

Weaving the Word

Blessed Are the Miserable

Part 18 – November 16, 2014

Welcome to where we're learning to count the cost to follow the One who paid the price!



Sea of Galilee from Mt of Beatitudes

Who wants to be blessed?

Jesus begins His Sermon on the Mount with, “Blessed are the poor ... the hungry ... the heartbroken ... and the hated.”

So now, who wants to be blessed/poor?

Let's take another offering! I just want you to be *blessed*. It *blesses me* to know that I'm blessing *you ... now, give it!*

What in the world could Jesus mean, “*Blessed are the poor*”?

When you pray for God's blessing, do you ever think, “*Take away my money*”?

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were *rich*; so, were they *not blessed*?



Last week, Jesus appointed twelve active apprentices on the hillside, and we saw that His sermon there was directed at *them*. Before that, His poor pupils had to pluck grain for something to eat, and wound up in a showdown, at the synagogue, on the Sabbath.

This'll sound like a review, but it's vital for grasping not only *what* Jesus means, but *why* He begins His famous Sermon on the Mount with *this* particular, peculiar, counsel.

When Jesus riled the religious leaders into a murderous rage, by healing the shriveled hand, in a synagogue, on a Sabbath, **how do you think *His followers* – caught in the crosshairs – felt?**

They were likely spat upon, slapped, cursed, rejected, excluded, and slandered (by those they *highly respected*), because of Jesus.

Plus, *they* were ones *in want!* And, **the wealthy and well-fed ones, who were mocking and jeering and laughing in scorn, seemed to be the ones who were receiving God's abundant blessings.**

Angry? Confused? Conflicted? Bitter tears? Resentment?

All of the above.

So, when Jesus takes ‘em home, who can blame Peter, Andrew, James, and John for briefly returning from becoming fishers of men to being fishers of fish?



Insult to injury: they fish all night without a single bite.

That’s a lot of time to think. What do you think they thought about, talked about, all that night?

What would *you* have thought about all night without a bite?

Maybe: ***“Why’s God not blessin’ the Way I’ve chosen?”***

I wonder if Peter was ready to cut and run. He was washing his nets while Jesus was futilely fighting off the crushing crowds. And, it’s Jesus who re-approaches Peter to ask for help. (Luke 5:1-3)

It would explain Peter’s pouting protest when Jesus asks him to put out his net again *and* his mortified admission of unworthiness to follow, when he receives the astonishing blessing of fish. (Luke 5:5-8)

And then what happens? Jesus leads ‘em to the hillside, and goes ahead of ‘em, to pray over ‘em, all night long, to appoint His Twelve Apostles.

They *worked* all night and ended up with nothing. (Luke 5:5)

He *prayed* all night and ended up with His limit! (Luke 6:12-13)

And then He walks ‘em down to a flat place above the crowds, so the people can hear as He begins to instruct His apprentices. (Luke 6:17)

Once we see *who* He’s speaking to, and *when*, we get to know *why*!

Looking at his disciples, he said: “Blessed are you [disciples] who are poor, [Poor because of *laziness*? Poor money management? Squandering? He’ll make it clear that he’s referring to being poor “because of the Son of Man”] for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you [disciples] who hunger now, [“because of the Son of Man”] for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you [disciples] who weep now, [those bitter tears, “because of the Son of Man”] for you will laugh. [Not with scorn, but with the joy of the Lord] Blessed are you [disciples] when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. [It is a blessing to be cursed for my sake by those who oppose Me. Don’t talk about that day as though it was a *failure*! That day was victory *disguised* as catastrophe] Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward [as My disciples] in heaven.” – Luke 6:20-23a NIV

Here’s a hard truth: **Blessings often begin as unfulfilled dreams.**

And not only that but, **triumph often comes wrapped in tragedy.** He did. So, *take heart! He’s overcome the tragedy! All tragedy.*

Jesus isn't saying poverty, hunger, grief, or rejection are *good things*, just that if they result from being an active apprentice, God's got you covered in a way that'll far exceed your misery.

Keep in mind: **You can be truly blessed *and* truly miserable.**

They're not mutually exclusive.

Jesus doesn't say, "Blessed are those who seem to be poor – those who might otherwise characterize themselves as being *hungry* – those who've adopted a persona that lends itself to the limited perception of being thoroughly despised and rejected."

He says it straight out: "You've been faithfully following Me; now, your money's gone, you've gone hungry, you're unhappy because of what I've done, and you're despised because of who I Am ... but ... if you could see what I can see, you'd be leaping for joy!"

If faithful following results in deprivation or loss or sorrow of *any kind*, wow! That's an eternal investment opportunity that can't be made any other way! *Congratulations!* Well done.



Remember the poor widow who put two tiny coins in the offering? **She was dirt poor *before* she gave and poorer still *after*.**

But, we should in fact see her as blessed.

Why? Because, simple truth of the universe and beyond: **You can't out give God!**



Jesus tells Peter that anyone who has forsaken anything for His sake "will receive a hundred times as much *and* will inherit eternal life." (Mat 19:27-30)

If you're honest in business *on His account*, and consistent with offerings *on His account*, and the result is less in *your account on His account*, you'll be leaping for joy when all is accounted for.



I can leave it behind in a box of pine or invest it on His account.

What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul? (Mark 8:36) Nothing! Bad investment.

But, what does it profit a man to lose the *whole world* and gain his *soul*? You can't even imagine. Literally. Not created with the ability.

The Dung Beetle represents *us!*

In one sense it *actually is* a blessing to be deprived.

Deprivation is a reminder of our desperate dependence on God.

The more earthly security we have, the more earthly comfort we receive, and the less we sense our desperate need.

Hence the flip side of the coin, directed at the false leaders who seemed so blessed with their big ball of religious authority.

“But woe to you [false prophets among the people] who are rich, [at the expense of your own soul] for you have already received your comfort. Woe to you [false prophets among the people] who are well fed now, [having denied yourself nothing that you might give unto others] for you will go hungry. Woe to you [false prophets among the people] who laugh now, [with derision and scorn] for you will mourn and weep. [When it comes time to reap what you have sown] Woe to you [false prophets among the people] when all men speak well of you, [though you deny God’s truth] for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets.” – Luke 6:24-26 NIV

This big “dung-ball” world is so broken, so messed up.

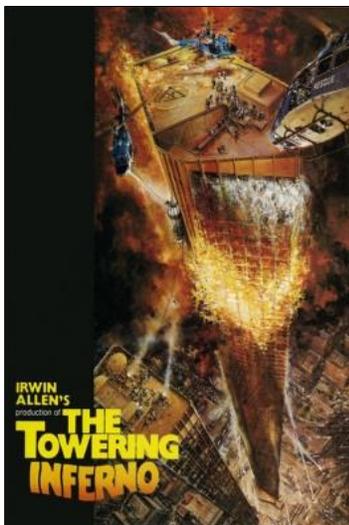


It offers one infernal hardship after another.

It’s the Titanic going down in the sea.

It’s the TOWERING INFERNO going up in smoke.

It’s simultaneously sinking and being consumed.



And, **He’s not come to remodel the boat or repaint the building!**

Woe to those who find their ultimate joy in the *ballroom* of either!

He’s come to lead us out alive!

He’s the Lifeboat to keep us from drowning.

He’s the Living Water to keep us from burning.

But it’s a perilous journey and we’re going fast!

So, who wants to be blessed?

Reach out. Grab hold. Hang on. And faithfully follow. No matter the infernal hardship.

And use whatever you have to help others to safety.

And whatever calamity is allowed to come, know that you’re greatly blessed, with a Savior, a destiny, a purpose, and a promise.