

ORIENTATION TO DISCIPLESHIP

Part ? of LUKE, Luke 6:17-26.

Peter Foxwell. The Cornerstone Church. September 5, 2021.

INTRODUCTION

When we change jobs, the first day at the new workplace usually includes an orientation. Sometimes this takes multiple days as the new worker is introduced to the policies and procedures of the company.

This summer, some of us took our kids to college for their freshman orientation. They were shown around the classrooms and dorms and introduced to the campus culture and expectations.

In today's passage in Luke, we get an insight into the orientation that Jesus gave to his followers. I've called Luke 6:17-26, Orientation to Discipleship. Let's read it now.

Luke 6:17-26

He went down with them and stood on a level place. A large crowd of his disciples was there and a great number of people from all over Judea, from Jerusalem, and from the coastal region around Tyre and Sidon, 18 who had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. Those troubled by impure spirits were cured, 19 and the people all tried to touch him, because power was coming from him and healing them all.

20 Looking at his disciples, he said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. 21 Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. 22 Blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. 23 "Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their ancestors treated the prophets.

24 "But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort. 25 Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep. 26 Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you, for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets.

SETTING THE SCENE

Let's set the scene. As usual, Jesus is surrounded by a large crowd of people from all around the region. The twelve apostles are there, also disciples of Jesus are there, and there are the curious who came to watch Jesus. They came to hear his teaching and to receive his healing and deliverance. In all of this, Jesus demonstrated his Kingdom power and authority. The disciples may have got the impression that following Jesus was a ticket to Kingdom riches, comfort, and power. Not so.

ORIENTATION

Jesus began the disciples' orientation by providing realistic expectations of the cost of discipleship. He does it by contrasting four blessings with four woes. If we were hearing this teaching for the first time, we would be shocked; it seems upside down, especially in light of his Kingdom power. This is a terrible marketing strategy. If we were deciding whether or not to follow Jesus as his disciples, this might be the moment we say, "No thanks. I'm out of here."

BLESSINGS AND WOES

One commentator, writes that "blessed" refers to those in "the most beneficial favored position, who experience the true well-being that comes from a right relationship with God". Israel was blessed by God as a result of his covenant with them.

On the other hand, "woe" refers to those in "the worst, most unfavorable condition, who will experience the calamity, disaster, and damnation reserved for the wicked". In Israel, the wicked are those who turn from God and break covenant with him.

Given that the context is the equipping of the apostles and disciples, it's is safe to say that Jesus is making a clear contrast between those who commit to him and those who do not; those who surrender to the Kingdom authority of Jesus and those who choose to live on their own terms.

Those who commit to Jesus are blessed. Those who do not commit to Jesus are in trouble. BUT, at first glance it might not appear that his followers are blessed, and it might not appear that the group that lives life on their own terms are cursed.

Let's dive deeper into the passage to uncover what disciples of Jesus should expect.

WHAT DISCIPLES OF JESUS SHOULD EXPECT

1. DISCIPLES OF JESUS SHOULD EXPECT FINANCIAL SETBACKS - verse 20.

Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

Following Jesus is not a road to riches. The apostles were already feeling the pinch; for example, Peter, Andrew, James and John had left their fishing business. Matthew/Levi had left his very profitable tax collection business.

Most people then and now tend to link God's blessing with financial success. But that isn't necessarily true. There are several ways in which the disciples of Jesus may experience financial setbacks:

- In some places, following Jesus will get you fired from your job.
- In some places, following Jesus will get you arrested, fined, or imprisoned.
- Jesus may lead some of us to take jobs that don't pay so well.
- Jesus will definitely lead us to be generous to those in need.
- Jesus will teach us to support our church and Christian ministries.

If we're not prepared, having less stuff or losing everything have the potential to create doubts about following Jesus. So remember what Jesus said:

- If we choose money over Jesus, we'll have nothing in the end: (Luke 6:24) "Woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort."
- If we choose Jesus at any cost now, we will have eternal treasure NOW and in the end: (Luke 6:20) "... yours is the kingdom of God."

The apostle Paul taught the same financial principle:

(1 Timothy 6:6-10) But godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. 8 But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. 9 Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

2. DISCIPLES OF JESUS SHOULD EXPECT STRUGGLES & SORROWS - verse 21.

(Luke 6:21) Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.

The orientation continues with another shocking expectation. If we follow Jesus, life may not be comfortable. We may go hungry for his sake. We will definitely weep. Our hearts will break over such sorrows as:

- Our own sinful hearts. The Spirit gives us glimpses into the darkness of hidden bitterness, jealousy, unbelief, and so on.
- Godly sorrow because of our sinful behavior (2 Corinthians 7:10).
- Feeling empathy for others' hurts and losses.
- Grief that there is a world of people far from God and salvation.
- The losses of life, especially the death of loved ones.

Far from removing our sorrows now, following Jesus actually intensifies them as his Spirit softens our hearts and gives us eyes to see ourselves and the world around us from God's perspective. Jesus warns us not to expect an easy life by following him. Every rose comes with thorns. Following Jesus will result in many hard days.

But the hunger and sorrows of those who follow Jesus will not last. We'll eat and be satisfied at the great wedding feast when Jesus returns for his bride (Revelation 19:6-9). This is a picture of total satisfaction when we meet Jesus face to face. The psalmist captures this completely:

(Psalms 36:7-9) How priceless is your unfailing love, O God! People take refuge in the shadow of your wings. They feast on the abundance of your house; you give them drink from your river of delights. 9 For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light.

In the end, we will experience laughter, a permanent joy that is the deepest and best it can possibly be, joy that comes from meeting Jesus when he comes. He will:

(Isaiah 61:2-3) ... comfort all who mourn, 3 and provide for those who grieve in Zion —to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.

3. DISCIPLES OF JESUS SHOULD EXPECT SEVERE SUFFERING - verse 23.

(Luke 6:22) Blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man.

If Jesus hadn't already scared off the crowd, his fourth blessing surely would. Here is a Kingdom reality check. The disciples should expect to be hated, excluded, insulted, and rejected BECAUSE OF THE SON OF MAN. Following Jesus does not necessarily make us popular. Pushback takes many forms, from teasing, to bullying, to community or government persecution.

According to the Open Doors USA ministry, in 2018, 245 million Christians in the world experienced high levels of persecution for their choice to follow Christ.

<https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/stories/christian-persecution-by-the-numbers/>

My heart goes out to followers of Jesus in Afghanistan as it has returned to Taliban control. They hate Christians. I found an article that reported comments by the former US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo. He fears ...

... the ground has been laid for a "potential genocide" of the country's Christian minority. "The humanitarian crisis that is developing as the Taliban returns to power is likely to become a genocide against Christians ...," he said. ... Pompeo ... expressed concern at reports that the Taliban have a list of the names of Christians and are actively hunting them down. He warned that the persecution of Afghan Christians is "only just beginning."

(<https://www.christiantoday.com/article/fears.of.a.christian.genocide.as.the.last.us.troops.leave.afghanistan/137320.htm>)

You and I need to ask the Lord for wisdom and endurance as we follow the Son of Man. Even if our prayers are answered, expect conflict, expect to be cancelled, expect to be condemned. This is why we need the church. We need each other's support.

We also need to think long-term. In the short-term, this world may hate us because of our love for Jesus. In the end, however, it will be worth whatever price we paid:

(Luke 6:23) "Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven."

James beheaded, Jerusalem

Peter crucified, Rome

Andrew crucified, Greece

Thomas speared, India

Philip executed, Carthage

Matthew stabbed, Ethiopia

Bartholomew executed, Armenia

James stoned, Syria

Simon executed, Persia

CONCLUSION: DECIDING FOR OR AGAINST JESUS

I wonder if someone reading this is deciding for or against Jesus, right now. If so, would you agree that Jesus hasn't made it easy for any of us to decide?

Some choose to reject Jesus in order to go after everything this world has to offer: wealth, comfort, happiness, and popularity. And we may even find those things and feel like we made the right choice. BUT ... remember what Jesus promised you: woe - misery and loss. Your wealth will fail. Your good times will end. You will not be blessed. You are destined for fearful judgment.

Some choose to commit to Jesus as his disciples. We embrace him by faith at any cost as our God and Savior. Be aware: Life may get very difficult, but do not turn back. Instead follow the way of Jesus and endure hardship for his sake. He was poor. He wept. He obeyed God. He was betrayed and condemned. He was mocked and rejected. He was killed. But by his obedient life and death, he entered into eternal joys. He was raised to life. He was exalted to the throne in heaven. He will be praised for all eternity. And he alone is the source of our blessing and eternal salvation.

The late Henri Nouwen put this in an unforgettable way:

“The way of the Christian leader is not the way of upward mobility in which our world has invested so much, but the way of downward mobility ending on the cross.”

Henri Nouwen, quoted in Bevens, Winfield; Dunwoody, Mark. Healthy Rhythms for Leaders: Cultivating Soul Care in Uncertain Times (p. 49). Exponential. Kindle Edition.

Following Jesus may cost us everything. There will be struggles. We may be killed. And we may wonder if it is worth it. The answer of course is yes. You can have all this world, just give me Jesus. Trust Jesus. His word is true. If you follow Jesus by faith, yours is the kingdom of God. Yours is the deepest possible satisfaction and joy. Yours is the reward in heaven.

For me, the choice is obvious. I choose the Savior, the One who lived and died for me for the forgiveness of all my sins, for new life, for restoration to God as my Heavenly Father. I choose the One who rules the universe. I choose the One who will come again for me, the One who is my joy forevermore. I choose Jesus. No turning back.

WORSHIP CELEBRATION
Sunday, September 5, 2021

1:30 Welcome & Invocation-Peter

0:00 Prayer-Eve

2:36 *Living Water-Eve*

4:46 *Our God-McKenzie*

0:45 Pray & Dismiss Kids - Eve

3:00 Bible Reading- Rom 15:14-22 - Joe

4:15 *Stronger-Eve*

3:00 Apostles Creed and Lord's Prayer - Peter

25:00 Teaching- Peter - Orientation to Discipleship

5:24 *Living Hope-McKenzie*

1:30 Updates-Joey & Peter

0:00 Cornerstone Iron mens group- movie

0:00 inspire -update- Jean

0:30 Blessing-Peter
