

The Sixth Sunday After Epiphany
February 11, 2007

Luke 6: 17-26

Jesus Reveals His Divine Authority

Introduction: Imagine standing in a slow-moving line. It's moving, but it's going very slowly. After a while, your legs begin to ache, and the thought crosses your mind that it's not worth it, and you should just go. But carried back on the wind is a sound from the front of the line. As you get nearer and nearer, you hear exclamations from people, "I can see! I can walk! My sickness is gone! I'm free from the demon that troubled me!" With each joyous outburst, your heart starts to beat a little faster, and as you approach the one who is standing there, you almost don't know what to expect.

He calls you by name. He knows your troubles, and he gives you just what you truly needed. Who is this who knows you so completely that even your wants and desires are known to him? He is your Lord, who takes care of all your needs, from the least of your physical needs to your greatest need, your eternal salvation. He knows your needs, and he fills them. Today, Jesus reveals his Divine Authority by his Power to Heal, and with his Holy Word.

I. By His Power to Heal (vs. 17-19)

In our lesson for today, we see Jesus at about the halfway point in his ministry. He has called his disciples, and has been traveling around for a little over a year. His reputation has spread all over the countryside, so that everywhere he goes, he is followed by large crowds. This period is known as the Year of Popularity.

They came to hear his preaching and to be healed of their sicknesses and diseases. Luke tells us that people came from all over, from Judea and Jerusalem, from regions that were even farther away than that. These people came to see Jesus. He had demonstrated that he had the power and authority to do miracles, and even had authority to heal those who were troubled by evil spirits. They came all that way, because they wanted to see the Son of God, who was among them to take care of their needs.

How often don't these same concerns trouble our hearts 2,000 years later? One thing that we have in common with all of humanity is this frail flesh that could go at any time. One allergic reaction, one mysterious virus, one car accident is all it takes to end our earthly pilgrimage. And what do we do with these concerns? When our own mortality frightens us, where do we go for our comfort? The latest medical technology, the best doctor, the safest vehicle the market can produce. How often don't we put our trust first and foremost in things of this world?

Our Lord, Jesus Christ, is still the one who takes care of our needs today. Jesus, our Creator, who lovingly brought this world into being, still governs everything in this world for the good of those who love him. He uses his authority as the Almighty God to guide and protect every living thing, and especially mankind, the crown of his creation.

We see Jesus do this in our lesson today. He uses his authority as God to heal the sicknesses of the people that came to him for help. The sick were made well. The diseased were cured. Those troubled by unclean spirits were cleansed. Jesus has authority to heal physical needs.

And God does this today all over the world. Every successful surgery, every broken fever, every time our hearts keep beating, is because Jesus, as God, wants it to happen. This is the authority that God has over creation, by which he provides for every living thing.

During Jesus' ministry, he did many miraculous signs to testify to this authority as God. His miracles had to do with reversing the curse of sin. We hear of Jesus' miracles for the same purpose. Still today, Jesus' authority works on our behalf. We need the healing that only Jesus can offer. By nature, we are diseased with sin, and there is no other name under heaven by which we must be saved. Jesus, the doctor of souls, is our only source for support. Jesus speaks to us today with his word to take away our illnesses, and save us from the spiritual death that we deserve.

As you go through life day by day, never fail to see Jesus. To understand our world only through the eyes of science is to remove the divine authority that drives everything. As you look around, see your Savior working through natural means to accomplish His Will. Jesus reveals his divine authority by his power to heal.

Transition – We've seen Jesus demonstrate his power over sickness, diseases, and demons. But more than just the physical needs of the crowd, Jesus was concerned with their eternal welfare. Jesus performed these powerful miracles to testify to his authority to speak. Jesus reveals his divine authority with his Holy Word.

II. With His Holy Word (vs. 20-26)

After reporting the many miraculous healings, Luke goes on to record the sermon that Jesus preached to the crowd on that day. Jesus begins to teach them as the master teacher, and he strengthens the faith of his disciples, who were there listening.

Our Lord had just shown how important the physical needs of his followers were by healing them. Now Jesus speaks especially about the spiritual life of the people to warn those who were secure in their sins. He does not talk just about economical standing, or worldly consequences, but relates the importance of the spiritual side of these things. We will first look at the natural consequences for the attitudes of the sinful heart.

“Woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort” – those who think that they have everything they need spiritually do not rely on God for their comfort. The supposed “riches” are the merits that they think will have value before God, by which they expect to gain Heaven.

These people are cursed because they have their comfort in this world, but their spiritual riches will do them no good in eternity.

“Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry” - those who are not hungry will not eat. They think that they know everything about Jesus, the Bread of Life, so they don't bother to feed their souls with God's Word

These people are cursed because they think that they are full, yet they starve spiritually.

“Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep” – who is happy in a pig sty but a pig? Those whose sins do not bother them laugh while they live in this sinful world. They indulge freely in the acts of the sinful nature, and think nothing of the punishment that they heap up for themselves.

They laugh now by enjoying their filth, but they will weep and mourn eternally while they are punished for these same sins that they enjoy so much now.

“Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets” - The world loves its own, and is happy to remain in the darkness of unbelief. Those who are loved by the world have forsaken Christ, who came to bring division. The broad path to Hell is the one easily traveled.

It would be better for them if they had not been born. Those who sit in the seat of mockers, etc. (Ps. 1) will receive no blessing for rejecting Christ, but will be left with their fair-weather friends in the punishment that awaits them.

These curses are spoken to unbelievers, who do not care about Jesus or the message of salvation he offers. So what does it have to do with us, who are his disciples? We face the constant temptation to share the interests of the world.

Isn't it easy to fall into chasing after the almighty dollar, instead of pursuing God's righteousness? After all the years that we've been going to church and Sunday school, and having devotions and Bible classes, it's easy to think that we know pretty much all that we need to know about Jesus. So our Bibles collect dust on the shelf, and the once familiar passages that we learned by heart, are far from the tips of our tongues. It's easier to give in to temptation than stand up against it. It seems far better to go along with the crowd than to oppose on the basis of one little objection.

There is something in us that wants to be well-liked, that would rather revel in the bliss of ignorance, that thinks it has all the answers already, that thinks that the works it does are really pretty good and should receive some reward from God. That something is our sinful nature, which would drag us down at every opportunity. It wants to return to the darkness of unbelief.

But Jesus faced our every temptation during his time of humiliation. Jesus could have had the love of the world, but he did not fall for that temptation. Jesus came to the world to defeat the Prince of this world, and win our release from these fruitless pursuits. Jesus gave up his perfect life as an innocent sacrifice for the sins of the world. Through your baptism, your sinful nature has been crucified with Christ. Through the faith that God worked in your heart, these woes do not apply. We receive only blessings and love from God.

These blessings are fruits of faith. These things are not the aim or goal of the Christian, but they are the outcome of your life of faith. Only faith can bring about these fruits, and only God gives us that faith.

Jesus reveals the blessings that are given to faithful Christians as they live their lives of faith here on earth.

“Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God” - Those who know that they have nothing to offer to God. They count their attempts at righteous acts to be filthy rags. They rely on begging for God's grace and mercy, because they know that they are nothing in God's sight.

They are blessed because theirs is the Kingdom. They will dwell with God forever, because they rest fully on the merits of Christ.

“Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied” - Those who are not satisfied with what they know about God. Their hunger for the Bread of Life is insatiable, and they continually feed their spirit by worshiping and studying the Scriptures.

They hunger now for more, but God reveals only a part. They will receive their fill of Godly knowledge in glory, as Paul says in 1 Cor. 13 – **then I will know fully, even as I am fully known.**” In the perfection of Heaven, they will see their Father as he truly is, and praise and worship him in full knowledge forever.

“Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh” - Those who cry when they see the effects of sin in this world. They are troubled by sin out there, and even more by their own. Like the prodigal son, they recognize how they have failed to live as God's children, and weep at their sinful state.

When they are taken to Heaven, there will be no more crying. No sin, no sadness, no disappointment, because everything will be perfect. They will know God's Will perfectly, and carry it out for all eternity. They will enjoy the full knowledge that awaits them.

“Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil because of the Son of Man.” - Those who do not value the friendship of the world, but cling to Christ as the only source for their reward. Our Lord will look on them in that day and welcome them to the eternal joys and perfect friendship of Heaven.

These blessings were spoken by our Savior to his disciples of all time. Through faith, we receive these same blessings as a gift from our Loving Father. All of his children can look forward with confidence to the many blessings that go along with following Jesus.

Brothers and sisters, when you face the temptation to value the things of this world, and put them as more important than our eternal King, continue to follow Christ and continue in His Word. Be poor in spirit, knowing that it is not by works that we have the assurance of Heaven. Be always hungering to know more about God and His Word. Weep when you see the effects of sin in this world. Stand firm when your faith causes you to be hated by the world. **“Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in Heaven.” Vs. 23**

Jesus truly revealed his divine authority by his powerful miracles. Through his holy Word, he strengthens our faith in him as our Savior, and blesses us for eternity. When you face the temptation to value the things of this sinful world, remember the words of our Lord, and the blessing that he intends for those who remain faithful to him. Jesus reveals his divine authority by his power to heal and with his holy word. Amen