

Curses Disguised As Comforts

Luke 6:24-26

When I was a kid, I remember watching the cartoon *Dudley DoRight*, which ran in the early 1960's. The villain, Snidely Whiplash, would always tie up Nell, Dudley's girlfriend, seeking to do her harm. In one show, Snidely tied Nell to the railroad tracks, and as the train approached, Nell cried "**Woe is me.**" The hero of the show, Dudley DoRight, came and saved Nell from her certain doom. In our text, we hear Jesus using the word "woe" four times, except this isn't a cartoon. It's real life. The word translated woe (*ouai*) means "an interjection denoting pain or displeasure, as in 'woe, alas!'" It is often used in the Bible to express pity for those people who stand under divine judgment (Isaiah 3:10-11; Ecclesiastes 10:16).

I. The way Jesus thinks is opposite of the way most of us think.

Jesus says 'blessed' are my people who are poor, who mourn, who are hungry, and are persecuted. We saw this 'blessing' (happiness) is an inside job; for knowing Jesus transforms the inner person. He Now gives four woes. "**Woe to those who are rich, who laugh, who are full, who are spoken well of**" What really sets Jesus' blessings and woes apart is that they are 180 degrees contrary to reason. You'd expect someone to say, "*The rich are fortunate ... but alas for the poor.*" Instead, Jesus says just the opposite. Jesus knows how to cause us to sit up and evaluate what it is we value in life.

II. Jesus knows that curses often come to us disguised as comforts.

(A). The poor and the rich (6:20, 24).

"Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God" (6:20). "**But woe to you who are rich, for you are receiving your comfort in full**" (6:24). Jesus is saying the man who is 'not rich toward God' (Luke 12:16-21), but is only worried about building bigger barns, is a man doomed. Aren't there any rich believers? Of course, Lydia was one. But Jesus is using a sharp contrast to make a vital point to his disciples. Those who are wealthy often feel insulated by their wealth. You can't serve two masters; God and money (Matt. 6:24) for there are two opposite paths.

(B). The hungry and the well-fed (6:21a, 25a).

"Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied" (6:21a). "**Woe to you who are well fed now, for you shall be hungry**" (6:25a). The people in Jesus' day knew hunger. They all had felt envy for all those who ate well during famine and drought. Jesus is simply turning the table. He is the Bread of Life. "The one feeding on this bread lives forever" (Jn. 6:58b) and is satisfied.

(C). Those mourning and those laughing (6:21b, 25b).

"Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh" (6:21b). "**Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep**" (6:25b). Those who share God's broken heart for His world now will in the future laugh and rejoice at what the world will be like when He comes (Matthew 8:11).

(D). Those who are hated and those who are praised (6:22-23, 26).

"Blessed are you when men hate you" (22). "**Woe to you when all men speak well of you**" (26). "Men and women," Jesus is saying, "don't seek popularity and acceptance. This is a false path.

III. Jesus' teaching in this Sermon on the Plain gives us incredible wisdom in how to live.

(A). Seek first Jesus and His rule in your life ... and everything else will be added.

Nothing wrong with being rich, full, laughing or praised; the issue is what are you seeking?

(B). When the rule and ways of Jesus hold sway over you, there is no panic during panic.

There is no depression during depression; no fear during fear, no anxiety during anxious times. ("**Be anxious for nothing.**" Anxiety is a sign that you are placing our confidence in comforts.

(C). Following Jesus can be characterized by both a *present blessing* and a future gratification.