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| **Date: February 13, 2022** | **Title: Filled and Emptied** | | **Scripture(s): Luke 6:17-26** |
| **Essence of Text: Jesus tells his followers who is being blessed and who is not. Its not what you’d expect either** | | | |
| **Essence of Sermon: There are things the way they are now in the kingdom of this world and things the way that they will be in God’s kingdom. We have to choose which kingdom we put our hope in.** | | | |
| You should… | | | |
| **Know: The things that God values are radically different than the things we value** | | **Do: Put your hope in God’s Kingdom.** | |
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INTRODUCTION (10 min):

* Jab 1: Parents with favorites- Who grew up in a home that had a favorite? Who was the favorite kid? Parents, do you have favorites?
* Jab 2: This week text seems like God is picking favorites
  + This text comes from the lectionary. What is the Lectionary and why we use it?
* Jab 3: I wouldn’t pick this week- Too hard.
  + Its something Jesus taught his followers.

Right Hook:  **Luke 6:17-26**

EXPLANATION (10 min):

**Luke 6:17-26**  
6:17 He came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon.  
  
6:18 They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured.  
  
6:19 And all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them.  
  
6:20 Then he looked up at his disciples and said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.  
  
6:21 "Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. "Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.  
  
6:22 "Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man.  
  
6:23 Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.  
  
6:24 "But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.  
  
6:25 "Woe to you who are full now, for you will be hungry. "Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep.  
  
6:26 "Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets."

<Prayer>

* You can see why this becomes such a tough text to read
  + it seems like God might have favorites,
  + and it sounds like there is a possibility it might not be us…
    - Blessed are the poor. Woe to the rich –

· If you made $1500 last year, you’re in the top **20%** of the world’s income earners.\*\*

·If you earn $25,000 or more annually, you are in the top **10%** of the world’s income-earners.\*\*\*

·If you earn more than $50,000 annually, you are in the top**1%** of the world’s income earners.\*\*\*

* + - Blessed are those who are hungry now – Woe to those who are full now
      * Have you eaten recently? Do you have access to food if you wanted?
    - Blessed when people hate you because you live like Jesus tells you to –
      * + Woe to you if people say nice things about you

We do everything we can to make people like us

* + - * People might call us the enemy because of our political affiliations or our views on healthcare, or because they are simply mean people, or maybe we haven’t been kind to them.
        + A lot of people have issues with Christians today but it seems to me their issue is that Christians don’t live like Jesus teaches us to live.
      * But rejoice when you face hard times for doing what Jesus teaches us to do
    - Woe to those who are laughing today because you will weep and mourn tomorrow

* We have some options in dealing with difficult teachings.
  + We can do what our instinct tells us to do, which is… ignore it, or deal with it in a superficial way.
  + Find one little feel good nugget and focus on that.
  + Or we try to make it symbolic.
    - Jesus didn’t actually mean what he said.
    - We can quickly find a solution that makes us comfortable enough and then move on.
* OR we can wrestle with it for a few minutes and see what shakes out.

But before we jump into these scripture verses, let’s start with the bigger picture and the context. Ready?

* Jesus is Jewish
* The blessings and woes, or blessing and curses structure of Jesus teaching is a construct that was used for generations in Jewish communities.
  + It shows up in many bible texts.
    - Like the other scriptures we’ve read this morning.
      * Psalm 1, Happy, which is the same word for blessed, also can mean fortunate, are those who delight in the law of the Lord.
      * But not so for the wicked. It doesn’t say the word “woe” or “cursed” but it’s definitely implied.
      * Another idea behind the woes is that those people should be pitied.
* We see the same thing happening in the Jeremiah scripture we read this morning.
  + Cursed are those who trust in mortals.
  + Blessed are those who trust in the Lord.
* There are other Jewish writings, in the bible and outside where we can see examples of a combination of woes with blessings
* But what really sets Jesus' blessings and woes apart is that they are the opposite of what you’d expect.
  + You’d expect someone to say, “The rich are fortunate … but pity the poor.”
    - Instead, Jesus says just the opposite..
    - Jesus used a traditional Jewish teaching method with a plot twist to get people’s attention.
* So, the next step in understanding what Jesus is saying here is asking who is Jesus’ audience?
  + Who was Jesus speaking to?
* Luke identifies three distinct people groups in this story.
  + Jesus, obviously.
  + His disciples or followers,
  + and the multitude or large gathering from many cities and villages.
    - Luke says the crowd came to hear Jesus, to be healed by Jesus, and to be rid of unclean spirits.
      * Then Luke says Jesus looks at his followers when he begins to talk.
      * The blessings and the curses are not to the crowd, it’s not to non-believers.
      * It’s not to the people who came to see Jesus to get something from him;
      * **The blessings and curses are directed to his followers.**
* So now we know a bit about how Jesus was teaching.
  + We know who he was teaching.
  + And now it seems like he began teaching his disciples in response to something, doesn’t it?
    - Paint a picture in your mind of the scene.
    - A large crowd of people getting healed and having unclean spirits cast out.
    - People touching Jesus and he was healing many people.
* Do you think Jesus and his followers would be pretty popular with the crowd?
  + Do you anticipate the crowd celebrating this Jesus?
    - It doesn’t say how long this was going on, but I’m guessing healing a crowd didn’t happen in a few seconds.
    - There was probably this sustained energy and excitement.
    - There were people who were grateful and excited;
      * people who felt that they owed a great deal to Jesus.
      * **If there ever was an opportunity to leverage the work that God was doing into personal gain, now would be that time.**
* And its in that moment that Jesus starts telling his disciples that its poor that are blessed and happy and inherit the kingdom of God.
  + It’s the hungry who will be fed when God makes all things right.
  + It’s those who mourn because of the things in the kingdom of the world that are comforted in the kingdom of God.
  + Its those who are rejected because they follow the ways of Jesus who will be welcomed into the kingdom of God with rewards and celebration.
  + Those who are empty or lacking in the kingdom of the world will be filled in the kingdom of God.
* But its those who are filled up by the kingdom of the world who will be empty in the kingdom of God.
  + If your treasury is full of worldly things, its empty in God’s kingdom.
  + If you laugh because you are comfortable in this kingdom, you will mourn in the coming kingdom.
  + If everyone thinks your great and says you’re great in the kingdom of this world you’re no better than the false prophets who used religion to gain power and popularity.
* There’s a crowd gathered around.
  + There’s a lot of excitement and energy.
  + It would have been really easy for them to use this moment for their own gain.
  + To use the blessings that God had given them to build themselves up, to fill themselves up.
  + They could achieve status and recognition and popularity, and influence through this ministry that Jesus was doing.
    - But Jesus tells them, those who remain empty now will be filled in the coming kingdom.
    - Those who fill themselves up now, will be emptied in the coming kingdom.

APPLICATION (10 min)

* Ok, so what does that have to do with us?
  + What are we supposed to do with this teaching of from Jesus today?
* Are we supposed to take it literally?
  + “If you laugh today you are going to weep later.” No Laughing! Or you will be punished?
* If you aren’t hungry today, you will be made to be hungry later?
  + This gets really confusing if you try to simply apply the words to your life.
* But there is something really important that we need to grasp here this morning.
  + Its something that if we don’t understand it, I’m not sure we understand Jesus or Christianity.
  + At least we don’t understand a Christianity that follows the example and teaching of Jesus.
* When we are faithfully doing the things Jesus calls us to do, people will receive healing, redemption, new life
  + And when they do, they are going to want to tell you how great YOU ARE
    - And this is why church leaders who are seeking affirmation because they are insecure or applause because they are proud does such damage.
      * People see God at work and attribute it to the pastor or leader
        + And it feels good

As a minister you wrestle with insecurity

And when someone tells you are great or wants to put you on a pedestal, its tempting.

* As a Christian you experience that same temptation, but maybe in a more subtle way.
  + With this relationship with God comes benefits and blessings.
    - The bible talks many times about God’s people being blessed, receiving grace, receiving forgiveness, being healed, being loved with the love of God, being empowered by the Holy Spirit.
    - So, it’s not wrong to understand that being a Christian means being a recipient of blessings.
* Jesus sees his disciples getting a little too comfortable with the crowd.
  + A little too comfortable with the celebrity.
    - It would be tempting to turn this calling and blessing into a project enriching yourself.
      * **Are you the hero of your story?** 
        + ?Or does your story point to Jesus
* what are you going to do with those blessings and gifts from God?
  + What are you going to do when people want to make you the hero?
  + What are you going to do when you are serving in a ministry and you get a position or title in the church?
    - Would you use that as an opportunity to serve others and celebrate Jesus?
      * Would you embrace the mission of helping people Love God?
        + Or will you fall into the temptation of a different mission of helping people love you?
* Are you going to see being one of God’s people as a way to fill yourself up? To bless yourself?
  + Or are you going to see it as a way for God to fill up those around you? Bless others?
    - Are you going to invite God to pour all God’s goodness into your life and try to keep it for yourself?
      * Or are you going to see yourself as one who gives as freely as you receive.
      * Is being freed from our sin and brokenness about only us ourselves?
      * Or does God call us to use that healing and freedom which we’ve been given for the sake of others?
* Jesus makes it clear in this teaching that you cannot be focused on filling yourself up.
  + Your mission cannot be to make yourself great.
  + You goal in life cannot be satisfying all your own needs and making yourself comfortable.
  + There is no way to hoard blessings in the kingdom.
    - A focus on oneself corrupts these great and gracious gifts from God.
* God affirms of our worth and value. But what happens if we try to see that as a blessing that is only for me?
  + If I don’t look at those around me and share that good news of God’s affirmation with others, then my sense of worth can become pride.
  + There is a huge difference between, “I have value” and “only I have value” or “I have the most value”.
* God gives us talents and gifts.
  + If we use them to fill ourselves up and chase after comforts and popularity in this world, if we try to make those gifts about ourselves, we corrupt them and they become selfishness and greed, and we make an idol of ourselves.
* God might create opportunities in your life to develop relationships with people in need.
  + You could take that moment to let them think that you are the hero with all the answers, or you could point them to Jesus.
    - Jesus was telling his disciples when a crowd gathered not to focus on filling themselves.
    - We need to hear those words from Jesus today.
* He is inviting us to a kingdom where the values are completely different.
  + You cannot hoard or stockpile blessings. It ruins them.
  + You have to give them away.
    - Yes God fills you up, but not for the purpose of you to stay filled.
    - God blesses us so that we may in turn bless others.
* Blessed are the poor because they are not hoarding what that they have received.
* Blessed are those who weep because their hearts break with compassion and concern for those around them.
* Blessed are those who are not popular, even hated, because they point others to God instead of themselves, they give credit to God, they celebrate God as the source of their blessings.
  + It’s the false prophets who lie about who God is to get people’s praise.
* And pity those who look at the world filled with pain and hurt and brokenness, and then laugh and remain comfortable.
  + Pity those who see others in need and choose to remain filled with the gifts that God gave them rather than choosing to give them away.
  + Woe to those whose mission is to elevate themselves, or to make themselves more comfortable.
* Because if you stockpile treasures in the kingdom of the world, you’ll be empty in the kingdom of God.
  + But if you give away your treasures of the wordily kingdom,
    - if you store up your treasures in heaven,
    - if you understand that those who try to save their life will lose it, but those who give their life away for the sake of others, will save their life,
    - if you remember that the first will be last and the last will be first,
    - if you remember that the greatest in God’s kingdom are the one’s who embrace a position as servant,
    - if you remember that we shouldn’t be worrying about what we need for tomorrow because God will provide the entire kingdom,
    - if you hear and believe all these things that Jesus himself said, you realize that God’s chosen people, are Chosen to give the world the blessings of God.
* It really boils down to a simple question: Which kingdom is more important to you?
  + Which kingdom do you put your trust in?
  + Which kingdom do you want to have your treasures in?
    - If you want to be full and happy and carefree in this kingdom, you can be, but just know, that in God’s kingdom you’ll be hungry and weeping.
* But if you see God’s kingdom, the upside down kingdom where value isn’t determined by checking accounts, popularity, status, or power, as the kingdom that you want to be great in, then give away the treasures of this kingdom.
  + Receive the blessings and the healing and the freedom and the gifts from God; and then give them away.
* It is truly a blessing to be a follower of Jesus, to have heard the invitation to follow and to say, “yes!”
  + So lets do everything we can to help others receive that blessing
    - We don’t want to help people to think we are great, but rather to understand that God is great
* Our mission is to invite and equip people to Love God, to follow God
  + <LG; LO; STW Logo slide>

My hope for First Church is that when people see us they see Jesus. We’re not the hero, but Jesus is the hero. Our kingdoms aren’t growing, but The Kingdom of God is growing. Will you join me in embracing that mission for our church?

Prayer

Patient God, you promise that your kingdom belongs to the poor: bless your church through the faithful company of those who know poverty. As you bestow laughter upon those who weep, comfort your sons and daughters who cry and show them unfailing joy. As you extend your goodness to all who are excluded on account of your Son, give courage to those who are persecuted. And as you promise to uphold all who hunger, fill your children, body and soul, with the food that truly satisfies. Bring us to the great day of heavenly reward, that dawn of unending blessedness which we shall share with all your saints, rejoicing in your glory, the ever-faithful God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. AMEN

<Worship

<benediction>

May the riches of God’s blessing  
never become a thing of pride  
but an overflowing well of giving  
daily shared both far and wide

We go in the love and peace of Christ