

## Sixth Sunday after Epiphany

### OLD TESTAMENT

Jeremiah 17:5-8

#### *The Sin of Judah*

**5 Thus says the LORD: “Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the LORD. 6 He is like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see any good come. He shall dwell in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land. 7 “Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD. 8 He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit.”**

**17:5–8** Jeremiah shows the real problem. It lies in the heart of the people. He contrasts the two ways – the way of unbelief and the way of faith. The real difference comes out in the long term. (PBC)

**17:5** *Cursed*. awrar – Execrate or bitter curse. To bind or restrict as with a law or spell. This term pronounces punishments, threats and restrictions. (QV)

Cursed is the person who puts his hope for the future in something human, who looks for ultimate security in other human beings. (PBC)

*Man*. The person referred to in this passage parallels the young strong person, or one like him, in full possession and use of all his powers. (CSB)

*flesh*. The opposite of “spirit” (see Isa 31:3; see also Job 10:4). (CSB)

Cf Is 40:6; Ps 103:15–16. Trust in human resources is foolish idolatry. Ter: “He forbids all implicit trust in man, and likewise in the applause of man” (ANF 3:369). (TLSB)

John refers to this feeling of confidence as “boasting” of what he had and does” (1 John 2:16). This refers to the unshakable confidence that there is nothing we are unable to do, no problem that in the end we cannot solve, no force we cannot master and turn to our use. This confidence is the pride that grows from all our accomplishments, the gleaming monuments of our technology. But what is the foundation of all this hope? Man and flesh. Man was made from dust and shall return to dust. The end of one who trusts in flesh will be empty and fruitless. Jeremiah described this condition in terms very familiar to his hearers. (PBC)

*whose heart turns away* – The heart is the key. (CSB)

Matthew 15:19 For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.”

Luke 6:45 The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart, For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.”

**17:6** *shrub*. Apart from these two places in Jeremiah, the Hebrew for this word appears elsewhere in the OT only in Ps 102:17, where it is translated “destitute.” (CSB)

To the east of Jerusalem lay the Judean wastelands in which even a scraggly juniper bush had to struggle to live. A little further lay a wilderness in which nothing green lived, the land of salt along the Dead Sea. (PBC)

Literally, "like a naked one in the wilderness," one destitute of all means of subsistence. (Kretzmann)

*an good come*. Lit. “good.” The Hebrew for this word is translated “bounty” in Dt 28:12, where it refers to rain. (CSB)

The lack of water prevents the maturing of crops. (Kretzmann)

*salt land*. An evidence of God’s curse also in Dt 29:23. (CSB)

Further out there was nothing green at all because of the salt from the Dead Sea. (CSB)

The soil here is impregnated with alkali. (Kretzmann)

*places of the wilderness* – Over against such a person the Lord pictures him who conducts himself in agreement with His will. (Kretzmann)

**17:7** *blessed* – *bawrak* – To kneel and bless God in adoration. (QV)

*trusts ... trust*. The same Hebrew root underlies both words. (CSB)

With the confidence of true faith. (Kretzmann)

What a contrast with the blessedness of the person who trusts the Lord! This person places his hope, his faith, his confidence for all things in the Lord.

**17:8** Using the figures of Psalm 1, Jeremiah pictures this person as a tree planted by the source of water that does not fail. Therefore it is always green and fruit-bearing. It does not have to fear even in the hardest and hottest times. (PBC)

*like a tree planted by water* – The following are notes from Psalm 1:3 ...They have roots in something that will always sustain them. The storms of life will not affect them because their hope and trust is in the Lord. Because they are planted and just accidentally sown, they are special and are nurtured. (PBC)

*stream*. See Isa 44:4, where the same Hebrew root is used again to illustrate the source of the righteous man’s strength. (CSB)

Such is the figure of the believer. He lives by the stream of living water, flowing from Scripture, giving him fellowship with God Himself. Because of this living-giving water, this fountain of life, he can stand up under the toughest times. Jeremiah, no doubt, wants the reader to understand that he too had found such strength in the Lord. It was his faith alone, sustained and nourished from the Word, that enabled him to be true to his calling and to stand up under the fierce opposition he encountered. (PBC)

*drought.* The stream at which it is located will never dry up. In order to bring this truth home with particular emphasis, the Lord describes the human heart as it is. (Kretzmann)

*bear fruit.* The Lord's answer to Jeremiah's complaint in 12:1-2. (CSB)

The good that these people do is a natural outgrowth of their faith which in turn is solidly rooted in the Word.

## EPISTLE

### 1 Corinthians 15:12-20

#### *The Resurrection of the Dead*

**12 Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. 14 And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. 15 We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. 16 For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. 17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19 If in Christ we have hope[b] in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. 20 But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.**

**15:12-19** Some at Corinth were saying that there was no resurrection of the body, and Paul draws a number of conclusions from this false contention. If the dead do not rise from the grave, then (1) "not even Christ has been raised" (v. 13); (2) "our preaching is useless" (v. 14); (3) "so is your faith" (v. 14); (4) we are "false witnesses" that God raised Christ from the dead (v. 15); (5) "your faith is futile" (v. 17); (6) "you are still in your sins" (v. 17) and still carry the guilt and condemnation of sin; (7) "those also who have fallen asleep [have died] in Christ are lost" (v. 18); and (8) "we are to be pitied" who "only for this life ... hope in Christ" (v. 19) and put up with persecution and hardship. (CSB)

Paul demonstrates thorough skill in classic logic and rhetoric (the art of persuasion) by using careful arguments. His if-then sentences test impossible notions and show the foolish implications of the Corinthians' doubts about the resurrection. (TLSB)

**15:12** *Christ is proclaimed as raised.* Christ was raised historically on the third day. Paul uses this same verb form (that expresses the certainty of Christ's bodily resurrection) a total of seven times in this passage (vv. 4, 12-14, 16-17, 20). (CSB)

*no resurrection.* Greek learning and culture opposed the idea that the body could rise from the dead. Some Greeks believed that the body and physical things were inherently bad but that the spirit was inherently good. Members of the Corinthian congregation continued to hold these opinions, even though they seem to have accepted that Christ rose from the dead. (TLSB)

**15:16** Paul repeats his main premise (v 13). (TLSB)

**15:17** *still in your sins*. Christ's sacrifice on the cross redeemed us from sin and from death. But if Christ had remained in the grave, His victory over sin would be incomplete. The complete act of redemption—called the Gospel—is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins (cf vv 3–4). (TLSB)

**15:18** *perished*. Destruction beyond hope of redemption. (TLSB)

**15:19-28** Paul's first letter to the Corinthians addresses specific problems and questions that the early church encountered there. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Paul deals with these challenges in a straightforward Law/Gospel approach. Present-day pastors confront many of the same problems and challenges, i.e., sexual immorality, marriage and divorce, strife, division in the church, abuse of the Lord's Supper, spiritual gifts, and the resurrection of the dead. This epistle is timely and particularly relevant for us today. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

In the 15th chapter, Paul deals with the question of the resurrection of the body. He also assures his readers that because Christ was raised in his body, we too shall have a bodily resurrection at his return. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

**15:19** *most to be pitied* – If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied,” and we are also the greatest fools, for we alone renounce all goods and comforts, all joy and happiness of this life and of all creatures, we expose ourselves to every peril of life and limb in vain and for nothing and to the terrible and unspeakable terror of hell, so that we have to live in contempt and in misery before the world and in eternal fear before God. (Luther)

εἰ ἐν τῇ ζωῇ ταύτῃ ... ἡλπικότες ἐσμὲν μόνον—Some interpreters take the adverb μόνον, “only,” with the verb immediately preceding it: “If in this life we have only hoped”—that is, we have no certainty, only a hope that is an empty shell, a hope which ultimately disappoints us. But the NT does not speak of hope in that negative way. More likely the adverb “only” modifies the whole sentence, and above all the phrase “in this life.” That is the consensus of the English versions; cf. RSV: “If *for this life only* we have hoped in Christ ...” (emphasis added). (CC p. 560)

Indeed, Paul continues, if the skeptics are right, Christians have lost both the present and the future. They do not enjoy present forgiveness in Christ, nor do they have any hope that extends beyond the veil into heaven (15:19; cf. Heb 6:18-20). Their hope is only good for this life. Contrary to what Paul maintained in 1 Cor. 13:13, hope would not not endure and be fulfilled in eternity. With such limited hope, Christians would be “of all people most miserable. They would have staked their lives on a great delusion. Even more did this apply to Paul and his coworkers. When they could have been “living it up,” eating and drinking, they had subjected themselves to extraordinary dangers and labors because of their resurrection hope (15:30-32; cf. 2Cor 6:4-10; 11:23-29). Was their hope merely a mirage? (CC p. 564)

### **Practical Implications**

For Paul, Christ's resurrection is inseparably connected to the future resurrection of Christians; they are two sides of the same coin. Through Baptism Christians have become members of Christ's own body (1 Cor 12:13). Consequently, the bodily resurrection of Jesus guarantees the resurrection of the believers' bodies. And that resurrection will be the fulfillment of the gift of salvation accomplished through Christ's death and inaugurated by Christ's own bodily rising. Paul's entire argument hinges on the unbreakable connection between Christ's resurrection and the resurrection of believers on the Last Day. (CC p. 564)

Here is profound and direct insight for our proclamation of Christ's Easter victory. Easter means that the victory has been won by Christ. At the same time, for God's people the full participation in that victory is yet to be experienced. Easter is, then, an eschatological event with end-time implications that the church must never forget if she is not to lose her hope. (CC pp. 564-565)

Contemporary Christians, including preachers, sometimes seem to forget that the final Christian hope is not just for the soul to enter Christ's presence after the death of the body. It is surely true that the Christian's soul goes "to be with Christ" immediately upon death (Phil 1:23; see also Lk 23:43; 2 Cor 5:8; Rev 6:9). At times, however, it seems as though this has become the only goal in the minds and hearts of believers, and that the return of Christ Jesus and the resurrection of the body do not play as vital a place in everyday living, believing, and hoping. (CC p. 565)

But the great hope toward which the church and indeed all creation looks is the renewal of that creation and the resurrection of the body. On that day, God will receive the full harvest of which Christ's own bodily resurrection is the firstfruits (1 Cor 15:20). For Christ will on the Last Day "raise me and all the dead and will grant eternal life to me and to all who believe in Christ. This is most certainly true." Without this hope, the Gospel proclaimed by Paul would collapse. Faith would be futile, sin and its consequences would remain, fellow Christians who have died would have perished, and humanity should look upon us Christians as people who are wasting their time. (CC p. 565)

Paul has led the Corinthians from their view—that there is no final resurrection of the body—to the place of despair to which such a view inevitably leads. Next, with the glorious rhetorical pivot of "but as it is ..." (15:20) Paul will move them from despair back to hope. (CC p. 565)

**15:20** Leaving behind the depressing hypotheses which filled the previous paragraph (1 Cor. 15:12–19: "if there were no resurrection of the dead ..."), Paul gives a ringing affirmation: "But as it is [ὡνὶ δέ], Christ has been raised from the dead" (15:20). The Corinthians should never doubt this basic tenet of their creed, nor should they doubt its implications for their own resurrection. For the risen Christ is not the only one who would rise; he is the "firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (15:20; cf. Rev 1:5). Just as the Israelites brought the sheaf of firstfruits to the Lord on the "Sunday" after Passover as a sign that the whole harvest belonged to him (Lev 23:9–15), so Christ's resurrection was the pledge that all who had fallen asleep in him would be physically raised as he was. (CC p. 568)

*but – nuni – But now, just now, but as it is, meaning that it is a fact and this is the end of all speculation. (TLSB)*

*Christ has indeed been raised. Paul's categorical conclusion based on his evidence set forth in vv. 3–8. (CSB)*

"Christ has indeed been raised." The verb *hegēgertai* is the perfect passive of *hegeirō*, "to raise." This verb form expresses the certainty of Christ's bodily resurrection as an accomplished fact. This is the 7th occurrence of the verb in this chapter. "Make no mistake," Paul is saying, "Christ has been raised!" It is done! We know it and believe it! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

But He came forth alive from the grave in which He lay and destroyed and consumed both devil and death, who had devoured Him. He tore the devil's belly and hell's jaws asunder and ascended into heaven, where He is now seated in eternal life and glory." This is to be comfort and defiance. For on His name we are baptized, and we hear and profess His Word. After Him we are called Christians, and for His sake we suffer every misfortune and grief from the hand of the devil. For this is not aimed at us but at Him and His kingdom, whose enemy the devil is. He tries to destroy it, and he treats us so roughly and wearies us with pursuit, harassment, and death so that we might forsake Christ. (Luther)

The apostle comes now to the triumphant assertion of the fact, the proof of which he has already stated. (CB)

*firstfruits*. The first sheaf of the harvest given to the Lord (Lev 23:10–11, 17, 20) as a token that all the harvest belonged to the Lord and would be dedicated to him through dedicated lives. So Christ, who has been raised, is the guarantee of the resurrection of all of God’s redeemed people (cf. 1Th 4:13–18). (CSB)

The earliest portion of a harvest, which Israel sacrificed to God in thanks for the full harvest to come. (TLSB)

The first of any crop, herd or family was given to the Lord. This represented all the rest of the crop, herd or family. In this case it means that Christ’ resurrection includes the resurrection of everyone else.

This is the perfect passive. This verb form expresses the certainty of Christ’s bodily resurrection as an accomplished fact. This is the 7<sup>th</sup> occurrence of the verb in this chapter. “Make no mistake,” Paul is saying, “Christ has been raised!” It is done! We know it and believe it!

ἀπαρχή—This is one of the Greek words the LXX uses (e.g., Ex 23:19; Ezek 44:30) to translate כְּבִיָּדִים, the “firstfruits” God commanded the Israelites to offer to him (e.g., Ex 23:19; 34:22, 26; Lev 23:17, 20). The “firstfruits” were the first produce from the harvest, with the full harvest yet to come. The LXX also uses the word to translate בְּכֹרֶת, the “firstborn” son and “firstborn” animals that were to be offered to God (e.g., Ex 22:28; Deut 12:6, 17). The NT regularly uses this term of a first installment which betokens a greater fullness to come (Rom 8:23; 11:16; 16:5; 1 Cor 15:20, 23; 16:15; 2 Thess 2:13; James 1:18; Rev 14:4). Cf. LXX Lev 23:10. (CC p. 566)

And what is more than that, by calling Christ “the Firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” Paul wishes to signify that the resurrection is to be viewed and understood as having already begun in Christ, indeed, as being more than half finished, and that this remnant of death is to be regarded as no more than a deep sleep, and that the future resurrection of our body will not differ from suddenly awaking from such a sleep. For the main and best part of this has already come to pass, namely, that Christ, our Head, has arisen. But now that the Head is seated on high and lives, there is no longer any reason for concern. (Luther)

## GOSPEL Luke 6:17-26

### *Jesus Ministers to a Great Multitude*

**17 And 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 and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, 18 who came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. And those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. 19 And all the crowd sought to touch him, for power came out from him and healed them all.**

**6:17-49** Luke begins the larger section (6:17–49) with Jesus standing on a level place. This could be a level place in the hill country, even on the side of the mountain on which Jesus prayed, the same mountain referred to in Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7). Jesus’ healing and teaching take place in this locale after he has come down from the mountain where he prayed and selected the Twelve. (CC)

These crowds came from everywhere, from all of Judea, from the holy city of Jerusalem, and from the coastal towns of Tyre and Sidon. Tyre and Sidon lie outside of “Judea” and represent the pagan/Gentile nations (cf. 10:13–15). The crowds are drawn to Jesus especially because he is the healer they seek. As Luke puts it, “power [δύναμις] was going out from him” (9:19; cf. 8:46). The hearer has seen power come from Jesus to heal (5:17; cf. 8:46). This overwhelming support of the crowds and Jesus’ disciples contrasts with the negative response of the Pharisees and scribes when Jesus healed the paralytic. Here the hearer sees coming together those who will make up the church: Jesus, the teacher and healer; the twelve apostles; the other disciples (the seventy[-two]); and the people coming for healing from unclean spirits and diseases. The prophecy of Jesus in his first sermon in Nazareth is coming true (4:18–19). He is present in the world as the Messiah, who brings release (ἄφεσις) from creation’s bondage to sin. The final words summarize this: “and he was healing all” (9:19). (CC)

**6:17** *with them* – μετ’ αὐτῶν—This refers to the twelve apostles Jesus just named, who come down from the mountain with him. (CC)

*stood on a level place.* Perhaps a plateau, which would satisfy both this context and that in Mt 5:1. (CSB)

The teaching that follows is sometimes called the Sermon on the Plain. Not surprisingly, much of the material recorded here also appears in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5–7). Jesus repeated His teachings at various times and locations, as speakers commonly do. (TLSB)

*crowd* – ὄχλος πολὺς μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ—The crowd of disciples out of which he chose the Twelve seems to be waiting for him when he comes down from the mountain. (CC)

There were three audiences: the crowd of people, the disciples, and the Twelve from among those disciples. (CC p. 283)

*people* – ὁ λαός, which sometimes is a term for the faithful remnant of God’s people, see textual notes and comments at 1:10 and 18:43. (CC p. 265)

**6:18** *came to hear and be healed* – οἱ ἤλθον ἀκούσαι αὐτοῦ καὶ ἰαθῆναι—The antecedent—those who came to hear and be healed by Jesus—includes the great crowd of disciples and the great multitude of people (6:17). On ἀκούω as a technical term for catechumens, see comments at 5:1, the Sermon on the Plain (6:27, 47, 49), the parable of the sower (8:8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 18), and Jesus’ discussion of the new kinship (8:21). ἀκούσαι and ἰαθῆναι are both infinitives of purpose. (CC)

**6:19** *sought to touch him* – ἐζήτουν ἅπτεσθαι αὐτοῦ—The imperfect implies continuous, almost desperate seeking to touch Jesus (infinitive of purpose), and the reason is stated by the causal phrase introduced by ὅτι: “because power was going out from him.” (CC p. 265)

They realized that power was coming from Him and healing them all. As great crowds came to have Jesus heal them, they also came to hear Him preach. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 1)

**6:17–19** Jesus preaches and ministers to the crowds. Jesus continues to touch our lives today through the ongoing ministry of His life-giving Word. • “Lord, Your words are waters living When my thirsting spirit pleads. Lord, Your words are bread life-giving; On Your words my spirit feeds. Lord, Your words will be my light Through death’s cold and dreary night; Yes, they are my sword prevailing And my cup of joy unfailing!” Amen. (LSB 589:3) (TLSB)

*The Beatitudes*

**20 And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said: “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. 21 “Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied. “Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. 22 “Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! 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.**

**6:20–49** Luke’s Sermon on the Plain, apparently parallel to Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5–7). Although this sermon is much shorter than the one in Matthew, they both begin with the Beatitudes and end with the lesson of the builders. Some of Matthew’s Sermon is found in other portions of Luke (e.g., 11:2–4; 12:22–31, 33–34), suggesting that the material may have been given on various occasions in Jesus’ preaching. (CSB)

**6:20–26** The structure of these beatitudes and woes is parallel, with the woes reversing the status of the beatitudes. The first beatitude speaks about the poor and the first woe about the rich; the second beatitude speaks about the hungry and the second woe about those who are filled; the third beatitude speaks about those who are crying and the third woe about those who are laughing; the fourth beatitude speaks about those who hate and the fourth woe about those who speak well. There are other parallels as well: the first three beatitudes and woes contain ὅτι (“for”), and the fourth beatitude and woe contain ὅταν (“when”) clauses; the second and third beatitudes and woes speak of “now” (νῦν); the fourth and last beatitude and woe contain the expression “for according to the same things their fathers did”—to the prophets (beatitude) or false prophets (woe). (CC p. 285)

**6:20–23** See Mt 5:3–12. The Beatitudes go deeper than material poverty (v. 20) and physical hunger (v. 21). Matthew’s account indicates that Jesus spoke of poverty “in spirit” (Mt 5:3) and hunger “for righteousness” (Mt 5:6). (CSB)

As in the Sermon on the Mount, the first words Jesus speaks are blessings (cf Mt 5:1–12). (TLSB)

When one enters the Christian community by Baptism, these beatitudes describe the character of those who belong to this community. Luke’s hearers then and now should see beyond themselves to the One who was poor for them, who hungered in the wilderness for them, who wept for them as he entered Jerusalem, who received hate, insults, and exclusion for them, who was cast out and crucified outside of Jerusalem as evil – the Son of Man. The Christological character of the beatitudes would not be lost on Luke’s hearers, who see themselves only in terms of how they see Jesus, who understood their baptismal incorporation into his body and into all that he brings. The catechumen, who enters the Christological life through Baptism, is taught about the stage of this life by being told in the gospel how Jesus lived his life in a hostile world that put him to death. Those who join his community will live in this same life in this same world. This Christological reading applies not only to the beatitudes, but also to the rest of the Sermon on the Plain, beginning with the woes that show life without Christ (6:24–26), the imperatives of catechesis that point the way to this Christological life (6:27–38), and the goal of catechesis that describes the enlightenment, the fruit and the foundation of this life (6:39–49). (CC p. 287)

A beatitude is a declaration of blessedness. The state of blessedness that believers enjoy results from the fact that God is in communion with them through his Son, Jesus Christ. (CC p. 267)

A beatitude describes Gospel gifts that pertain to each and every believer. A beatitude may function like a Gospel invitation, in which the blessings of the Gospel are held out as enticements to bring or to keep the hearer in God’s kingdom. (CC p. 268)



Some of the beatitudes function in a manner similar to that of an absolution. Particularly the beatitudes of 6:20–23 are intended to comfort afflicted believers with the assurance that God knows their plight, looks upon them with favor, and will deliver them, filling their need with blessings to the point of overflowing. Like an absolution, a beatitude is a speech act. (CC p. 268)

Most of the beatitudes draw on the Gospel theme of the Great Reversal (the idea that the first shall be last, the last shall be first, also expressed in many other kinds of reversal). The Great Reversal runs throughout Luke and is particularly prominent in the Magnificat. (CC p. 268)

The Great Reversal is strongly eschatological, and so the beatitudes contain the tension between the suffering of believers *now* versus the blessed comfort they will enjoy *then* in the eschaton. *Already* they possess those blessings through faith in the promise, but those blessings have *not yet* been fully realized. (CC p. 269)

The most important feature of the beatitudes is that they are *Christological*. *All God's blessings are found in Christ, and Christ is the source of every blessing*. Therefore it would be a misuse of the beatitudes to suggest that they are principles or guidelines that inform people of the way they should live so that God will reward their efforts with blessings. That would turn the beatitudes from Gospel into Law. Instead, the purpose of the beatitudes is to instill and strengthen faith in Christ alone. (CC p. 269)

Several important aspects of blessing as described by St. Paul in the context of Eph 1:3 also apply to the Lukan beatitudes. First, the blessings are not rewards for a Christian's supposed accomplishments, but rather are a consequence of election in Christ. (CC p. 270)

Second, *all* God's blessings are in Christ, and every believer receives *all* these blessings—"every spiritual blessing" (Eph 1:3)—by virtue of being *in Christ*. Neither Jesus nor Paul sets up degrees of blessedness, as if some Christians possessed more or greater blessings than other believers. (CC p 270)

Third, these blessings are "*spiritual*" blessings. Therefore the beatitudes are abused if it is suggested that they are principles to live by in order to achieve success in the things of this world, whether that be one's occupation, finances, or relationships. (CC pp. 270-71)

The "spiritual blessing" (Eph 1:3) of the Spirit as the "down payment of our inheritance" (Eph 1:14) highlights the eschatological dimension of blessedness (cf. also "inherit blessing" in 1 Pet 3:9). God's blessings are stored up and waiting "in the heavenly places" (Eph 1:3), and the full enjoyment of them must wait until the believer joins Christ there. (CC p. 271)

The OT blessings certainly do include and are the result of God's grace, favor, and imputed righteousness. Sometimes the blessing is also expressly related to the work of the Holy Spirit (Judg 13:24–25; Is 44:3). (CC p. 272)

The following was an article in USA Today in late July 2004 entitled (How many can pass the I'm blessed inspection test?) "For years now, I have taken my neighbors' cars to be inspected. It's a little gift I give them, one of those random 'acts of kindness' if you speak bumper sticker. Most people hate the chore. And it doesn't help any that the inspection station is the District of Columbia isn't in the best part of town. But for some perverse reason, I enjoy the outing. Maybe it has to do with the fact that it's never my car. All pressure is off. Pass, fail – it doesn't really matter to me, although I'm happier when I can bring good news back to the neighborhood. You passed! I always make the trip early in the morning. The station is on the other side of town, so I have to drive across the National Mall to get there. It's one of the few times during the year I get to see the sun rising behind the Capitol, the mist rising off the Tidal Basin, the commuters barreling down the Southeast Expressway with road rage in their eyes. I could do

without the last, but two of three isn't bad. So there I was the other morning, waiting in line – Lane 4, to be exact – reading the paper, when I was finally told to pull up to the garage entrance. A man about my age waved me closer, then opened my door. It was 6:55 a.m. ‘How are you doing, this morning?’ he asked. ‘Fine,’ I said, bit startled at his perkiness. ‘And you?’ ‘Blessed,’ he said. ‘Blessed.’ I walked into the inspection station and down the long glass hallway where residents can view their cars going through the paces. He said ‘blessed,’ I thought to myself, blessed. There he was dealing with more-than-likely unhappy people, standing outside on a steamy July morning, and he felt blessed. I can't get the man out of my mind. Why does it seem the people who appear to have the worst jobs often seem to be the happiest? (I'm not talking about the clerk at my local CVS, who is most unhappy to be there.) I'm talking about the woman here at the newspaper whose job it is to clean the bathrooms. She's the happiest woman in the building. Always smiling. Always say hello. She just had an operation and is now back. Happy as ever. The men who painted my house this summer were happy. I couldn't understand a word they were saying but they were in the hot sun, singing away. Lunch under the tree out front was even a festive affair, constant laughter floating up to my window. And why is it the people with the most seem the most unhappy? (I'm just asking the questions here, folks. I don't have the answers.) Earlier this summer, a senator's wife got into an altercation with another shopper at a local garden center. If I remember correctly, it was over mulch and loading of said mulch into the trunk of the car. Someone was being blocked, I think the senator's was doing the blocking. In the end, charges were filed, lawyers were called, people went to court, ‘no comments’ were issued. The judge should have just ordered them all to get their cars inspected. Lane 4.

**6:20** *disciples* – οὗς μαθητάς—This word for “disciple” comes from μαθάνω, “to learn.’ ’ Although μαθητής does not occur in the LXX it seems to be equivalent to the Hebrew תלמיד, which only occurs once in the OT (1 Chr 25:8) but is common in the Talmud (whose name is closely related to it). The Hebrew term designates a student who sits at the feet of a rabbi. Early Christians called disciples “catechumens” or “hearers of the Word” (see comments on 5:1). Both disciples and catechumens learn about the kingdom through the teaching of Jesus. μαθητής occurs frequently. In Acts, “disciple” is the equivalent for “Christian.” (CC p. 278)

Disciples are learners, students, or in early Christian parlance, *catechumens*. Here they are taught by Jesus in the same way the early church would later teach catechumens. (CC p. 283)

*blessed* – μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοί—Luke includes no verbs in the beatitudes and the woes. Most Hebrew blessings and curses likewise are nominal sentences without verbs. Verbs are supplied only in brackets in order to capture the force of the original. On μακάριος, see comments at Lk 1:42 on εὐλογημένος. This translation follows the KJV's “blessed” instead of “happy,” found in some translations, since “happy” implies a human emotion, while “blessed” implies that God's grace and favor rest upon the person. The promise of bliss for those who are blessed is eschatological, not temporal. The blessing of joy does not come from being poor, but from the promise of God's kingdom that comes to those who understand the eschatological meaning of their poverty. (CC pp. 278- 279)

*poor* – These are those who refer to those who have only empty hands to bring before their master. They are “beggarly poor” in this context those who know that “all of their righteous acts are like filthy rags” (Is. 64:6). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 1)

An emphasis in Lk. Because Jesus blesses the “poor in spirit” in Mt 5:3, the poverty spoken of here may include spiritual humility. (TLSB)

*yours* – ὅτι ὑμετέρα—Each of the first three beatitudes and woes is followed by a subordinate causal clause (translated “for”) that is in the second person. This distinguishes Luke's beatitudes from Matthew's, which are in the third person. The causal ὅτι is not found in the fourth and final beatitude and

woe, marking them as separate from the others and functioning as summaries of the previous three beatitudes or woes. (CC p. 279)

*kingdom of God* – ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ—The present tense indicates that the possession of the kingdom of God is a present reality by God’s grace. (CC p. 279)

**6:21** *now* – νῦν—This word occurs in the second and third beatitudes, which separates these two beatitudes from the first and last. It contrasts with the future tense in the causal clause, i.e., χορτασθήσεσθε and γελάσετε. This suggests a parallelism between the first and last beatitudes and one between the middle two. It does not indicate that one is more significant than the other, for all four are equally important. It simply suggests that there are different accents. (CC p. 279)

*hunger* – We have an insatiable appetite to know more about Jesus and His Word. Like a person who has been starved devours bread, the believer devours the Word. We hunger for the bread of life, and Jesus feeds us as a Shepherd in Word and body and blood. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 1)

Like poverty, this hunger may have a spiritual aspect. (TLSB)

*you shall be satisfied* – χορτασθήσεσθε—This is a theological passive: you will be satisfied *by God*. (CC p. 279)

For those who are hungering, God fully satisfies us by richly and daily forgiving our sins in Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 1)

*you will laugh* – They will do this even as we “weep” in this place of tears and sin, God’s ready mercy and grace flow down to us in His means of grace until that day when the Lord “will wipe every tear from their eyes” (Rev. 21:14). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 1)

**6:22** *whenn people hate you...exclude you* – ὅταν—This word occurs twice and replaces ὅτι as the introduction to the subordinate clauses that describe the state of blessedness. They are temporal instead of causal. This returns us to the first beatitude, which suggests a present condition or one that will soon be a reality. The first ὅταν clause is completed by the final clause “on account of [ἐνεκα] the Son of Man.” The second ὅταν clause expands the first one and explains what it means: you will know you are hated when they exclude you (ἀφορίσωσιν), insult you (ὀνειδίσωσιν), and throw out your name as evil (ἐκβάλωσιν τὸ ὄνομα). L. T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 107, notes that “the three verbs therefore move from attitude (hate) to action (setting apart), to speech (scorn).” (CC p. 279)

Here Jesus speaks of the persecution and suffering that come to those who by faith belong to Him. Hate leads to setting apart, scorn, and ridicule. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 1)

*on account of the Son of Man* – When we confess Jesus, we are also willing to suffer for His sake (1 Peter 4:14). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 1)

**6:23** *rejoice* – χάρητε and σκιρτήσατε may suggest joyful dancing, such as accompanies a wedding. σκιρτάω occurred earlier at 1:41, 44, while χαίρω denotes the joy of a feast in 15:32. (CC p. 279)

This is an image of people leaping who cannot contain themselves because of the good fortune that has come to them. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 1)

**6:20–23** Jesus blesses the crowds and describes their estates in this life and the life to come. Even amid sorrows, God’s blessings prevail. • Set my heart, dear Savior, on Your blessings and promises, that I remain steadfast in all circumstances. Amen. (TLSB)

*Jesus Pronounces Woes*

**24 “But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. 25 “Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry. “Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. 26 “Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.**

**6:24–26** The four woes are exact opposites of the four blessings just uttered (vv 20–23). Particularly noteworthy is the contrast between the persecution awaiting Jesus’ followers (v 22) and the popularity of those who please men (v 26). (TLSB)

**6:24** *but* – πλήν—This strong adversative begins the woes to show the contrast with the previous beatitudes. (CC p. 279)

*woe* – οὐαί—Woes are found in the OT, particularly prophetic texts, and indicate that the person stands under the judgment of God (e.g., Is 5:8–23; Amos 6:1; Hab 2:6). Jesus warns of “woe” in other places in Luke (10:13—Chorazin and Bethsaida; 11:42–52—Pharisees; 17:1—those who tempt others to sin; 21:23—pregnant women during the last days; 22:22—the betrayer). (CC p. 279)

*to you* – ὑμῖν—The antecedent, those to whom the woes are addressed, is not specified. It is general enough to be addressed to all those who fail to understand that God’s kingdom comes in Jesus, which in the course of Luke’s gospel will include all Jesus’ disciples until after the resurrection. But the hearer knows that the religious establishment fits these categories best. (CC p. 279)

**6:24–26** This section is a point-by-point negative counterpart of vv. 20–22. (CSB)

**6:25** *woe...laugh...weep* – οὐαί, οἱ γελῶντες νῦν, ὅτι πενθήσετε καὶ κλαύσετε—James 4:9 is remarkably similar and illustrates how the traditions in the gospels also shaped the epistles: “Be wretched and mourn [πενθήσατε] and weep [κλαύσατε]. Let your laughter [ὁ γέλως ὑμῶν] be turned to mourning [εἰς πένθος] and your joy to dejection.” (CC p. 280)

*laugh now* – The self-righteous have no time for true sorrow over sin and repentance. For them eternal matters can wait. They laugh and enjoy now the pleasures and lusts of sin in this life, spurning personal responsibility and accountability for their actions. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 1)

**6:26** *when all people speak well of you* – If we are known by the friends we make, we will also be known enemies we make. Jesus warns that those who want to be merely “men-pleasers” or “friends of men” rather than suffer “because of the Son of Man” will be cursed. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 1)

**6:24–26** Jesus condemns those who live for today, neglecting the ways of God and the care of His people. When pride and self-interest allure you, turn to the Lord in repentance. Daily He provides for all your needs and forgives you by grace. • Hear my daily confession of sins, O Savior, and set my heart on things above. Amen. (TLSB)