

Notes

Please note that this document contains 3 different versions of the "Exploring the Word" worksheet. Each version contains the same Gospel texts, Reflection and questions, but with a different configuration of "alternative views". The suggested activities are applicable to a variety of age ranges. Some activities may not be suitable in all circumstances.

Activities

- Create a collage of contemporary words and images that reflects the contrasts and contradictions of Luke's beatitudes sermon.
- Select one of the groups of people identified (poor; hungry; those in mourning; those rejected and denounced) and identify an action you could undertake to make a difference to their situation.
- Investigate an agency or group in your local area that works with the poor and marginalised of the community. Identify ways in which you could support and promote their work.

Gospel Journal



Why does Jesus' sermon balance the blessings for the poor with the curses on the rich?

What comfort can the poor and rejected take from this sermon?

In what ways might this sermon be misinterpreted to avoid addressing the needs of the poor?

What implications does this gospel have for people with riches and success today?



Reflection

We are perhaps more familiar with the Beatitudes from the Gospel of Matthew in which the kingdom of heaven is promised to those who are 'blessed' because of their afflictions. Rather than the Sermon on the Mount from the Gospel of Matthew, the Gospel of Luke presents the same event and teaching as the sermon on the plain as it occurs on 'a piece of level ground'. This version may appear a little more confronting than the Matthew version. Rather than the afflicted being 'blessed', they are to be 'happy'. It seems odd that anybody should be happy to be poor, hungry, mourning or reviled and we would certainly regard these as states of sadness and difficulty; not times for rejoicing at our good fortune! However, this gospel in particular frequently reminds us that God does not think, feel and behave as we might expect. God's actions are frequently contrary to the expectations of society. The Gospel of Luke makes it plain that the reign of God will upend the structures of society. The lowly will be raised and the mighty will be brought low. It is in this context that the poor, the hungry and the outcast are regarded as happy. Their happiness comes from the reassurance that although they are rejected and dismissed by society, they are indeed the most favoured of God. Whatever the world dishes up to such as these, they can rejoice in the knowledge that in the reign of God their fortunes will be reversed and they will be favoured. However, just as the fortunes of the poor and afflicted will be reversed for the better, those who are rich, well fed, happy and well regarded will also have their fortunes reversed. Alas to them! Their comfort and joy leaves no room for the generosity of God!

Scriptural Context

Message for all

Throughout the Gospel of Luke, the author is keen to demonstrate that the message of Jesus is for all people – not just the Jews, but for the Gentiles and Pagans as well. We can see this message revealed in the gathering of people who listened to Jesus' sermon on the plain. We're told there were people from all parts of Judea (all Jews) as well as people from the pagan lands of Tyre and Sidon. The first audiences of this gospel would immediately have recognised the significance of people from Tyre and Sidon standing alongside Jews from Judea.

Have you Thought?

Gospel of prosperity

The sermon on the plain challenges our ideas about happiness and success – particularly those of us who live in a relatively prosperous society. Those who are rich and well regarded are actually condemned by Jesus. This also flies in the face of the so-called Gospel of Prosperity that has gained some prominence amongst Pentecostal churches in the last 20-30 years. This teaching holds that God blesses the faithful with wealth and influence. It doesn't take a lot to see how this teaching is out of step with the gospel blessing of the poor and cursing of the rich.

Gospel Lk 6:17, 20-26

Jesus came down with the Twelve and stopped at a piece of level ground where there was a large gathering of his disciples with a great crowd of people from all parts of Judaea and from Jerusalem and from the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon who had come to hear him and to be cured of their diseases.

Then fixing his eyes on his disciples he said:

'How happy are you who are poor:
yours is the kingdom of God.
Happy you who are hungry now: you
shall be satisfied.
Happy you who weep now: you shall
laugh.

'Happy are you when people hate you,
drive you out, abuse you, denounce
your name as criminal, on account of
the Son of Man. Rejoice when that day
comes and dance for joy, for then your
reward will be great in heaven. This
was the way their ancestors treated
the prophets.

'But alas for you who are rich: you
are having your consolation now.
Alas for you who have your fill now:
you shall go hungry.
Alas for you who laugh now: you
shall mourn and weep.

'Alas for you when the world speaks
well of you! This was the way their
ancestors treated the false prophets.'

- Q. *Why does Jesus' sermon balance the blessings for the poor with the curses on the rich?*
- Q. *What comfort can the poor and rejected take from this sermon?*
- Q. *In what ways might this sermon be misinterpreted to avoid addressing the needs of the poor?*
- Q. *What implications does this gospel have for people with riches and success today?*



Reflection

We are perhaps more familiar with the Beatitudes from the Gospel of Matthew in which the kingdom of heaven is promised to those who are 'blessed' because of their afflictions. Rather than the Sermon on the Mount from the Gospel of Matthew, the Gospel of Luke presents the same event and teaching as the sermon on the plain as it occurs on 'a piece of level ground'. This version may appear a little more confronting than the Matthew version. Rather than the afflicted being 'blessed', they are to be 'happy'. It seems odd that anybody should be happy to be poor, hungry, mourning or reviled and we would certainly regard these as states of sadness and difficulty; not times for rejoicing at our good fortune! However, this gospel in particular frequently reminds us that God does not think, feel and behave as we might expect. God's actions are frequently contrary to the expectations of society. The Gospel of Luke makes it plain that the reign of God will upend the structures of society. The lowly will be raised and the mighty will be brought low. It is in this context that the poor, the hungry and the outcast are regarded as happy. Their happiness comes from the reassurance that although they are rejected and dismissed by society, they are indeed the most favoured of God. Whatever the world dishes up to such as these, they can rejoice in the knowledge that in the reign of God their fortunes will be reversed and they will be favoured. However, just as the fortunes of the poor and afflicted will be reversed for the better, those who are rich, well fed, happy and well regarded will also have their fortunes reversed. Alas to them! Their comfort and joy leaves no room for the generosity of God!

Scriptural Context

Message for all

Throughout the Gospel of Luke, the author is keen to demonstrate that the message of Jesus is for all people – not just the Jews, but for the Gentiles and Pagans as well. We can see this message revealed in the gathering of people who listened to Jesus' sermon on the plain. We're told there were people from all parts of Judea (all Jews) as well as people from the pagan lands of Tyre and Sidon. The first audiences of this gospel would immediately have recognised the significance of people from Tyre and Sidon standing alongside Jews from Judea.

Living the Gospel

Treated as the prophets

As part of his sermon, Jesus announces, 'Happy are you when people hate you, drive you out, abuse you, denounce your name as criminal, on account of the Son of Man... This was the way their ancestors treated the prophets.' The prophets of the Old Testament were the chosen spokesmen of God. Their message was often unpopular and they were often threatened and berated for challenging the social order. To be treated in this way is in fact something of an affirmation that one's words and actions are reflecting the message of God. The Word of God is confronting and challenging!

Gospel Lk 6:17, 20-26

Jesus came down with the Twelve and stopped at a piece of level ground where there was a large gathering of his disciples with a great crowd of people from all parts of Judaea and from Jerusalem and from the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon who had come to hear him and to be cured of their diseases.

Then fixing his eyes on his disciples he said:

'How happy are you who are poor:
yours is the kingdom of God.
Happy you who are hungry now: you
shall be satisfied.
Happy you who weep now: you shall
laugh.

'Happy are you when people hate you,
drive you out, abuse you, denounce
your name as criminal, on account of
the Son of Man. Rejoice when that day
comes and dance for joy, for then your
reward will be great in heaven. This
was the way their ancestors treated
the prophets.

'But alas for you who are rich: you
are having your consolation now.
Alas for you who have your fill now:
you shall go hungry.
Alas for you who laugh now: you
shall mourn and weep.

'Alas for you when the world speaks
well of you! This was the way their
ancestors treated the false prophets.'

- Q. *Why does Jesus' sermon balance the blessings for the poor with the curses on the rich?*
- Q. *What comfort can the poor and rejected take from this sermon?*
- Q. *In what ways might this sermon be misinterpreted to avoid addressing the needs of the poor?*
- Q. *What implications does this gospel have for people with riches and success today?*



Reflection

We are perhaps more familiar with the Beatitudes from the Gospel of Matthew in which the kingdom of heaven is promised to those who are 'blessed' because of their afflictions. Rather than the Sermon on the Mount from the Gospel of Matthew, the Gospel of Luke presents the same event and teaching as the sermon on the plain as it occurs on 'a piece of level ground'. This version may appear a little more confronting than the Matthew version. Rather than the afflicted being 'blessed', they are to be 'happy'. It seems odd that anybody should be happy to be poor, hungry, mourning or reviled and we would certainly regard these as states of sadness and difficulty; not times for rejoicing at our good fortune! However, this gospel in particular frequently reminds us that God does not think, feel and behave as we might expect. God's actions are frequently contrary to the expectations of society. The Gospel of Luke makes it plain that the reign of God will upend the structures of society. The lowly will be raised and the mighty will be brought low. It is in this context that the poor, the hungry and the outcast are regarded as happy. Their happiness comes from the reassurance that although they are rejected and dismissed by society, they are indeed the most favoured of God. Whatever the world dishes up to such as these, they can rejoice in the knowledge that in the reign of God their fortunes will be reversed and they will be favoured. However, just as the fortunes of the poor and afflicted will be reversed for the better, those who are rich, well fed, happy and well regarded will also have their fortunes reversed. Alas to them! Their comfort and joy leaves no room for the generosity of God!

Living the Gospel

Treated as the prophets

As part of his sermon, Jesus announces, 'Happy are you when people hate you, drive you out, abuse you, denounce your name as criminal, on account of the Son of Man... This was the way their ancestors treated the prophets.' The prophets of the Old Testament were the chosen spokesmen of God. Their message was often unpopular and they were often threatened and berated for challenging the social order. To be treated in this way is in fact something of an affirmation that one's words and actions are reflecting the message of God. The Word of God is confronting and challenging!

Have you Thought?

Gospel of prosperity

The sermon on the plain challenges our ideas about happiness and success – particularly those of us who live in a relatively prosperous society. Those who are rich and well regarded are actually condemned by Jesus. This also flies in the face of the so-called Gospel of Prosperity that has gained some prominence amongst Pentecostal churches in the last 20-30 years. This teaching holds that God blesses the faithful with wealth and influence. It doesn't take a lot to see how this teaching is out of step with the gospel blessing of the poor and cursing of the rich.

Gospel Lk 6:17, 20-26

Jesus came down with the Twelve and stopped at a piece of level ground where there was a large gathering of his disciples with a great crowd of people from all parts of Judaea and from Jerusalem and from the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon who had come to hear him and to be cured of their diseases.

Then fixing his eyes on his disciples he said:

'How happy are you who are poor:
yours is the kingdom of God.
Happy you who are hungry now: you
shall be satisfied.
Happy you who weep now: you shall
laugh.

'Happy are you when people hate you,
drive you out, abuse you, denounce
your name as criminal, on account of
the Son of Man. Rejoice when that day
comes and dance for joy, for then your
reward will be great in heaven. This
was the way their ancestors treated
the prophets.

'But alas for you who are rich: you
are having your consolation now.
Alas for you who have your fill now:
you shall go hungry.
Alas for you who laugh now: you
shall mourn and weep.

'Alas for you when the world speaks
well of you! This was the way their
ancestors treated the false prophets.'

- Q. *Why does Jesus' sermon balance the blessings for the poor with the curses on the rich?*
- Q. *What comfort can the poor and rejected take from this sermon?*
- Q. *In what ways might this sermon be misinterpreted to avoid addressing the needs of the poor?*
- Q. *What implications does this gospel have for people with riches and success today?*