Epiphany 6 Luke 6:17-26
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How Blessed We Are to be Christians!
I. We are blessed with the perfect Savior.
II. We are blessed now and in eternity.

Dear Christian friends,

We have today a SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT **epiphany** or revelation. The focus is **not just** ON Jesus but also on us. Do YOU see the difference that **Jesus makes** in your life? CAN OTHERS **see that difference** in you? Do they see the JOY – the INNER PEACE – the CONTENTMENT that we **Christians have in Jesus**? Maybe we don't even see it. **Our Christian lives** are not ONE BIG HIGH. We don't float through life ON CLOUD NINE.

"Blessed are you…" Jesus keeps saying in these verses. Today **we have** the much-needed epiphany – HOW BLESSED WE ARE TO BE CHRISTIANS! **As Christians** we ARE BLESSED 1)with the perfect Savior and 2)we are blessed now and in eternity.

I. We are blessed with the perfect Savior.

So many of God's blessings are so familiar that we just take them FOR GRANTED - unless they're **taken from** us. We do that with ***"our daily bread"*** – our health – working furnace, etc. Those are wonderful blessings we JUST DON'T NOTICE **all that much**.

We can easily do that **same thing** in our spiritual life. SO WE HAVE a **beautiful** church to go to – Bibles we can read at home – Christian schools for our children – Holy Communion, etc. WHAT'S NEW about any of that? **After a while** the services and sermons seem to just RUN TOGETHER and all say the **same thing** – we are sinners – Jesus is our Savior. Come on, Pastor, tell us something NEW **for once**!

I'm not going to tell you **anything new**. But I will remind you of things you ALREADY DO KNOW. Jesus is our **perfect Savior**. HOW BLESSED we are to be Christians and HAVE JESUS as our Savior!

Just look at these verses. Here were all these people coming to Jesus. **Coming** not because everything was PERFECT in their lives **but because** they had all sorts of **problems**. Some had diseases. Others were ***"troubled by unclean spirits."*** WHATEVER **their problem** – Jesus was there for them with the HELP **they needed**.

As Christians WE ARE BLESSED to be able to do the **same thing**. Our lives aren't perfect either. We may have health or financial or PERSONAL PROBLEMS. We may have problems in our MARRIAGES – at WORK – with a **neighbor** or **relative**. Ignoring those problems – denying our problems – just makes them worse. WHAT A BLESSING to be able to go to Jesus with them! **As Christians** we don't have ALL THE ANSWERS but we do have God's Word. **As Christians** we have Jesus!

Luke tells us that these people also ***"came to listen to Jesus."*** WHAT A BLESSING to be taught by Jesus – to learn **God's Word**! There are plenty of CONFLICTING IDEAS and **answers** floating around in the world. NOT BEING SURE of what color to **paint the kitchen** is one thing. But to NOT BE SURE about the most basic and important things – WHO am I? – WHAT'S the purpose of my life? – **what** is GOD LIKE? – HOW can I have a good relationship with God? – WHAT WILL HAPPEN to me when I die? – to NOT KNOW the **right answers** to those questions – that's scary! To have all those **competing answers** and then go EENIE – MEENIE – minee mo – no way!

WHAT A BLESSING to be able to turn **to Jesus** for our answers! Jesus doesn't PULL ANY PUNCHES. He ***"teaches with authority."*** "THIS IS THE WAY it is whether you like it or not." But

Jesus also has the ONLY RIGHT ANSWERS to **life's questions**. We are sinners who **justly deserve** God's punishment now and in eternity. There's NO GETTING AROUND that. And there's NO TOPPING that wonderful gospel message that **Jesus Himself** is our perfect Savior. Jesus has already taken care of everything necessary to save us. TRUSTING in Jesus we have God's forgiveness of all our sins and God's promise of eternal life in heaven when we die. That's not just an OPINION – a NICE THOUGHT – a GOOD CHANCE. That's exactly what God says!

A Christians is a person who trusts in Jesus as his **perfect Savior**. AS CHRISTIANS we are…

II. Blessed now and in eternity.

Luke here gives us a SHORTENED ACCOUNT of the "Sermon on the Mount." Matthew's account of that sermon **runs three whole chapters**. Luke covers it in **thirty verses**. The Sermon on the Mount is where we find the "BEATITUDES" – the ***"Blessed are you…"*** Luke gives us ONLY FOUR of them and then he clarifies them with four opposing ***"woes."*** These ***"blessed are you"*** are not wishes – "MAY YOU BE so blessed." These beatitudes are statements of fact – ***"You ARE BLESSED…"*** These ***"blessed are you"*** are true only about Christians. Jesus spoke these blessings TO Christians ABOUT THEIR LIVES **as Christians** with Jesus **as their Savior**.

"Blessed are you who are poor, because yours is the kingdom of God." Jesus is not talking about the FINANCIALLY poor. People are not admitted to heaven based on **how little** or **how much money** they have. There will be both rich and poor people in heaven – AND in hell.

These ***"blessed"*** are the ***"poor in spirit"*** – the spiritually poor. Jesus is describing the ATTITUDE of the Christian. **From God's law** – those 10 Commandments – we learn JUST HOW POOR we really are **on our own** – without Jesus in our lives. We're **not simply** DOWN ON OUR LUCK. We didn't just have a FEW BAD DAYS. **Spiritually** we are BEGGARS. We have nothing and NEED EVERYTHING. We came to church today with nothing to offer God but our **sin** and **guilt**. **We know** we can't fool God into thinking we're BASICALLY GOOD, DECENT people who have made a **few mistakes**. Born sinful we have often DELIBERATELY ignored and defied God. We've broken God's CLEAR commandments **even though** God has JUST AS CLEARLY said, "You sin – you die!"

To us SPIRITUAL BEGGARS God gives ***"the kingdom of God."*** HOW BLESSED are to **be Christians**! We come before God BROKE and BANKRUPT and look at what God ALL GIVES us! God gives us the CREDIT for Jesus' perfect life. In Jesus' blood – the ***"blood of God's Son"*** shed on the cross – ***"we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."*** In Jesus' resurrection we HAVE GOD'S PROMISE of eternal life in heaven. Trusting in Jesus we are the **redeemed, beloved children** of God! All the money in the world COULDN'T BUY us **even one** of those blessings. We COULDN'T EARN ONE of those blessings **no matter** how hard we tried. Here God GIVES them all to us as gifts in Jesus!

"Blessed are you who hunger now, because you will be satisfied." Again Jesus is talking about SPIRITUAL things – spiritual ***"hunger."*** Hunger expresses an EMPTINESS that **needs to be filled**. **IF** we don't have whatever we just won't survive – IF we don't eat we **can't live**. **Hunger** takes us to OUR PRIORITIES in life – to what's REALLY IMPORTANT to us.

Matthew calls this a ***"hunger and thirst for righteousness"*** – a being right and in a RIGHT RELATIONSHIP with God. God ***"satisfies that hunger"*** with Jesus' ***"righteousness."*** Jesus has MADE THINGS RIGHT between God and us by perfectly obeying all the commandments for us and then fully paying for all our sins with His own death. Trusting in Jesus **everything** is ALL RIGHT between God and us. With Jesus as our Savior we can be sure of WHERE WE STAND with God.

Jesus satisfies our ***"hunger"*** for forgiveness – peace with God – real hope in the face of death – real meaning for our **lives right now**. Jesus tells us, ***"I am the Bread of Life. He who comes to Me will never go hungry."*** CONTRAST that promise with Jesus' WOE. ***"Woe to you who are well fed now,***

because you will be hungry." Those whose PRIORITIES are all centered in **this life** – who find their satisfaction in **things** – toys – money – good times – they may now be enjoying a "GOOD LIFE" – but **in the end** they will find out **how poor** they really are. Jesus warned the Christians in Laodicea, ***"You say, 'I am rich; I …do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, blind, naked."*** People now may FEEL NO HUNGER for **Jesus** – FEEL NO NEED for church – **no need** to read their Bibles or give their children a Christian education – but WOE to them on the Last Day!

"Blessed are you who weep now, because you will laugh." HOW BLESSED WE ARE to be Christians! Now we ***"weep." "Now"*** we must deal with **sin** and **its consequences**. We SEE THE TOLL sin is taking on the **family** – our **country** and world. We SEE SIN in our own hearts and **lives**. Like Paul we ***"have the desire to do what is good, but cannot carry it out."*** As Christians it BOTHERS US when we sin. **As Christians** we weep over our sins – not JOKE about them or MAKE EXCUSES for them. We want to be BETTER **spouses**, children, parents, employees, neighbors, etc. – but it's such a struggle!

We WANT **to be** but we fall far short. We're not content with that. What keeps us going is God's **grace** and **promise** of heaven. ONE DAY all will be perfect – **including** US! **One day** there will be ***"no more death or mourning or crying or pain."*** One day God ***"will wipe every tear from our eyes."*** ONE DAY – in heaven! - HOW BLESSED we are to be Christians with that promise!

As Christians we **not only** TRUST in Jesus we also TALK ABOUT Jesus. **As Christians** we want to share our Savior with others. **As Christians** we want to BE FAITHFUL to our Lord and His Word. That faithfulness **to** Jesus and boldness **in sharing** Jesus are often met with RIDICULE, rejection, name-calling, etc. It's UNLOVING and JUDGMENTAL to tell people they're **sinning** or that what they believe is **wrong**. It's better to let them BE WRONG AND HAPPY than try to correct and save them.

When we run into such opposition there's no need to SHUT UP or whine and **complain**. ***"Blessed are you whenever people hate you, and …insult you …because of the Son of Man. Rejoice …and leap for joy because of this: Your reward is great in heaven!"*** Such hostility is an OUTWARD SIGN of our faith and **faithfulness**. If we WEREN'T STICKING UP for Jesus – if we were hiding our faith – those things wouldn't happen to us.

"Blessed are you." These blessings make clear that our **Christian life** on earth won't always be easy. But when we focus on our PERFECT SAVIOR we are blessed – NOW and **in eternity**. HOW BLESSED WE ARE to be Christians! Amen.

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