

Living a Kingdom Lifestyle

Luke 6:20-21 (NRSVue)



When I say I'm blessed, life's going well. I feel fortunate. God smiles on me. I'm content.

And I don't worry much about you.

But then Jesus opens his mouth in Luke 6: Blessed are the *poor*. Blessed are the *hungry*. Blessed are those who *weep*.

That's not how I define blessing.

In Luke's version of the Beatitudes, our Lord doesn't describe a blessed life. He *redefines* it. He invites us into a kingdom where blessing looks like brokenness, longing, reversal, where we take in the poor, hungry, and weeping.

So today, let's listen again. Let Jesus teach you what it means to live in a kingdom lifestyle, with a blessed life.

Spiritual Wealth

The disciples had spiritual wealth. Jesus invested in them and taught them to act with moral integrity. They learned compassion and generosity. Spiritual maturity grew in their minds. Wisdom burgeoned in their hearts.

But did they serve the poor?

Jesus told them: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God" (Lk. 6:20). They needed compassion for those who were poor.

He insisted that the disciples were in spiritual poverty. But some were materially rich. Women disciples were wives or daughters of wealthy men and supplied shekels for the group's moneybag. Yet Jesus gave part of their gifts to the poor. And the Twelve had some material riches, yet they weren't wealthy by ancient standards. They owned boats and nets and houses, but they weren't well-to-do. Yet did they serve those who had even less?

If they had spiritual wealth, what about us? What's it like to have spiritual wealth today?

Are you in poverty? Most of us aren't rich, but we're not poor either. We have roofs above our heads, food for the table, and cars outside the garage. Clothes galore! We have enough to help others. But do we?

Do you seek wealth that comes from a healthy spiritual life? Then serve the poor, and you'll be blessed.

Spiritual Food

The disciples had spiritual food. They knew their souls must be fed *and* their bodies. From Jesus' hand, they received and tasted truth. They gobbled up grace. They munched on the mysteries of faith and holiness. Every day they opened themselves to scripture, prayer, worship. The calories the disciples ate were lean and tailored for health in their souls. They had spiritual food, but others had little to eat. Their hearts didn't hear the gospel because their stomachs hurt.

Jesus told them: "Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled" (Lk. 6:21a).

He insisted that the disciples needed to watch their souls' diet. He redefined blessing. They needed to consume intimacy with God. Prayer and musing on the teachings of the Old Testament, daily, were needed. So was intimacy with other humans, eating meals, laughter shared, sorrow, too. Like manna in the wilderness, God gave them every day the necessities of life and faith and hope. They must consume them, make them part of their identity—be nourished, be blessed. Yet they must also feed those who were actually hungry.

If they had spiritual food, what about us? What's it like to have spiritual food today?

Are you hungry now? Most of us aren't. Cupboards and counters display soup, vegetables, crackers, chips, cereal, bread, candy, more food than we can eat in a day. We abound with nourishment for our bodies. But do you seek food that produces spiritual life? How often do you pray

just to meet with God? Or are you interested in only occasional emergency calls? Is your heart hungry?

What of those whose tummies growl?

Spiritual Happiness

The disciples had spiritual happiness. But this wasn't a simple matter. It was hard-won; they struggled for the contentment Jesus offered. They delighted though their outward circumstances were difficult because they were anchored in Christ. Pain was in their lives, but so was his purpose. Christ gave them the drive to be kingdom people. With him they felt whole, complete; with him they were rooted. They flourished like well-watered plants—rooted in Christ, nourished by grace, resilient in any storm.

Jesus told them: “Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh” (Lk. 6:21*b*). Did they turn others' weeping into joy?

He insisted they must bear the world's sorrow, its lost hope, purpose, and belonging. He redefined blessing. Whatever drove people to languish or lament, they must sacrifice their safety to comfort the sorrowful. The grief of others must be lifted. The disciples' happiness must sprout from bearing sinful hatred thrown at them by people who had nowhere to turn. Can they convert the hatred into blessing by comforting the lonely?

If they had spiritual happiness, blessing, what about us? What's it like to have spiritual happiness today?

Are you sorrowful now? Has somebody's burden squeezed your heart until it hurts?

Do you bind up someone who's splintered by the axe of hatred? Do you carry another's overstuffed backpack for a mile or two?

Do you seek happiness that flows from spiritual life? Do you practice a life dedicated to the survival and thriving of others?

Then you've begun to understand the strange, beautiful
logic of the kingdom. Where sorrow births joy, hunger
leads to fullness, and poverty opens the gates of heaven.
Now you understand what being blessed means.

Amen

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