

***"THE GOOD LIFE"***  
**LUKE 6:17-23**

What makes a good life? What is a happy and satisfied life? Is it even possible in this broken world — a world where there are broken relationships, broken cars, broken bodies, and broken economies — to have a good life? People have been asking that kind of question for millennia. Certainly that question is part of the questioning between Job and his friends. And the ancient **Greek philosophers** also debated it:



- ✓ Epicurus suggested that the good life is the experience of pleasure — hedonism — though he qualified that the greatest pleasures were things like friendship and study and that pleasure had to be virtuous to be genuinely good and happy.
- ✓ Aristotle said the good life is a happy life. But he disagreed that a happy life was merely pleasurable subjective and individual experiences. Happiness is determined by certain objective realities, things like: moral virtue, health, prosperity, friendships, respect, luck (avoiding bad luck), and engagement (using their abilities for the betterment of others).

It's not too hard to figure out what you need to do to get what men like Epicurus and Aristotle suggest is the good life — but what about Jesus? Does He offer a good life? How do you receive it? That is the focus of Jesus' first extended recorded sermon and teaching, the Sermon on the Mount.

Having revealed the authority of Christ in chs. 4-6 (primarily through His acts and works), Luke now reveals the authority of Christ in His preaching and teaching. Specifically, Luke is revealing the gospel message that Christ proclaimed — what kind of people get to enjoy life with Christ and the Father? Who gets to enjoy the good life that only Christ offers? This well-known sermon by Christ is not an ethical sermon; it is a gospel message. And we can summarize the teaching of the opening section this way:

***TO RECEIVE THE BLESSING OF CHRIST'S GOOD LIFE, BE HUMBLY DEPENDENT ON HIM.***

And in these opening verses (vv. 17-23, beatitudes), Luke reveals **five attributes of the people who receive Christ's "Good Life."**

1. Christ's "Good Life" is For **ALL** People (vv. 17-19)
2. Christ's "Good Life" is For Spiritually **IMPOVERISHED** People (v. 20)
3. Christ's "Good Life" is For Spiritually **HUNGRY** People (v. 21a)
4. Christ's "Good Life" is For Spiritually **GRIEVING** People (v. 21b)
5. Christ's "Good Life" is For Spiritually **PERSECUTED** People (vv. 22-23)

## 1. Christ's "Good Life" is For ALL People (vv. 17-19)

- Having chosen the Twelve on the mountain, Jesus **came down with them** and joined with the larger crowd of His disciples (followers) — they were coming from all over Israel (**Judea** in south to **Tyre** and **Sidon** on the NW coast). They also represented the religious elite (Jerusalem) and perhaps Gentiles.
  - ✓ They (**crowd**) came **to hear Him and be healed** (both of physical diseases and demon possession).
    - Twice Luke emphasizes the size of the crowd (v. 17) — **large crowd** and **great throng**.
    - The phrases indicate a broad and general interest in Jesus.
    - But when crowds gather around Jesus it is often with ulterior motives and not with repentance and faith (e.g., 3:7; 4:42; 5:15; 7:8-9; 11:27-29...).
  - ✓ It seems that some in these crowds were more interested in temporal blessings than the **Son of Man**.
- What is important from these verses is to see what Jesus is doing:
  - ✓ He is teaching (v. 18).
  - ✓ He is healing (v. 19) — demonstrating His authority as the Son of Man (again).
  - ✓ The combination of His *words* and His *works* authenticate who He is: the Son of Man.
  - ✓ He teaches with authority; He heals with authority. He is worthy of being followed.
  - ✓ And the various groups He teaches and heals means *He is accessible to all* — the Twelve, the disciples (v. 17), and the crowds. His life and teaching is for all.
  - ✓ He is compelling and authoritative over all.

## 2. Christ's "Good Life" is For Spiritually IMPOVERISHED People (v. 20)

- **A short overview** of the passage will be helpful to interpreting it —
  - ✓ The sermon almost certainly is the **same sermon as Matthew 5-7**.
    - Matthew is longer (107 vv., while Luke is 30 vv.) — and Luke is more succinct.
    - Both sermons are in the same physical context —
      - ... It sounds like they were preached in different places: Matthew said Jesus was 'on a mountainside' (Mt. 5:1) and Luke said Jesus was **on a level place** (Lk. 6:17).
      - ... Here's the chronology: Jesus went up in 'the hills' (**the mountain**) near Capernaum to pray all night (v. 12) and then He called 12 disciples to be His apostles (v. 13; prob. also Mt. 5:1).
      - ... He then went down on a **level place** to talk and to **heal diseases** (vv. 17-19). The level place was likely a plateau that might still be considered "on the mountain," above sea level.
    - Though there are differences, both sermons are addressed to disciples, both begin with beatitudes, both conclude with the same parables, and both have the same general content.

- ✓ **The sermon was primarily for *His disciples*.** In fact, here is a three-fold audience: the apostles (the Twelve, v. 17), the disciples (including the Twelve, but broader, vv. 13, 17, 20), and the crowd.
  - The **crowd** was probably largely unbelievers — curious, but uncommitted.
  - Most of the sermon is explicitly for the disciples, but parts will be for the crowds (vv. 24-26).
- ✓ **The sermon is about spiritual life** — specifically about the gospel/salvation, and the kind of life that the gospel produces. The sermon is not about ethics (“How to be better”), but an expansion of the message of repentance and faith necessary for salvation.
  - John the Baptist (3:3ff) and Jesus (4:18) both began their ministries preaching the gospel. This message is a more complete recitation of that gospel message.
  - The sermon focuses on the spiritual condition of the hearers (e.g., living for the Son of Man, v. 22; comparison to the life of the prophets, v. 23; praying for and loving enemies because it reflects sonship to God, vv. 27-28, 35; examining the condition of one’s heart, vv. 41, 45...)
  - As you read the sermon (especially the Beatitudes), recognize that Jesus is not talking about some form of a self-improvement plan; He is revealing the condition of the person who has genuine faith in Him.
- **The sermon begins** with an introduction containing four  **blessings**  and four **woes** (vv. 24-26); Matthew has eight blessings and no “woes” (one of the differences).
  - ✓ The word **blessed** as you know refers to happiness, contentment, or favor (grace).
    - These are people who are spiritually prosperous and have joy in life, “enviably happy.”
    - The NT word builds on the OT idea — the person who trusts in and hopes for God will be happy (Ps. 1:1; 2:12c; 34:8; 40:4...)
    - The word anticipates the provision of God’s grace — and these vv. are an invitation to that grace.
    - This word is a statement of fact, not a wish or desire; it will be clear in these verses that Jesus means that everyone is in one of two positions — either blessed or under a woe.
  - ✓ The first blessing is for **you who are poor**.
    - To be “poor” is to be economically disadvantaged — more month than money. It is even more than that — it is utter destitution; abject poverty. It is complete inability to provide for oneself.
    - Jesus does not mean that it is good to be poor, or that every poor person will enter His kingdom.
    - But He does mean it is good to be spiritually poor.
    - We know that He is referring to spiritual poverty because this is the same word He used in His first sermon in which He preached the gospel (4:18). That’s spiritual poverty.
    - This spiritual poverty will be exemplified later by the story of the repentant tax collector (18:13).
    - The first step towards belief in the gospel is to acknowledge you can’t save yourself. You and I are wholly incapable of doing anything to please God (we can’t be perfect; Mt. 5:48).
    - This message was essential for the Israelites who saw themselves as self-righteous and favored.
    - This message is still essential for a world that believes it is self-sufficient and independent.

- When one humbles himself before God and says, “I can’t save myself” then, Jesus says, ***yours is the kingdom of God.***
  - ✓ The ***kingdom of God*** is a term used almost exclusively in the first three gospels.
    - The term is used frequently in Luke and often refers to the future Millennial Kingdom (e.g., 10:9, 11 — if you believe, the Kingdom will be inaugurated; 16:16; 17:20-21; 19:11). Cf. Dan. 7:13-14.
    - The MK anticipates future life with God in His presence (22:16, 18). We will be *with* Him.
    - In that sense, Jesus also says, “yours is...” It is a present possession. Obviously the fulness of Christ’s kingdom as well as the eternal state are still future. But there is also a sense in which we have it now (i.e., we *are* now redeemed and being redeemed, though not fully). Cf. Eph. 1:3.
  - ✓ Luke emphasizes the second person pronoun — this is for *you*, the one who is humble.
  - ✓ Christ will one day rule from the Davidic throne but He is already ascended in Heaven at the right hand of the Father, authoritatively ruling over His creation. And for the believer, He is ruling in our hearts even now (changing and transforming us, producing His fruit, vv. 44-45).
  - ✓ If you want the presence of God — either in the future or now you have to be humble, recognizing your sinfulness and brokenness. You have nothing to commend you. But Christ is still available to save.

### 3. Christ’s “Good Life” is For Spiritually **HUNGRY** People (v. 21a)

- The good life is for ***hungry*** people.
  - ✓ As with “poor” Jesus isn’t talking about physically hungry people. Physical hunger is never fully satisfied — it only lasts a few hours at best. He’s talking about something else.
  - ✓ But just like physical poverty and physical hunger go together (if I don’t have money I can’t eat), so spiritual poverty and spiritual hunger go together.
  - ✓ Spiritual poverty says I am spiritually destitute. And when I am spiritually destitute, what do I want? I want the fellowship with God and righteousness of God I don’t have.
  - ✓ “It is an intense, deep, all-consuming longing for acceptance with God.” [MacArthur] Cf. Ps. 63:1.
  - ✓ Have you ever been hungry or thirsty? (T & Jeremy’s hiking trip) That’s what this is spiritually.
- Notice that Jesus also says, “hunger ***now***” (2x). Why does He emphasize that?
  - ✓ He is making a contrast — this may be your condition now, but it doesn’t need to be your permanent condition. “What is now will not last forever.” Change is possible. God can and will give you something better.
  - ✓ What is your “now” that you long to have changed? What is the struggle and difficulty in the spiritual life that has controlled you? Anger? Tongue? Despondency? Fear? Coveting? Greed?
  - ✓ What are you wanting to be able to do? Be kind? Speak graciously? Be hopeful? Rest?...
  - ✓ Christ’s gospel gives you something in the future — and now — for your longings.

- What does He give? ***You will be satisfied.***
  - ✓ The word “satisfied” has the sense of being satiated — well-fed (like cattle).
  - ✓ It also means that someone else fills you (you don’t fill yourself); God fills the hungry.
  - ✓ Jesus may well be thinking about the future Messianic banquet (Is. 25:6-9; 49:10-13; Lk. 13:29).
  - ✓ Can you think of some reversal like this? How about the rich man and Lazarus (16:19ff). On earth, Lazarus craved the smallest morsels of food; in Heaven, he is contentedly full.
  - ✓ Christ is not inadequate for our desires. We just too quickly fill ourselves on spiritual cotton candy and have no appetite for Him and His Word.

#### 4. Christ’s “Good Life” is For Spiritually GRIEVING People (v. 21b)

- You know what it is like to weep. You have stood at open caskets and at the side of an open grave. Even if it is “only” an animal, you know the bitterness of death. There is no retrieving what is gone.
  - ✓ That’s what Jesus refers to with His beatitude about ***weeping*** — it is deep grief for what is lost.
  - ✓ But he’s not talking about grief and weeping that we normally think about.
  - ✓ He’s talking about spiritual grief — I know I am destitute and empty; I long for fellowship with Him and His righteousness and I don’t have it (yet), so I lament and grieve over my sin.
  - ✓ “Who will set me free from the body of this death?” (Rom. 7:24).
  - ✓ The right response to our sin is not to delight in self-pity; it is to be broken-hearted in lament. “I was and am wrong...I repent...” Cf. Is. 4:9-10; 2 Cor. 7:10.
- When we grieve righteously over our sin, God will give ***laughter*** (i.e., joy — laughter is the outward manifestation of inward joy).
  - ✓ Perhaps the best illustration of that in Luke is the parable of the waiting Father (15:11-32, v. 24).
  - ✓ Grief over sin isn’t the end of the story for the believer. *God will restore joy* (as we are transformed).
  - ✓ The second and third beatitude seem to be fulfillments of Mary’s song (1:50-55).
  - ✓ When you and I lament for our sin, Christ will comfort us.
- In all of these Beatitudes, there is stunning reversal because of the Son of Man:
  - ✓ Those who are poor experience the riches of Christ and His Kingdom
  - ✓ Those who are hungry are fed to satisfaction from the fellowship with Christ
  - ✓ Those who are grieving are comforted by the joy of Christ.
  - ✓ Sin and Satan desire to destroy us. God loves to give stunning and dramatic reversals.
  - ✓ Every story of salvation is a story of reversal. It is a gift of His complete transformation of us.
  - ✓ You may be despondent and discouraged today because of some sin, some broken relationship, some habit that is controlling. That is your life ***now***; but Christ will change that when you trust Him. (It doesn’t mean that it will be easy or instantaneous; but it does mean you will have everything you need to change and that in His Kingdom and eternity it will be finally and wholly changed.)

## 5. Christ's "Good Life" is For Spiritually PERSECUTED People (vv. 22-23)

- Have you ever run into a friend you haven't seen in years? As you exchange stories he tells you all the things that have happened: promotions, prosperous family (children at TAMU), vacation house, good relationship with parents, better weight than in HS,... "You're really doing well...you're blessed..."
- Jesus turns that concept on its head. Real blessing is when men ***hate...ostracize...insult...scorn as evil***.
  - ✓ That's not a typical happy list. That's a hard list. It's a list that starts with a heart attitude (***hatred***) and moves to increasingly hard actions against one because of that hatred.
  - ✓ To be ***ostracized*** is to be excluded or excommunicated. Jesus is referring to loss of relationship and income from being banned from family and synagogue — "don't do business with him..."
  - ✓ To be ***insulted*** is not like our typical insults — it is to experience anger, be maligned, and even injured.
  - ✓ To have ***your name scorned as evil*** means there is an assertion that one is completely evil. It's not just "you did something wrong," but "You *are* evil..." It is a personal attack of complete rejection.
  - ✓ But notice the qualifier — it isn't about you — it is ***for the sake of the Son of Man***.
    - When one identifies with ***the Son of Man*** persecution and suffering will come. The Lord is reminding the hearers that the suffering endured for His name is not pointless (v. 23).
    - There is blessing attached to such suffering. In such instances the hatred is not ultimately for the individual but a rejection of the authority of the Son of Man.
    - What is the blessing? "They see in me the life of Christ! They see a transformed life! And they hate me because they hate Christ (which means that I am living out His fruit)!" That's blessing.
    - (Read biographies to encourage you in this kind of joy; read **Heb. 11:35-40**.)
- How does one respond when experiencing this blessing of persecution?
  - ✓ In the other beatitudes, Jesus says that something good will happen to the humble person.
  - ✓ In this beatitude, He says the humble person needs to do something — ***be glad*** (an inv.).
    - He is compelling His followers to be joyful.
    - That is a reminder that joy is not just a byproduct of a "happy" life; it is the result of a decision to cultivate and be joyful. It is intentionally making yourself happy in Jesus.
    - This is not "I'm just a happy person..." but "I am choosing to be happy in hard circumstances."
    - This joy in persecution is a common theme for Luke (cf. **Acts 5:41**; 16:25; 21:13).
  - ✓ WHY? Why be joyful? Two reasons —
    - ***Your reward in Heaven is great*** —
      - ... What we lose on earth will be infinitely surpassed by what we gain in Heaven.
      - ... What we lose on earth is not the end of our story. He *will* reward faithfulness (**12:42-44**; **19:17**).
      - ... It is a reminder that we need to be motivated by right desires (and reward is a good motive).
      - ... Are you keeping an "otherworldly" perspective?

➤ ***For in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets —***

... The ancient Israelites also rejected (and killed) the prophets (11:47-51; 1 Thess. 2:14-16).

... “If you are rejected as a follower of Me, you are in good company.”

... Suffering for Jesus is not unusual; it is typical.

... Like the first part of the verse, this is an encouragement because it affirms their faith. And in that way it is a blessing, and because that one is blessed, he should rejoice.

- Even when we are suffering and persecuted for our faith, there is blessing to be experienced.

**CONCLUSION:** Where will you go for the good life?

- ✓ Do you want to follow the modern version of the Epicurean lifestyle? Indulging various passions?
- ✓ Do you want to follow Aristotle and look for the happy life — health, prosperity, friends, and luck?
- ✓ May I commend to you Christ?
  - He will make demands of you. You will need to submit to Him (He is the Son of Man).
  - You will need to have to spiritual poverty. And longings for righteousness. And grief for sin.
  - But He will give you His riches. And satisfaction in Him. And joy. And contentment.
  - Oh friend, He is King, but He is good. You will never find anyone better for you than Him.
  - Repent of your sin. Have faith in only Him that He will save you. And He will be enough for you.

**BENEDICTION** (Rob — Pastors @ back): Jude 24-25