

Overflowing blessing

Luke 6.17-26

Here, people have travelled from many places to meet with Jesus, to hear him and to be healed. As Jesus teaches the crowd, he shares four blessings and then four woes. These blessings are not four ways to be happy but instead show what it is like inside the kingdom and outside of it.

Now read **Luke 6.17-26** see p.2 for text.

A note on the passage

This passage has many similarities to the Beatitudes in Matthew's Gospel, but rather than being on a mountain, Jesus is level with the people he speaks to. In this place, he sees the struggles they face and reveals the blessings they will receive in the kingdom. This passage challenges us to think about the blessings that our communities, the people we know and ourselves, need to hear and receive.



Ask yourself: How does this image make you feel?
When do you feel full of God's blessings?



Think of practical ways you could bless others in your local community. This could be by organising a litter pick; donating to or volunteering at a food bank; sending cards to everyone in a local nursing home. Decide what you are going to do, what you will need and when you are going to do the task. Get other people involved as well. When you have planned, go ahead and carry out your plan as a blessing to others.



LISTEN

Listen to 'Counting Every Blessing', Rend Collective on *Good News*. As you listen, reflect on how you have been 'blessed beyond all measure' by God. Write down, or talk about, some of these and as you do thank God for each blessing you have received. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w6Y91axwxfI>



REFLECT

At mealtimes this week, place a jar on the table and next to it a pile of small items (buttons, building blocks, coins). As you eat your evening meal, think or talk about each of the ways you have felt blessed that day. Name each of these out loud and, as you do, add a small item to the jar for each blessing. At the end of the week, look at how many times you have felt blessed.

Write

Go for a walk or take a bus ride around your local area and notice the shops, schools, offices and other buildings that you pass. Think about the people who work, study, live or spend time in these places. Can you write a prayer of blessing for them? Next time you are walking past these places, pray your blessing.



It's Valentine's Day this week. Think of different groups of people you could bless on this day, by sharing a gift with them: friends or colleagues, neighbours or members of your local community – or a mix of these groups. Bake and decorate lots of heart-shaped biscuits. Place the biscuits in paper bags with 'You are Blessed' written on. Share these as a blessing with the people you have been thinking about. <https://realfood.tesco.com/recipes/funfetti-heart-biscuits.html>



Choose a version of the passage to read. The first is the ROOTS version for children, the second is the NRSV text which may be suitable for older children, young people and adults.



Jesus went down the hill with his twelve disciples and stood on the level ground. A big crowd of his followers were there and also people from all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the coast of Tyre and Sidon. They had come to listen to Jesus and to be healed. People who were unwell because of unclean spirits

were also healed. All the people were trying to touch him because power was going out from him. He looked at his disciples and said, 'Blessed are the poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God. Blessed are those who are hungry now, for you shall be filled. Blessed are those who are crying now, for you shall laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you because you are friends with me – when they exclude you, insult you and say your name is evil. Rejoice on that day and jump for joy because your reward in heaven is really great! For this is how our ancestors used to treat the prophets. But woe to you who are rich, for you are receiving your comfort now. Woe to you who are full up now, for you shall be hungry. Woe to those who are laughing now, for you shall be crying. Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you, for this is how our ancestors spoke about the false prophets.'

Luke 6.17-26

Did you know?

- The words 'unclean spirits' cover many types of mental, physical and spiritual sickness.
- In this context, 'blessed' means 'good for you', rather than a blessing you might receive in church.

Luke 6.17-26 (NRSV)

He came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon. They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. And all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them.

Then he looked up at his disciples and said:

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

"Blessed are you who are hungry now,
for you will be filled.

"Blessed are you who weep now,
for you will laugh.

"Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.

"But woe to you who are rich,
for you have received your consolation.

"Woe to you who are full now,
for you will be hungry.

"Woe to you who are laughing now,
for you will mourn and weep.

"Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets".