

This passage is what are called the “beatitudes” of Jesus. In this passage (Luke only have four, Matthew has more), Luke is *summarizing* what I would call the keynote sermons of Jesus. Most likely, while this sermon took place on the plain and Matthew’s recalls Jesus teaching on the mountain, they are a summary account of a series of sermons that Jesus taught often to proclaim what His kingdom looks like in the present joy of His disciples as they trusted (faith) Him for their hope of redemption.

Because we are not accustomed to this style of teaching, we are tempted to read the beatitudes as contingencies. In other words, we read them as “if you are, then you will receive” promises. Thus, we read the first beatitude of Luke as “If you are poor, then you have the Kingdom of God.” However, this is not possible with the verb tenses of the passage, nor is it the regular usage of the style of “blessings/woes” of the near eastern instructive poetry. We need to read them causally backwards: “Because the kingdom of God is yours, you are blessed poor ones.” Or, “because your will be satiated, you are blessed hungry ones.” Thus, we see that the beatitudes are not promises of blessing contingent upon our taking on the quality of poverty, hunger, weeping, etc., but rather they are promises that those who hope in the Divine King (kingdom of God) are presently joyful even though they are exploited in this world, robbed, thrown out, and suffer because of Him.

### 1. Happy/Joyful because of Divine Favor – Blessed

- a. The beatitudes are about present joy and the experience of happiness today in the light of God’s grace in Jesus.
- b. The sayings of “blessed are...” and ‘woe to...” was a common ancient way of describing a disciple who has true joy of the soul. A beatitude, as these are known, was a typical style of literary teaching as to what spiritual values bring deep soul happiness. For example, Psalm 1:1 begins, “Blessed is the man who does not walk in the way of sinners...” So, these are ways of teaching the deep spiritual truths that bring joy.
- c. When Jesus teaches, there is a strong correlation between present joy (Luke uses the work “now” twice) and its future hope. Blessedness is the inner joy of the heart that is certain of its future hope.
  - i. You ARE blessed poor ones
    1. because the Kingdom of God IS yours
  - ii. You ARE NOW blessed hungry ones
    1. because you WILL BE satisfied
  - iii. You ARE blessed NOW weepers
    1. because you WILL laugh
  - iv. You ARE blessed WHENEVER people
    1. hate you
    2. exclude you
    3. heap insults upon you
    4. throw out your name as evil
    5. on account of the Son of Man
  - v. REJOICE WHENEVER these happen
    1. because your reward is great in heaven
    2. You are like the prophets whom your fathers were doing these things, too

### 2. What kind of person is presently joyful?

- a. Presently powerless (Poor, Hungry, Weepers, Rejected and Cast Out)
  - i. Jesus is relating all of these present realities to one’s discipleship (because of the Son of Man)
    1. The relationship between the disciples of Jesus and the prophets of old is connected with each of the categories (powerlessness)
    2. It is those who trust in the Lord and therefore give up their power in the world for the sake of Christ that are on the side of God’s prophets
    3. They are poor, hungry, suffering, and despised because of their relationship with Jesus and their faith in His gospel
  - ii. Each of these is one way of describing powerlessness – we will look only at the title “poor”
    1. Blessed are the poor:

2. "are" - this shows that Jesus is explaining that "happiness" or "blessedness" *currently exists* for those who are poor *and* who place their hope in the apodosis "yours is the kingdom of God"
3. It is the hope, certain expectation through King Jesus, of the kingdom of God that leads to blessedness, not the right nor possession nor protection of the security of this world
  - a. Jesus is making some broad eschatological statements here: comparing the transitory nature of this world with the eternal nature of His Kingdom and His reign - the Kingdom of God as fullness and the present world and broken and insufficient
  - b. Those who hope in the eternal King and His eternal Kingdom find blessedness
  - c. Those who hope in the transitory power of this world, its promises of security and blessedness will find only woe in eternity
4. Who are "the poor?"
  - a. Biblically, poverty is not merely economic, though economics is a primary category of poverty.
    - i. The connection of poverty with the prophets and the rich with the false prophets show that Jesus is speaking of spiritual/eternal qualities here more than merely socio-economic categories
    - ii. The prophets were not poor because of their business choices, but because they were hated and ostracized because of the Word of God
  - b. Poverty, biblically, is a lack of power
    - i. Isaiah 3:14-15 – “the spoil of the poor is in your houses...what do you mean by crushing my people...?”
    - ii. Proverbs 13:23
      1. The poor have fruit, but they don't have the power to protect it and thus it is taken away unjustly
      2. Thus, poverty is when what you have is taken from you without receiving anything in return
    - iii. This is what separates the *causes* of economic poverty
      1. poverty that is the result of laziness is never condoned nor considered unjust in Scripture
      2. poverty that is the result of injustice is always to be met with mercy (Pr 31:9; Ps 72:4; Lev 25:35)
    - iv. It is also why the answer for poverty in the Bible is not merely economic provision, but JUSTICE and defense and protection
      1. The typical OT categories of the poor were widows, orphans, and sojourners (foreigners)
      2. They couldn't own land, thus they were at the mercy of those who did have land, and often they were exploited for their labors and were not remunerated fairly
      3. Thus, God “takes up their case” and defends them for “justice” (Psalm 146:9)
  - c. This powerlessness (injustice) can be the result of unjust exploitation the poor, or it can be the result of this broken world (injury, born powerless in body, etc.)
    - i. Either way, those who hope in the Rule of God as their Divine King are happy today as they patiently await the fullness of His coming Kingdom

- iii. So, in this beatitude Jesus is stating that those who are powerless in this world, not able nor trusting their own strength or the strength of this world's systems but instead are hoping in the reality of God's Kingdom (His justice, His rule, His provision) are "blessed"
- b. Presently Hopeful: two future hopes, one present hope (already, not yet Kingdom)
  - i. Future Hope
    - 1. You will be filled up
    - 2. You will laugh
    - 3. You stand with the prophets of God
      - a. The "servants" of Isaiah 65
      - b. Jesus is stating that He (the Son of Man) is bringing about all that Isaiah promised and it is here and it is yet to come.
        - i. The creation of the new heavens and the new earth
        - ii. The old things passing away and look! New things have come
        - iii. Joy and gladness of heart in the land of the living because God has created His people to be His joy and the gladness of His heart
  - ii. Present Hope: You have a King who cannot be stopped and is for your good
    - 1. Yours *is* the Kingdom of God
    - 2. What is it about the present Kingdom of God that gives the powerless happiness?
      - a. Who is the King of this Kingdom of God?
      - b. What is it about Him that gives you hope?
        - i. He is our hope in His deity
          - 1. Equal with the Father in nature, the exact image, the radiance of His glory
        - ii. He is our hope in His eternality
          - 1. Jesus never had a beginning, He is simply there, the Absolute Reality who upholds all things
          - 2. Everything else is a shadow in comparison to the substance of Him
        - iii. He is our hope in His constancy
          - 1. He never changes! He is faithful and true
        - iv. He is our hope in His Wisdom
          - 1. He knows everything and understands all of its parts and details and atoms and wonders and ponderings
          - 2. He has never been perplexed and can never be counseled by anyone
        - v. He is our Hope in His patience
          - 1. Think about His mercies toward you every morning! Toward the wicked, He has shown mercy today!
        - vi. He is our hope in His authority
          - 1. On the earth, above the earth, under the earth
          - 2. All that He desires to do, He does and nobody can stop His hand from working His wise and eternal will
        - vii. He is our hope in His power
          - 1. He commands demons, heals sickness, commands the waters, walks on the sea, raises the dead
          - 2. He holds life and death in the palm of His hand
    - 3. Knowing that this King is our King who loves us and takes up our case, enables us to love our enemies, bless those who curse us, enter into relationship vulnerable in order to love...all joyfully

The One who trusts not in the power of this world, but in the Son of Man for divine favor, finds present joy and happiness because he believes that God is his and that He provides all things in due time.

This already and not yet hope of God's grace gives the believer patience in the midst of suffering and exploitation by the world. In the face of injustice (poverty, hunger, suffering loss, rejection), the believer in God is still rejoicing because he has a King who is sovereign and good and he has the hope of future grace that, when deeply believed, gives a present joy.

This faith, that God is present in power and goodness and that God will provide all that we need in the future, is what gives the disciple of Jesus the endurance and joyful strength to do what Jesus commands in the following context: love your enemies, bless and don't curse, make yourself vulnerable to love (turn other cheek), etc. Without the present joy of future grace we would do the opposite and find ourselves on the "woe" side of the beatitudes, striving for power now and comfort now and taking justice into our own hands according to our own wisdom and not trusting in the Son of Man.

So, what is it that gives you joy today? Upon what do you fix your eyes for hope?

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, <sup>2</sup> looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. (Heb 12:1-2 ESV)

We are happy because Jesus set His eyes upon the joy of the Father, and having His hope fully set upon Him He endured the present suffering of the cross and the shame of the hatred of the people whom He created out of nothing. He suffered the greatest injustice that the world has ever known so that you can be blessed by His work and by His rule. He was cursed on that tree so that you and I might rejoice, and this was His joy. You have a King...today...who laid His life down, it was not taken from Him. He laid it down for your surety, your certainty, to lay up a hope for you that is unshakable, unbreakable, kept in heaven for you by the power of God Himself. What have you to fear about losing your power, O poor unjustly treated one? Have you been robbed of your beauty or your respect? Rejoice in the coming of the King! Set your hope fully upon the grace to be revealed when He returns. Fix your eyes upon your great present King and upon the renewal which He is bringing about by His powerful Word. Swim in the light of His glory, stretching your life out upon the frame of His Word. Imbibe in His Word, for in it you see Him, glorious, majestic, swallowing up all your self-centered fears and foolishness in the blazing glory of the eternal King of all that is, and was, and ever will be.

"Beloved, we are God's children now (present), and what we will be has not yet appeared (future), but we know (hope) that when He appears (object of hope) we shall be like Him (promise), *because we will see Him as He is.*" (1 John 3:2)