true disciple of God follows the will of God. What God wants him to proclaim, what God wants him to do—whether people like it or not, whether they are willing to accept it or not—he faithfully proclaims it according to God’s will. This is what it means to be a true disciple of the Lord; this is what it means to be a true prophet.

False prophets, on the contrary, look at what people like and then speak accordingly, catering to the crowd, accommodating the crowd, and satisfying the crowd’s desires. Yet throughout the whole process, it is not God’s will, not God’s provision, and not grace that comes from God. What Jesus said to His disciples is also something every child of God who serves Him today must firmly keep in mind.

Let us pray together: Lord, we thank You for Your word. Help us to remain poor in spirit, and help us to remain hungry and thirsty for righteousness. We are even willing to be in a place of mourning—for our own spiritual condition, for the spiritual condition of the church, and for the spiritual condition of the nation and society around us—and to come before You to pray for all people. Although we may encounter difficulties, our hearts are joyful, because what we seek is Your reward on that day. Bless my life today, that it may be worthy of the calling I have received. Thank You. We pray in the holy name of Jesus Christ. Amen!