

Topic	Money, Blessing & Woes
Reference	Luke 6: 19-26, 30-35
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There was a movie called Elysium. It was a station that was built in space. The world is rubble with no medication; the rich live in this space station called Elysium where it is paradise. One of the most touching scenes in the movie, people from earth take a spaceship and basically gate crash Elysium and there was a mother who has a child who is terminally ill rushes to this very expensive looking bungalow because inside all this bungalow they have this device that can heal people. She rushes inside to hopefully heal the kid.

In lot of movies it is always art imitating life. Elysium is like the ultimate gated community and the people from earth who want to go to Elysium are like the poor people of the earth.

STATS:

They say absolute poverty is down to less than 10%. Absolute poverty is taken at US 1.90 per day. 1.1 billion people according to UNICEF and World Bank live on US 1.90. You take that 1.90 and you shift it up 10 cents, it is 2 billion people and if you move it up a bit more you find actually we are going back to 18th century poverty and one statistics says, it will take us 100 years to get back to that. According to UNICEF 50% of the world's children live in poverty. According to Oxfam, 85 people of the world's richest hold a combine income of the rest of the world.

“4 richest Indonesians richer than poorest 100 million Indonesians.” *The Sun*, 24/02/17

In today's text we read *woe to you who are rich and blessings to the poor*. It is a very difficult text and something that I really struggled with. We all are very-very rich compared to US 1.90 per day. Today, I am going to talk about how losing your wealth can glorify God.

BACKGROUND ON THE GOSPEL OF LUKE:

Luke wrote two books to Theophilus. The common theme that we see across the Gospel of Luke is money. Luke has a lot to say about money. He does not care about whether you are rich or you are poor, you are middle class; Luke is very concerned on what you do with your money. In fact I did a search a poverty and riches and I was surprised to see the amount of verses found in Bible. So for a lot of us, middle class/upper middle class, what you do with your money is of paramount importance, it reflects your Christianity. It reflects if we are disciples of Jesus Christ and what we do today is that we look at this chapter but we are going to navigate some other chapters because a lot of words are tied together. So I am going to give you three points

- Money and the cost of discipleship.
- Money and knowing the poor.
- Money and loving your enemies.

Money and the Cost of Discipleship

We have one of the most very fascinating comparisons in the Bible. He gives two groups. He attaches blessings to one. He puts a woe on the other, the Greek word for woe is pity.

Blessings	Woes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor (v20) • Hungry (v21a) • Grief (v21b) • Hated, Insulted and excluded (v22) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rich (v24) • Well fed (v25a) • Happy (v25b) • Well spoken (v26)

Favorite verse among the Christians might be, **I know your plans to prosper me**, Jeremiah. **Enlarge my property**, the prayer of Jabez, but here we have poverty. It does not make sense. So let's look at something again.

The parable of shrewd manager; the context is the Pharisees love money and they sneered at Jesus. The story tells us, they love money and they say this fellow is talking nonsense and Jesus says,

“What is highly valued among men is detestable in God’s sight.” Luke 16:15

We all want money, we all want to be healthy, we don't want to grief, and none of us want to be insulted. But the fact is when you chase the same thing the world chases it means you see you are no different from the world. So the first thing God tells us is that there are two kingdoms.

- The kingdom of this world
- The kingdom of God

That is why we look at the comparison the first thing he says is very similar to the sermon of the mount. Kingdom means you take on the qualities of the king. The values of the king goes into the kingdom and these are the values of the king being imparted and basically what Jesus is saying, when he looks at this huge crowd that come and they want to see, we want to be healed, we come to hear the Messiah and he is saying

Blessings in the kingdom of God are in total contrast to the blessings in the kingdom of man.

Again remember Jesus is not asking you to be poor, Jesus is not asking you to be sick, not asking you to go hungry.

People in the world say that money buys you a lot of things and Jesus is saying if you are living like that you are the most pitted person on earth, you are the most tragic person. There is this teaching going around called prosperity. Some people tell you, you are destined to reign; you are called to enjoy wealth. The argument is this; God is a good God, what kind of God wishes his children to be sick and to be poor. It is a very compelling argument. They say you are a father you don't want your children to be poor, you don't want your children to be sick so is God. I agree but remember we live in a fallen world.

The opposite of prosperity is not poverty. The opposite of prosperity is idolatry. Because the moment this becomes your God, when this happens to you, you will crumble. Just look at your middle class life before suddenly you discovered you had cancer. Just look at your boringly predictable life before a lawsuit came to you, just look at your very normal every Sunday come to church life before your wife files for divorce. Any person who can take any of this and come out stronger is blessed and anyone who can take all of this and remain through the storm is the most blessed person on the face of this earth, because no matter what you say the prosperity gospel is highly illogical because you are not going to stop if a tsunami hits the country.

You are blessed when your faith is so strong you can take yourself through this and we can take ourselves through this when we are so in love with God, when we have found a treasure in God which is so valuable, when bad things happen you are blessed because you can go through it. You see following Jesus isn't cheap and today middle class Christianity has to see other Christians who are so poor and yet so joyful, who don't have the privilege of enjoying things that we enjoy.

In countries or families where to be a Christian will cost you, in the same way if you are a Jew at that time and you became a Christian they will kick you out of a synagogue and there are people in our midst who if you become a Christian the family will disown you and they will say, I have found a treasure so much higher. If you cannot experience this or cannot internalize this then our question is, are we following Jesus or are we really following whatever God in our mind is, we could think it is Jesus because we hope he keeps us in our middle class predictable uneventful life. It is a very important point as we look at the state of the world. He says later on in Luke 14

And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple Luke 14:27

One day I was speaking in another church and a very famous developer came up to me who is a minister. In all my years I never had any industry captain come up to me to pray over the corruption matter. A lot of industry captains don't think you need to pray, they think that it is the way. And because of this 1% of the rich make 99% poor because corruption goes all the way down. The biggest thing that affects the poor is corruption. So every time you let a land deal go through because you have to cut in somebody or because your factory needed a permit and you

got to do something, we are making the 99% poorer and when we all get up there we will be accountable for this and God's conviction to us is how much are you and I are prepared to be poorer from a small little thing when they catch you on the highway for speeding to clearing your factory permit, to doing something else that save you half a million, to complaining about 3 billion that goes missing, what is the difference. So it starts with us and it is a very difficult call. When you go through this and God will honor you. It says,

Luke 6:23 Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.

Some people might say I don't do all of that, I am not in that line. Bible never say, cannot be rich. So I can be godly and rich. In fact here is argument if you have no money you cannot help the poor. I want to go on two verses

“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” Luke 12:34

Notice the order is important. It does not say where your heart is there your treasure is. It means your treasure reveals your heart and later on he says

“How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!” Luke 18:24

If we are too used to a nice comfortable predictable Christian life of every Sunday, going to church, giving a little bit money, frequent helping a little bit and the next twenty years you chart your Christian life as that way that is your security that is your idol because you are no longer dependent on God. You say it with your words but you are dependent on your upper middle class life. The story is really reinforced in the parable of the rich man

But Abraham replied, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony.’
Luke 16:25

It is same as verse 26, **woe to you well fed know you will go hungry.**

Luke is almost paraphrasing this blessings and woe into the parable. It is almost word for word and more interestingly you notice the poor person who everybody does not care, here again is that reverse order is named as Lazarus, the rich man to be any rich guy. It is a first time in a parable a name is picked up. When God finally names a person in a parable, it is a beggar. It shows us the values of the king in the kingdom of God, for God seeks out the poorest of the poor and God knows them by name. The rich man's main problem besides his lack of compassion for the poor is he had become his own God. Craig Bloomberg puts it this way,

*No ungodly poor people are ever exalted as models for emulation. No godly rich people, who are generous and compassionate in the use of their wealth, are ever condemned.... **The rich are not necessarily wicked, but frequent surplus goods have led people to imagine that their material***

resources can secure their futures so that they ignore God from whom alone comes any true security. Page 246, Chp 8, Neither Poverty nor Riches.

This morning for all of us upper class people, it goes beyond the fact that you are generous and church people are generally very generous, they are very quick to write a check. Here is something we want to take back. It is a simple question.

Is your security is in God alone or is it in your upper middle class life because that is the most subtle idol of all.

Money and Knowing the Poor

The poor	The rich
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financially disadvantaged(v20) • Deprived of basic needs(v21a) • Life of discontentment(v21b) • Socially excluded(vv22) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financially empowered(v24) • Benefit of abundant choices(v25a) • Life of self-actualization(v25b) • Socially privileged(v26)

Jesus is giving us two groups of people, meaning if you are rich you have what we call capital, you have seed capital that can take that wealth and grow you to become a person which is respected. You can do so many things with your money, you can send your kids to the best schools, and you can eat organic food. The poor eat whatever is on the table; they cannot afford to eat expensive food. They don't have the technology to assess, to see the best education systems; they don't have any of that.

He starts out from physical poverty to an emotional state which is about grieving to a social condition. It is from poor, hungry, grieving and then insulted. This is very-very profound. For Jesus to say this is something every poverty social model picks up. They call this, poverty is multidimensional. For us to understand this we will look at the rich.

Evan Spiegel is 24 years old. He owns Snap Inc. His net worth is US 4.4 billion. David Karp sold Tumblr to Yahoo for US 1.1 billion and he is 26. There is never in history that 20 year old made billions of dollars because of technology advancement, social media, globalization and text reforms the rich get really rich while the poor get very poor. There are few verses in the bible.

- The righteous care about **justice to the poor**, but the wicked have no such concerns. *Proverbs 29:7*
- Do not **hold back the wages** of a hired worker overnight. *Lev 19:13*

- One who **oppresses the poor** to increase his wealth and one who gives gifts to the rich—both come to poverty. *Proverbs 22:16*
- Whoever **oppresses the poor** shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honours God. *Proverbs 14:31*
- But you have **dishonoured the poor**. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? *James 2:6*
- The **wicked borrow and do not repay**, but the righteous give generously. *Psalms 37:21*
- “...do **justice**, love **mercy**, walk humbly with your God. *Micah 6:8*

It is not just money; it means the poor are denied many things to get them out of poverty. They are trapped in it. The system works against them. If you are rich you can manipulate the bank, manipulate the tax, manipulate many things and explode your wealth. If you are poor you cannot do anything.

There is a book written by Gary Haugen. This book is so powerful pastor Timothy Keller wrote a forward to it. He runs an NGO call International Justice Mission. He called what happens to the poor the Locust Effect. Meaning when the locust swamp, they swamp you and they overwhelm you, meaning there is root causes for poverty. His hypothesis is violence. And there is another word injustice. We all are living a good life and we don't care what happens to poor people. So we need to come down to earth a bit.

A woman was living in a county in America and she was from a very poor part of the state of Oregon where there was no police protection. She called 911 because a man was trying to get into the house. She told them, ‘he is trying to come in, can you save me?’ The police told her, we have police cuts, cannot send anybody over. The police operator tells her, ‘if he assaults you, can you ask him to go away. That man entered the house, rapes her, hits her and chokes her. Because she was poor, she couldn't live in a gated community. This is something we don't feel and how Gary Haugen talks about poverty leads to eviction, it leads to slavery, it leads to exploitation, it leads to desperation and this morning we ask ourselves, upper middle class Christians living in Elysium, what is our response. Jonathan Edwards says this,

Every human being has a moral conscience, you don't need to be Christian and our moral conscience whether you are a Christian or not when we see a poor person we will give money. But for Christians you go beyond a moral conscience and there are very noble non-Christians out there who do work to rescue woman from sex trades, who help drug addicts, a lot of my Buddhist friends are very kind people, put Christians to shame. Jonathan Edwards says that

You go beyond moral conscience and he calls this the gospel rule. If really God is everything to you and you are so in love with God not only it helps you go through difficult times, it will shape you to be so compassionate to what we just described. You are not going to say, I am going to

sit there and write the check. He is saying, the gospel evidence of your life is how you are compassionate to the poor and that is why Luke says so much about helping the poor and the Bible says so much about it and if we don't really respond to this you cannot say the gospel is center of your life that is just intellectual theology. Now he gives three areas and he says, the cornerstone to helping the poor is knowing the poor from a position of grace.

- Grace and helping the poor **financially**.
- Grace and helping the poor **personally**.
- Grace and helping the poor **emotionally**.

Grace and helping the poor **financially**

Luke says, **But if you lend to those who expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' lend to 'sinners', expecting repayment in full. Luke 6:34**

The bible is saying, no matter who kind you are to the poor there is a measure of self-interest. It is very unconscious. It is either because you were so corrupt in your life you feel so bad about it, you thought you better give more charity or it makes you feel better about yourself. People like to tell everybody about it. We had a inherit need to brag about it. So the first thing that grace tell is that God has unmerited favor, we don't deserve it. So when I give there is no credit to me. I should give, give willingly because God gave and because God gave with grace I give and I don't need my left hand to know what my right hand is saying.

Grace and helping the poor **personally**

But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."
Luke 14: 12-14

It is not so easy because we live in Elysium. You and I don't understand that kind of life. We all got problems, cancer, lawsuit but you and I don't understand what it is like to be in a living hell and Jonathan Edwards says, giving money is not enough, you need to know people personally and they will cost you as much as it cost Christ. So here is a challenge to all of us to find one person whom you think you can care for and they should be from a marginally disadvantaged group and I challenged you to care for that person for one year. Always remember this love is a commandment

Grace and helping the poor **emotionally**

"When our neighbour is on difficulty, he is afflicted; and we ought to have such a spirit of love to him, as to be afflicted with him in his affliction." Jonathan Edwards

We need to feel it and the compassion comes from the Latin word Cum Passio, which means to suffer with because if you don't feel it you cannot help a person. We are like Elysium where we

through down some goods to the poor, but I challenge you to do that because that is what the gospel tells us to do.

10 years ago a lot of Dalits became Muslim and Christians and Christianity today had a big article about how the Dalits were facing discrimination from Hindus, became Christians. Five years later BBC carried an article. Dalit Christians renounced Christianity and became Hindus. Because when they were buried they are not even allowed to be in the same graveyard with other Christians. So charity at a distance is just your moral conscience. Charity with the gospel is relational. It is relational to people whom the world rejects but God knows by name and God says Lazarus that is our call.

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, who had come to her him and to be healed of their diseases. Those troubled by impure spirits were cured, and the people all tried to touch him, because power was coming from him and healing them all. *Luke 6:17-36*

It looks like a healing rally, everybody comes and he talks about the poor. In the kingdom of God everything is reverse. To God power is not just demonstrated in healing and miraculous demonstrations of the supernatural. The most incredible sense of power what he is trying to tell us in the text is extraordinary love. Love for God is so deep that when poverty hits you, hunger hits you, insults hit you, you go through extraordinary love that is so deep that when you see the marginalize you go and help and know them and now he raises it to the hardest bar of all, extraordinary love so deep you love your enemies.

Money and Loving your Enemies

Gracia Burnham was from New Tribes Mission. For one year she was held by Abu Sayyaf. She said,

*“People in today’s world...will not pay attention to Christians because we can explain our theology in crystal-clear terms. **They will not esteem us because we give to charity** or maintain a positive outlook on life. What will impress them is genuine love in our hearts.”*

So here is the base and there is no greater love than to love your enemies because that shows the sincerity of it. Now here is the other thing which she said ties with Luke 6.

“We learned that the fruit of the Spirit could not be drummed up by ourselves. We couldn’t force joyfulness or loving action or a peaceful mind. The Holy Spirit had to grow those things within us.”

A lot of times when we have problems with people, a lot of this got to do with money. When this happens your hate is so deep you cannot see it and it is time to sue and Hebrew says this

You suffered along with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions. *Hebrews 10:34*

Loving your enemies with your finances/possessions

- Pray to see beyond your hurt.
- Take time to understand those that seek to tear you down- get into their lives, thoughts, etc.

The text is saying, love your enemies, do good to them and lend to them. Why to lend them, because our enemy is also a human being who needed money. Our enemy is also possibly a father or a mother. He also has children, he is also a human being, he is a sinner like you, he has needs and if you can go past that your love is so powerful it is as the healing Jesus did on the sermon of the plane. That is the hard call for all of us.

- Ask if giving away your possessions will make them see God's extraordinary love.

Sometimes giving it away just makes them exploit you. So God is not saying that you give it to everybody, sometimes you don't.

OUR CHALLENGE

- Jesus was rich but for our sake became poor.
- Jesus had no place to rest his head.
- Jesus was called man of sorrows.
- Jesus humbled himself upon death on the cross.

Jesus was born in a manger. He had no fixed assets, no shares in the bank, no property. He didn't even have his own transport and when he entered Jerusalem he had to borrow a donkey and when he died he didn't even have his own tomb, some rich person had to bury him. That is the king of the kingdom and his values should be our values. Jesus challenges us to a life like that.