



God tells us that Ezra read from the book of the Law,
day after day and that the people of God
were filled with joy!

Many people read these verses and see them as an exposition of the Law. They understand it as Jesus correcting the legal interpretation of the Jewish rabbis. From that the argument is made that Jesus is presenting a new ethical standard, one that, if adhered to, will provide the way to eternal life. It's the type of thinking that underpins much of what is presented as 'Christianity' today. But that's not what we have here. Jesus is not offering an updated, new covenant, way of works-righteousness salvation. And he is not doing so for two reasons. First, there was no old covenant, works-righteousness way of salvation, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness." Galatians 3:6. Second, Jesus came to provide the one and only way of salvation, and it wasn't through getting spiritually dead men to do what they couldn't do; it was by offering up his own life as a substitutionary atonement sacrifice for sin.

V20 The comment by Luke about Jesus lifting his eyes shows Jesus' pastoral care for those he is speaking to. He looks at them to engage with them.

It's interesting that Luke draws out just four of the eight statements which Matthew records Jesus making.

Blessed are the poor – Jesus is speaking here of the position we are in when, by God's grace, we come to realise that we are sinners, dead in our trespasses and sins. A human being must realize the gravity of the destitution of their soul before God, before they can, by repentance and faith, receive Christ as their Saviour. This is the foundation stone upon which the Christian life is established in Christ. Without this poverty of spirit, which comes solely by way of God's grace, there can be no salvation and no resulting entry into heaven.

Blessed are those who hunger – This, despite how many times it is suggested by politicians and others, has nothing to do with physical hunger. It's about spiritual craving; about an insatiable desire to own the righteousness which Christ alone can provide. It's a clear sign of new life in Christ.

Blessed are you who weep now – This is not about being sad for the loss of a loved one. It is about weeping because of an awareness of one's sin. The Christian feels the hurt of their sin. This hurt is a feeling that comes from knowing that one has grieved God. It drives the individual to seek forgiveness out of a desire to know a daily sense of peace with God.

Blessed are you when people hate you – The crucial part of this statement is the concluding words, "on account of the Son of Man!" Jesus isn't speaking of people's general dislike of us as individuals; it is that specific hatred that comes from knowing, loving, and obeying the Lord. The point is that hatred, those ridiculing comments, and the exclusion, will not cause us to withdraw. Instead, by God's grace, we will stand our ground knowing that we are privileged to suffer for his name's sake, and that our reward in heaven will be great.

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These notes have been prepared by Rev. Dr Andrew Quigley.

A slight change to the notes – from now on I'm not going to ask questions. I know, parents, that means that you are going to have to come up with questions of your own, but I am confident that you will be able to do that, and do it well.

Thursday - Luke 6:17-23 – The background to the sermon on the mount.

V17. Luke tells us that what is about to transpire will happen 'on a level place'. Because of this, some have concluded that what we have here is not the Sermon on the Mount, but a different sermon, delivered on a separate occasion, albeit including much of the same material. Jesus did preach the same material in different places; however, this is the same sermon as the one in Matthew. Luke simply characterized the particular area where Jesus had come to when he began to preach. He is still on the mountainside.

Two groups of people are present. Those people who have attached themselves to Jesus as his disciples, and then there is a 'multitude' of others. Jews and Gentiles, some of whom have come from as far as the Jewish religious capital Jerusalem in the south, and others from the godless seacoast communities of Tyre and Sidon in the far north west. They have come to hear Jesus preach and to be healed. It's astonishing just how far Jesus' fame had spread. Not only among the Jews of Judea, but also into the heartlands of the Gentile world. In commenting on those who are healed, Luke separates the people suffering due to demon possession from those with other illnesses. It's a statement that points to the spiritual warfare that was continuously raging around Jesus. Everyone suffering from this evil ingression on their lives are 'cured'. None are left to endure the consequences of being possessed by a demon. Jesus loves people and cares for them. We need to remind ourselves daily of the reality of his love for us, and use that knowledge to wage war on the unbelief that can often lay hold of our hearts when confronted with a specific command from God.

While Matthew gives three chapters to this sermon, chapters 5, 6, and 7, Luke is more concise, and we have his recording of it in this one chapter. Why is that the case? It is because of who they were writing to. Matthew was writing for Jews; Luke is writing to the gentile Theophilus and doesn't feel the need to include everything he sees as relating to the Jews. Does that mean that we have the full sermon in Matthew? No, we have what Matthew recorded. Does that not mean then that we are missing some precious truth? No, we have what God enabled Matthew to remember as he was carried along by the Holy Spirit when writing. We have in both Matthew and Luke what God wants us to have. As a note – Mark does not include any specific account of this sermon, although he does have elements of the teaching in his gospel.

Monday - Luke 6:1-5 – Jesus Lord of the Sabbath.

The Jews had thousands of laws, which been written over generations for the purpose of setting a 'fence' around God's Law. The idea being that if you stayed within the parameters of their laws there was no way you could get near to God's Law to break it. The problem, of course, is that God's Law is first and foremost a heart issue.

V2. As Jesus is leading his disciples along a path, either between two cornfields, or through one field, they quite naturally pluck some of the heads of corn and eat the seeds. Which wasn't an issue, as obviously the corn grain is ripe enough to be eaten, Deuteronomy 23:25. The problem for the Pharisees was not the plucking and eating of the corn, it's the day on which it is being done. In the simple act of taking and eating a few grains of corn, the disciples were probably contravening a few of these 'fence' laws, for example: reaping; threshing; and winnowing; as well as preparing food.

V3,4. Jesus takes the Pharisees to 1 Samuel 21:3-6, where David and his men ate the Bread of Presence, (Leviticus 24:5-9). There were twelve of these shewbreads (showbreads / Bread of Presence). Each one was made from six and a quarter pounds of flour, and each Sabbath they were set out in two rows on a gold-covered table in the Holy Place or Sanctuary of the Tabernacle, as an offering to God. Only after they were removed could they be eaten by the priests. Jesus' point is a simple one. While neither condoning nor excusing David's behaviour, Jesus is making the point that the Pharisees would not dispute the fact that David and his men had breached God's Law out of hunger. But they wouldn't condemn David. Why not? Because he hadn't broken one of their 'fence' laws, as no 'fence' laws existed about this, as it was something that the ordinary Jew would never be in a position to do. So, in reality the Pharisees were putting stringent observance of their rabbinical laws above keeping God's Law.

Giving precedence to what people think over God's Law is wrong, and says something significant about the soul that does it.

V5. Jesus ends the exchange with the Pharisees with a staggering claim, given that the Sabbath is a creation ordinance, Genesis 2:3, and a divine institution, Exodus 20:8-11. What does it mean? It means that Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath, by virtue of his living under it, his keeping of it, and his calling of us to follow him in doing likewise. His Lordship of it doesn't mean we can do as we please on it.

Tuesday- Luke 6:6-11 – A healing on the Sabbath.

Although this is near the beginning of Luke's gospel, these events are actually taking place in the final year of Jesus' life.

V6. Jesus is teaching in the synagogue and there is a man present whose right hand is withered. The scribes and Pharisees are not listening to what Jesus is saying, their hearts are filled with malice and their gaze is fixed to see if Jesus will heal the man so that they can accuse him of Sabbath-breaking.

V7,8. Jesus knows what they're thinking. How? Because as God and man he can read men's hearts. So, he calls the man to get to his feet so that everyone will see him. Even though the man has not asked to be healed, he gets to his feet and is now the centre of attention.

V9. Jesus asks the scribes and Pharisees a question to highlight the inconsistency of their thinking. Matthew's account is helpful in that it tells us that Jesus used an illustration of a sheep that has fallen into a pit on the Sabbath, which the shepherd will lift out. The implication being, that if they find that acceptable, why are they recoiling at the idea of this man's hand being healed? Matthew 12:11,12. His point is that the highest moral excellence, i.e., 'good', would be to save life, whereas the basest moral action, 'to do harm', would be to literally kill it. Is doing 'good' therefore not acceptable on the Sabbath?

V10. They have been staring at Jesus, now Jesus looks at them. His eye scans the room. He looks at each individual to see if one of them is going to respond. It is a question a child could answer, but these highly qualified religious scholars are silent. To answer would be to incriminate themselves, and they aren't about to do that.

Jesus says four words, "Stretch out your hand." and the miracle is done! No touching, no command to be healed, just this simple little phrase, and upon the man's obedience being rendered his hand is a completely restored. Oh, that we would just do what God tells us to.

Jesus' words made it incredibly difficult for those glaring at him. He knew it, and so did they. The absence of any physical contact, or words regarding healing, meant that no accusation could be brought. What evidence was there? Without malice or spite, Jesus had exposed them and they are incandescent with rage, literally 'filled with madness'. As they leave the synagogue, one thought dominates their thinking, 'how are they going to destroy this man'. Luke doesn't state it that explicitly, but Mathew and Mark do, and the intent is clear.

Wednesday - Luke 6:12-16 – Jesus chooses the twelve apostles.

V12. Now we are back to 'non-chronological' Luke. He records events which took place prior to this. Next, he tells us that Jesus went out to the mountain to pray and that he continued all night in prayer. **It begs the questions** - Why did Jesus spend time in prayer? Why did he need to spend so long in prayer, after all, he knew the plan of God as one who had participated in devising it? And remember, he did so in the midst of an incredibly hectic life.

V13. Morning breaks, and what a day it will be for these men whom Jesus is calling to be his apostles. Each one of them has been with Jesus from the beginning of his public ministry. They have seen and heard so much as they have faithfully followed him wherever he has gone. With this call, they are no longer Jesus' disciples; they will be his apostles and will walk, listen, and learn from him in a more intimate way and for a reason. The word 'apostle' is derived from the verb 'to send' and means to be 'someone who is sent', 'a messenger'. Jesus had been commissioned and 'sent' by the Father. Now Jesus, following communion with the Father, is choosing and commissioning these twelve men as those whom he will send them out with the good news of the gospel. Interestingly, Luke is the only gospel writer who uses the word 'apostle' extensively. He does so another five times in this gospel, plus twenty-eight times in his letter to Theophilus – the book of Acts. Matthew and Mark use the word only once; Matthew 10:21, Mark 3:14. They prefer the term 'the twelve'. Mark does add the purpose for which they are going to be sent out, "so that they might preach and have authority to cast out demons." Mark 3:14.

Why twelve of them? Because it recalls the twelve patriarchs and twelve tribes of Israel. There are minor variations in the order in which they appear in the gospels; but dividing the names into three groups of four, we find the same names occurring in each group, albeit in a different order. Each group is also headed by the same name in all the gospels. The first group begins with Simon. Jesus gave him the name Peter, and, from now on, Luke will use Peter when speaking of this apostle. All three Synoptics end with Judas Iscariot, and refer to his subsequent betrayal of Jesus. He is identified as a traitor. Notwithstanding the best efforts of God's people and godly men, bad men do, in the providence of God, gain access to the leadership of his Bride, and for God's glory and the ultimate good of His Church, even if we don't understand the reason why either at the time or afterwards.