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The Blessed and the Cursed
Luke 6:20-26
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Will you take your Bibles and turn to Luke's Gospel? We have now come to Luke chapter 6. We will be looking at verses 20 through 26 under the heading, "The Blessed and the Cursed." Let me read the text to you, again, Luke chapter 6 beginning with verse 20.

"And turning His gaze toward His disciples, He began to say, 'Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

"'Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.

"'Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man.

"'Be glad in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven. For in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets.

"'But woe to you who are rich, for you are receiving your comfort in full.

"'Woe to you who are well-fed now, for you shall be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.

"'Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for their fathers used to treat the false prophets in the same way.'"

This is a timely passage for many reasons, especially as we look at the wickedness all around us, as we see apostasy in so much of evangelicalism; and certainly as we look at the midterm elections, and frankly, most all of the elections that we have in our country. The passage is important because it provides encouragement for those of us who truly have been saved by God's grace, and it contrasts the character between the redeemed and the damned.

Moreover, it affirms the priority of evangelism and discipleship over political activism and even despair when things don't go the way you wish it might. But might I say we shouldn't be surprised with the outcome of this latest election. Angry voters have elected immoral pagan progressives without any kind of a coherent agenda other than Trump derangement syndrome. And certainly they struggle with affordability, they don't understand the Iran war. I mean, there's all of these types of things, but it's interesting that voters and politicians in our country know nothing of the righteousness of God. They don't understand the gospel. They are behaving exactly the way you would expect them to behave given their

fallen nature. Because the unregenerate have no capacity to understand or obey the Word of God, they are just doing what their depraved nature tells them to do. You remember Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2:14 that “the natural man,” referring to the unsaved man, “does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him and he cannot understand them because they are spiritually appraised.”

Allow me just a short digression into some biblical theology. You must understand that the unbeliever is unable to obey the moral commands of Scripture. We see, for example, in Romans 8 and verse 7, “the mind set on the flesh,” referring to the unbeliever who is bereft of the indwelling Spirit of God, that

“… mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so,

“and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”

You see, apart from the transforming power of regenerating grace that radically changes our human nature, the unbeliever is only able to sin, and he is unable not to sin. Romans chapter 14 verse 23 speaks of that and Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 6. And some will therefore say, well, that's not fair. Why can a person possibly be held accountable for his sin, as the Scriptures say? As, for example, Jesus says in John 3:18? Well, the answer is because they have acted freely out of their depraved nature.

God did not make them choose wickedly. They chose to reject the gospel out of their own free will. Now, believers also act out of their nature, just as unbelievers do. The difference is believers have been granted a new nature. We've been transformed, so we have new desires. We have the capacity to choose just like the unsaved, but because our innermost being has been radically changed, we have a desire to know and love and obey Christ. Bear in mind that divine sovereignty never disallows human freedom, but rather works with it to accomplish God's purposes in redemption.

God didn't elect some to save and then elect others to be damned. That's not at all what we see in Scripture. In fact, I can put it this way, that God is active in redemption, but he is passive in reprobation. For example, in Romans 9, beginning in verse 22, we see God has, quote, "...endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction." In the original language, this is in the passive voice, which indicates that God is not doing the one, that is, God is not doing the preparing.

The person has prepared himself because of his fallen nature. God has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction. And then he goes on to say,

"...and He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,

“even us, whom He also called."

When he says, "...which he prepared beforehand for glory," that's not in the passive voice, that's in the active voice, which indicates the subject is doing the preparing, namely God

himself. So the point with all of this is, folks, don't be surprised when unbelievers who are spiritually dead and are only able to sin and are unable not to sin are elected and rule over us. We're in a fallen world.

Furthermore, back to the midterm elections and so forth, and I know it can be so frustrating for so many, bear in mind that America has for a long time abandoned biblical values and elected Christ-hating pagans to rule over them. This is nothing new. Why is that? Well, part of it is because of God's judgment upon America. As we read in Romans 1, it's the wrath of divine abandonment. If you're going to abandon me, I'm going to abandon you to the consequences of your own iniquities.

But also, for generations, Christian churches have abandoned the authority of Scripture and have not preached the Word of God. They've preached a distorted, twisted, superficial gospel that cannot save - a gospel without repentance. And for several generations, our children have been taught to ignore biblical morality. They know nothing of the holiness of God and their need for salvation. They know nothing of the transforming power of the gospel. They disregard the sanctity of life; they've been taught this. They redefine marriage and family. They depend upon the government to care for them rather than taking personal responsibility. They shift the blame for their own failures onto other people. They perceive others to be oppressors. They see themselves as victims. And therefore, we have a whole generation of people that tolerate every imaginable philosophy. Even if it's absurd. Even if it's contradictory. Even if it is wicked, like the LGBTQ perversions. Like the whole woke insanity. Like allowing abortion, promoting abortion. Like electing people who are socialists and communists. And even allowing Islam, a scourge upon the world, to enter our country and be put in office.

Our young people today don't know who they are. They don't know why they're here. They don't understand that they are image bearers under the wrath of a holy God. And their only hope for salvation is through faith in Christ and the gospel. They don't understand these things and they mock these things. So electing the right politicians will never satisfy the hunger of their soul. And it will never in any way mitigate the guilt that they feel in their heart. And whatever people perceive to be the correct political position, the correct political party, will never reconcile them to a holy God. You will never vote your way out of the chaos and the corruption of this fallen world.

But may I encourage all of us who know and love Christ solely by His grace, that nothing that has happened politically in the history of our nation, in the history of the world, will even remotely impact the purposes of God and redemption. Nothing will alter His kingdom purposes and plans.

And aren't you thankful that we are citizens of another kingdom because of Christ? Don't think for one second that any of the wickedness that we see in our country, in our political system, surprises God. For indeed, because He is sovereign over all creation, He has ordained to allow these things to ultimately bring glory to Himself through His judgment and through His grace. And remember, God has promised to ultimately judge the wicked.

And that's why when you see the arrogance of these politicians, for example, you need to have pity upon them. They do not understand that the wrath of God abides upon them. And

that one day they will die, and they will enter an eternity of torment. God has promised this. Hebrews 12, beginning in verse 26,

"And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, 'Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven.'"

"This expression, 'Yet once more,' denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

"And since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire."

O child of God, rest and relax and rejoice in God's sovereignty. He is going to bring glory to Himself.

And I might even add that his comprehensive and scrupulous sovereign reign over his creation is beyond dispute in Scripture. In Deuteronomy 32, verse 39, we read,

"'See now that I, I am He, and there is no God besides Me; It is I who put to death and give life. I have wounded, and it is I who heal, and there is no one who can deliver from My hand.'"

We read from 1 Samuel 2, beginning in verse 6,

"'The LORD kills and makes alive; He brings down to Sheol and raises up.

"'The Lord makes poor and rich. He brings low, and He exalts.'"

Ecclesiastes 7, beginning in verse 13,

"Consider the work of God, for who is able to straighten what He has bent?

"In the day of prosperity be happy, but in the day of adversity consider - God has made the one as well as the other, so that man will not discover anything that will be after him.'"

In the prophet Isaiah, we read of God's word in chapter 45, beginning in verse 5,

"'I am the LORD, and there is no other; besides Me there is no God. I will gird you, though you have not known Me;

"'that men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun, that there is no one besides Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other,

"'The One forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the LORD who does all these things.'"

And one more passage in Lamentations 3, beginning in verse 37,

“Who is there who speaks when it comes to pass, unless the Lord has commanded it?

“Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that both good and ill go forth?”

Now, with this background, let's turn our attention to the words of our Lord, which He has for us in this text in Luke 6. And might I remind you that this is really a condensed account of our Lord's Sermon on the Mount that we read in Matthew 5 through 7. And we're going to look at this text under two very simple headings. We're going to see four blessings and four curses; and in this, we are going to once again see Luke providing more irrefutable evidence that Jesus is indeed the Son of God, the incarnate Son of God, the Messiah.

The divine blessings and cursings also are rooted in what is recorded in Deuteronomy 27 and 28. Therefore, the Jews would have been very familiar with the contrast between blessings and cursings. And also remember that as the Gospels make very clear, Jesus' teachings absolutely amazed the crowds. They had never heard anything like this. They were authoritative. They were compelling. They convicted some. And for most, what he said was hideously offensive, especially the self-righteous Jews.

Moreover, I might add that what he taught was counterintuitive to not only apostate Judaism of that day, and frankly of today, but it was counterintuitive to the worldview and the conventional wisdom of all unregenerate people everywhere. It was then as it is today.

And as we will see, each blessing bestowed upon the righteous included a promised benefit to the faithful and each curse included a promised threat to the wicked. And as we examine the words of our Lord, I trust that you will see the character of a person who is truly born again versus a person who is merely Christian in name only, as perhaps some of you. So let's look first at the four blessings the Lord speaks about. And I might add that the first three depict how a repentant sinner will actually view himself. And the last or the fourth blessing describes how the world will see him.

So the first blessing is in verse 20, we read,

“And turning His gaze toward His disciples…” that is those who are following, who are listening to his teaching, “He began to say, ‘Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.’” Now, poor here is not speaking of material things, but rather poor - a term that is actually used to describe those who cower in fear and in desperation - it speaks of the person that is destitute, that is entirely dependent upon others for support. And in this case, in this context, again, it's not speaking of material poverty, those who are reduced to begging for money, it refers to those who are poor in spirit. As Jesus said in Matthew 5 in verse 3, which by the way can include people that are fabulously wealthy, is speaking of those who recognize their spiritual bankruptcy, that they're utterly destitute before a holy God, that acknowledge their poverty of spiritual resources to be reconciled to God. That's what Jesus is speaking about.

We sing about this from time to time. I love Augustus Toplady's hymn, *Rock of Ages* - written back in 1776 by the way - it captured this concept in one of the verses where we sing,

Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to the cross I cling
Naked come to thee for dress, helpless look to Thee for grace
Foul I to the mountain fly, wash me Savior, or I die.

Now, of course, Jesus' words struck a death blow to the self-righteous mindset of apostate Judaism, where they could believe that they could somehow earn their salvation by keeping the law, and by doing good deeds, and by external morality and religious rituals. They could somehow impress God and be saved, so to speak. And they perceived themselves to be the spiritually elite, because after all, they are sons of the covenant, sons of Abraham. And they thought theirs was the kingdom because of their ancestry. And so this idea of coming to a place of repentance was totally foreign to them. It was offensive to them; they believed that the kingdom of God belonged to them because of their ancestry and religious observances.

Now, we see the contrast between the poor, actually the poor in spirit that are blessed, with what you might say the wealthy in spirit who are cursed. We see this in Jesus' parable in Luke 18, beginning in verse 10.

Jesus says,

“’Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

“’The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: “God, I thank you that I'm not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.

“””I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.”

“’But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast saying, “God, be merciful to me, the sinner.”””

And then Jesus says this,

“’I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.’”

So again, the Jews, along with most Gentiles of that day and today, believe they are spiritually rich, that they're worthy of God's acceptance, because after all, they do good things, they're good people. And maybe they even do some religious things, but in reality, they are like the phony Christians that are described in Revelation chapter 3, the Christians of the church at Laodicea, who said, I am rich and have become wealthy and have need of nothing. But the Lord says, they did not know that they were wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked.

So again, Jesus says in Luke chapter 6, the end of verse 20, “’Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.’”

“Is” - present tense - it's immediate, it's now. Isn't it an amazing thing that when we come to saving faith in Christ, instantly, Christ becomes our king and we become citizens of that kingdom? When we humble ourselves in repented faith, we immediately become, according to Romans 8:17, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.

As I said earlier, we are citizens of another kingdom. Philippians chapter 3 and verse 20,

“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.”

And in Colossians 1 and verse 13, we read that,

“He rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son.”

So, Jesus is saying that when we bow before the Most High in humble recognition of our spiritual poverty and utter dependence upon his mercy and grace, he saves us. That's what unleashes the blessing. And immediately we enter into the spiritual kingdom and receive the blessings, according to Romans 14:17, of “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”

And I might also add that we anticipate the future blessings of the earthly millennial kingdom when we will reign with him, according to 2 Timothy 2 and verse 12. And how sad to witness the arrogance of fools who have no fear of God and who possess an inflated opinion of themselves and reject the gospel. Jesus described them in so many places, especially in Matthew 7, beginning in verse 26.

“’Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand.

“’The rain fell and the floods came and the winds blew and slammed against that house and it fell, and great was its fall.’”

Look at the second blessing in verse 21,

“’Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied.’”

This is an amazing statement. He's speaking of a divine blessing bestowed upon those who recognize that they are spiritually impoverished and they're craving, they are hungering, for a righteousness that is foreign to them. This is speaking of that person who hates their sin. This depicts those who have an overwhelming sense of self-loathing over their unrighteousness. They hate their sin, they long for forgiveness, they yearn to be freed from the bondage of their own sinful nature that has incarcerated them in such a profound way. They long to be relieved from the guilt that it produces that haunts them in the middle of the night when all is quiet and all is dark. They crave holiness and tranquility of heart and they long to be reconciled to a holy God so that they can enjoy intimate fellowship with Him, a fellowship that will satisfy the deepest longings of their soul.

And I must ask you, dear friends, is that true of you? Does this describe you? I pray that it does. If you truly know Christ, it will describe you. If you have truly been brought to a place of brokenness over your sin, where you can totally identify with what it means to be poor in spirit, then you will say, “Ah, yes, I hunger now for more of that righteousness, for more of that intimate fellowship. I long for that satisfaction, and I see bits and pieces of it. Sometimes I'm overwhelmed by it. But, oh, I long for that day when I will be satiated in full and glory.”

The psalmist expressed this when he said in Psalm 42, beginning in verse 1,

“As the deer pants for the water brooks, O my soul pants for You, O God.

“My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; When shall I come and appear before God?”

I'm struck by that phrase, how he thirsts for the living God. The idea that he is the source of life. In fact, later on in verse 8, he speaks of “a prayer to the God of my life.” In other words, he links the life-giving water with the living God. And for this reason, he thirsts for God. It's a matter of life and death.

He knows that life cannot exist apart from water. And I ask you, is this true of you? Do you thirst for him? That life-giving and life-sustaining relationship with the lover of your soul, the Lord Jesus Christ. Is this the passion of your heart?

And you must understand that those who really understand the grace of God will thirst for him, will long for him, will crave to know more of his goodness and his fullness, to experience more of him. Even though we are sinful, we know that we're in constant need of grace, in constant need of forgiveness, because even our righteousnesses are like filthy rags. Isaiah 64:6.

Beloved, let me remind you that sin is more than mere actions. It is a condition. For the unbeliever, they are ruled by their sin. Before we came to Christ, all that we were and all that we did was fundamentally offensive to a holy God because sin is man's innate inability to conform to the moral character and desires of God. And when we truly grasp what God has done for us by his saving grace, we will never need to be prodded to pray. We will never need to be coerced to feed upon the word of God. We will have no need to be shamed into fellowship and evangelism and discipleship and corporate worship and all of those things.

It will be the longing of our heart to do these things, because of the work of grace that the Spirit of God has wrought within our souls. These will be the natural expressions of our necessary life. We will be like the deer that pants for the water brook. Our soul will pant for God. I trust that is true of you, rather than like so many who would be like the deer that lacks for nothing, that is fully hydrated and in need of nothing. Oh, dear friends, if you don't long for God, then you don't understand the spiritual dehydration that is destroying you.

And if you're a believer and the longing somehow is not what it should be, then you don't understand the depth of your sin or the height of God's grace. The psalmist says in Psalm 63

verse 1, “Oh God, You are my God, I shall seek You earnestly…” And here's why, “My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, in a dry and weary land where there is no water.”

Beloved, this will always be the mark of a true Christian. And this is at the heart of Jesus' words, “Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied.” In other words, you will be completely satiated by the goodness of God and His grace. Even this side of heaven, you're going to have much of it, even though you won't have the fullness of it until eternity. In Psalm 34 verse 10, We are told that, “…they who seek the Lord shall not be in want of any good thing.”

So again, this is God's promise to those who are first of all poor in spirit, but also who hunger and thirst for righteousness. And the Holy Spirit causes us to realize that he alone can supply the needs of our soul and give this kind of life because he causes us to rest in his sovereign care, come what may, and the circumstances of life, whether good or bad, will serve His purposes and sanctification.

And we find, frankly, inexplicable contentment even in the midst of great sorrow. Because we know of Christ's work on our behalf. In Psalm 23 verse 1, we read, “The Lord is my shepherd, and I shall not...want” You say, well, why am I discontent? Why am I so frustrated with life? Well, the answer is quite simple. The Lord is not your shepherd. Maybe you have trusted in Christ, but you're not following Him. You've wandered off on your own. You're not hungering for fellowship with Him. And that hunger will only come through humble obedience and genuine worship. So you want, and you're not satisfied.

But Jesus promises “Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied.” You're going to find contentment in this life, and you're going to be satiated in the next. John Piper said, “God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him.”

I trust this is true for you. Jeremiah 31 verse 14, we read, “’My people will be satisfied with My goodness,’ declares the Lord.” Oh, I pray that that is true.

And isn't it true for those of us that have walked with Christ down through the years, even when life hurts, when things are really tough, isn't it amazing how he satisfies the very core of our being, even when the tears stream down our cheeks.

The third blessing,

“’Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.’”

Now, this speaks of the sorrow and genuine brokenness over sin, and that deep awareness of spiritual bankruptcy and separation from God.There's this sense of self-loathing here. Don't you hate your sin? Won't it be wonderful when we're finally rid of it all? I hate my own sin, and I hate yours. And our sin just splatters on each other, and the world around us.But oh, we weep now, but someday we're going to laugh at hopelessness and helplessness that causes us to cry out for mercy. It's going to turn to laughter. 2 Corinthians 7:10, we read of what the Apostle Paul says, “The sorrow that is according to the will of God that produces a repentance without regret leading to salvation…”.

You know, I've encountered this so many times over the years when I've been around a person who, by God's grace, is suddenly convicted of their sin. They suddenly see it for what it really is, and they suddenly see, at least to whatever degree they can, humanly, the holiness of God and the wretchedness of their own heart and mind. And they are so overwhelmed by it that they sob and they weep. And many times, as I say, you have to give them mouth-to-mouth grace, you know, to help them understand God's love for them. And certainly, we are never closer to grace than when we are confident we could never have it.

Well, everyone's experience will be different, but if you've never been truly broken over your sin, I must warn you of God's Word in this regard. In James 4, beginning in verse 9, we read,

"Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom.

"Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you."

So again, Jesus says, "Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh." What an amazing promise. Oh, the joy of sins forgiven. Oh, the bliss of saving grace. Oh, the promises of heaven when we shall see him face to face. You know, I can still hear my dear mother, who used to sit about right there where Christian is sitting, with my dad, before the Lord took her home. And as she aged, she would constantly say to me, "David, I just can't believe I've come to this." And those of us who are aging, we can all understand that. And as she continued to fail, I can remember her saying so many times, I should say quoting Psalm 30 and verse 5 so many times, "Weeping may last for the night, but a shout of joy comes in the morn." And is this not the promise of God for those who weep now? Has he not promised, according to Isaiah 61 verses 2 and 3, to comfort all who mourn? And that comfort is going to come at His second coming. That's the context of that passage. He says that in Zion, He's going to give them "a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting."

And then there's a fourth blessing. Remember, the first three speak of how a repentant sinner is going to see himself. And the last one speaks of how the world will see him.
He says,

"'Blessed are you when men hate you and ostracize you and insult you and scorn your name as evil for the sake of the Son of Man.'"

And again, this is to be expected. Those without Christ, we read, serve their father, the devil, as Jesus said. They are incarcerated in the kingdom of darkness. They love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. As I said earlier, Romans 8 and verse 7, "…the mind set on the flesh," that is, on believers are hostile toward God, "…for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is even unable to do so."

And because of all of this, you must understand that the life and the message of a true believer is going to be met with hostility. It is going to be a rebuke to their life and they hate that.

They hate Christ and all who belong to Him. And they are desperately trying to suppress the truth in unrighteousness, as we read in Romans 1 and verse 18. And your life and your message just pries that lid up that they're trying to push down. And they will hate you for it. Look no further than the growing hostility towards authentic, biblical Christianity in our country. As we read here, they scorn our name as evil. They will declare us bigots and homophobes and Islamophobes. I don't know, I'm a phobe of everything it seems like these days. That we spew hate speech. Many of us have these people even in our own family. None of this should surprise us.

Luke chapter 12, beginning at verse 51, Jesus said, "'Do you suppose that I came to grant peace on earth?" And he says,

"'I tell you, no, but rather division;

"'for from now on, five members in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three.'"

Dear Christian, remember this. The world does not reject its own, because they are part of them. Jesus, in John chapter 15, Jesus said,

"'If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world because of this, the world hates you.'"

But when you are hated by the world because of your love for Christ, he says in verse 23,

"'Be glad in that day,'" speaking of that day of persecution, which also helps us to see that it's not going to be every day; it's not like you experience the persecution every day, but it's going to come –

"Be glad in that day and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven. For in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets.'"

So their hatred is nothing new. And your eternal reward, therefore, is going to be greater than your faithful sacrifice, the sight of glory. We need to understand that.

That's why Paul said in Romans 8 and verse 18,

"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us."

And in 2 Corinthians 4 verse 17, he adds this,

"For momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison. While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

Well, finally, we move to the curse. There's four of these curses. The first one is verse 24,

"'But woe to you who are rich, for you are receiving your comfort in full.'"

Again, this is not speaking of material wealth. This is speaking of hypocrites who perceive themselves to be spiritually rich in contrast to believers who see themselves as spiritually bankrupt in desperate need of divine mercy and grace. Think of the countless people that you know, that I know, who believe they are in good standing with God because of their righteous deed.

And then think of the countless people who applaud them, but their warped self-righteousness that fuels their self-glorifying conceit, and the accolades of fools that applaud them will alone be their reward. That's why he says, "for you are receiving your comfort in full." My, what a contrast to the torment that awaits them. Oh, how we need to be burdened for them, love them for the sake of the gospel.

The second curse,

"'Woe to you who are well-fed now, for you shall be hungry.'"

I think of the staggering religious hypocrisy that we see even in our day those who are, shall we say, full of themselves because of their own religiosity, their own spirituality. That all the hunger that will be theirs in hell. William Hendrickson said it well, "On the threshold of eternity, those who have placed their trust in earthly goods suddenly discover how desperately poor they are. Similarly, those who have set their hearts on earthly pleasures are going to discover in the end that they are stuffed so full that all desire is lost; yet have never shown any appreciation for the higher values of life. These gluttons, unless they are converted, face the never-ending future with a maddening ache that can never be assuaged, a burning thirst that can never be quenched, a ravening hunger that can never be alleviated."

And then the third curse,

"Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.'"

You see, in contrast to the mourning sinner who is coming to Christ and saving faith - that repentant sinner - the unrepentant sinner who has rejected God's word lives in a fool's paradise of cheerful bliss. They imagine they have, as I say, "made the cut." They imagine in their own mind and convince themselves in their own mind, in their own self-deceit, that they are heaven-bound. And they smugly scoff at any challenges to their claim, and they mock the true essence of the gospel. But they have built their spiritual house on the sand of human achievement rather than on the rock of divine accomplishment. And the tsunami of divine judgment that will come their way eventually will sweep them into the abyss of an eternal hell. And the temporal joy that they had will be turned into eternal mourning and weeping. They will never experience the eternal joy promised to the redeemed. Instead, Jesus says, "they will be cast out into the outer darkness. In that place, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 8:12).

And then finally, the fourth curse,

“’Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for their fathers used to treat the false prophets in the same way.’”

Isn't that what we see in our world today? You see, false prophets, they can fill up stadiums. The people praise them. Enormous popularity. And true prophets are scorned and mocked. They entertain large crowds, these false prophets; they get into public office, they rule over us. But there's payday someday. “There's payday someday” as the 20th century Southern Baptist preacher once preached. R.G. Lee, one of his famous sermons.

You know, I watch the arrogant charlatans that we have today mock the true gospel and they claim that God's telling them this and telling them that, and I'm reminded of Jeremiah 5 and verse 30 where the Lord says,

“’An appalling and horrible thing has happened in the land:

‘The prophets prophesied falsely and the priests rule on their own authority; and My people love it so!’”

I listen to smug politicians, their arrogant rhetoric as they exalt themselves in front of wild sycophants who praise them - men and women who are actually making a mockery of all that God deems sacred - and I think, “My, how sad. They only knew what awaits them. Oh, God have mercy on their souls.”

Well, dear friends, I pray that you are among the blessed and not among the cursed. You must examine your heart honestly before the Lord knowing that you are hopelessly biased in your own favor. But allow the Word of God to shed light on the truth. Today, you have been taught the difference between the blessed and the cursed, and I pray that you will not disregard the Word of the Lord.

And for all of you who know and love Christ, let's rejoice, especially during this Thanksgiving season over God's saving grace. Let's be faithful in evangelism and discipleship. Let's live out the Gospel in faith and obedience. And may I add one final thing. Let's long for the Lord's return. Let's long for the Lord's return. Get your eyes off of the temporal. Look into the eternal. Long to see the Lord face to face. And then we can sing Charles Wesley's great lyrics,

Come, thou long expected Jesus,
born to set thy people free;
from our fears and sins release us,
let us find our rest in thee.
Israel, strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art;
dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart.

Let's pray together.

Father, may this indeed be the testimony of all of the redeemed. I thank you for our precious people. Lord, continue to save sinners and sanctify saints and help all of us who know and

love you to rejoice in the blessings that you have promised us. All because of what you have done within our hearts, within our souls, because of your grace. And Lord, bring conviction to those who know nothing of you. Make them miserable. Bring them to a place of genuine mourning over their sin that they might be saved and experience the miracle of the new birth. I pray in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen.