

I. Introduction

A. We continue today with “*Outcasts: Meeting People Jesus Met in Luke*”

1. Luke has a definite interest in people on the-outside-looking-in
 - a. His birth narrative tells of shepherds, the mistrusted drifter-gypsies
 - b. Later she shows Jesus touched lepers, ultimate of unclean outcasts
 - c. He mentions tax collectors more than Matthew and Mark combined
2. The outcast we will look at today from Luke’s gospel is the poor
 - a. Jesus first sermon in Luke was a text on the poor (**Luke 4:18-19**)
 - b. John asks from prison if Jesus is really Messiah (**Luke 7:22-23**)
 - c. Jesus is asked about handwashing & ritual purity (**Luke 11:39-40**)
 - d. Jesus proclaims his own solidarity with the poor (**Luke 9:58**)
 - e. Jesus equates the kingdom with giving to poor (**Luke 12:32-34**)
3. Jesus had quite a lot to say about the poor in Luke (*see more later*)
 - a. Were some of those text just a little bit unfamiliar to us? Why?
 - b. What first pops into our head when we think of helping the poor
 - c. Did you think Bernie Sanders and “*Liberal Democratic Socialism?*”
 - 1) **Political Test:** *The difference between socialism and capitalism*
 - 2) Socialism is man exploiting man. Capitalism is other way around
 - 3) Jesus doesn’t care about our politics; he wants us to care about poor

B. Our “outcast” Jesus encounters will be quite different this morning

1. Jesus doesn’t run into a poor person; he stood and teach (**Luke 6:17**)
 - a. This is called “*Sermon on the Plain*” because it’s on a level place
 - b. It’s like a *Reader’s Digest* version of “*Sermon on the Mount*”
 - 1) Some of what Luke leaves out here is included elsewhere
 - 2) Lord’s Prayer is response to apostles’ question (**Lk 11:1**)
2. But like Matthew, Luke begins this sermon with a list of beatitudes
 - a. At least they sound like the beatitudes, but they also sound different
 - b. They have more of an edge to them– the beatitudes with an attitude
3. Let’s begin today by reading them together (**Reading: Luke 6:20-23**)

II. Blessed Are You Who Are Poor

- A. Jesus is standing the values and principles of our culture on its head here
1. People are blessed by God who appear to be the opposite of blessed
 - a. *“Blessed are you who are poor?”* We want him to keep going, right
 - 1) We want him to be saying *“blessed are the poor in spirit”*
 - 2) Not because it is easy to be meek and humble– because it isn’t
 - a) It’s spiritual. It’s pious. It sounds like something Jesus would say
 - b) Blessed are poor? That doesn’t sound like something we can endorse
 - b. *“Blessed are those who hunger now?”* There is a NOW and THEN
 - 1) There is a delay gratification nature to what he says here
 - 2) Today is 2nd Sunday of Lent, when Christians traditionally fast
 - a) We don’t do that anymore– we’re too sophisticated and anti-legalistic
 - b) Jesus thinks there is something to be said for being hungry now
 - c. *“Blessed are those who weep now.”* Why would they be weeping now?
(*Again, there is a now-then contrast between weep now and able to laugh later*)
 - 1) Maybe personal loss– don’t grieve as one no hope (**1 Thess 4:13**)
 - 2) Maybe brokenness over sin– grieve, mourn and wail (**James 4:9**)
 - 3) Maybe weeping is persecution he talks about next (**Lk 6:22-23**)
 2. He moves from poor to rich and blessing to woe– **Read: Luke 6:24-26**
 - a. *“Woe”* here isn’t *“woe to you Pharisees”* but rather *“to be pitied”*
 - b. Again, there’s a contrast between the NOW and the LATER
 - 1) What about those who are rich NOW? Already have comfort
 - 2) What about those who are well fed NOW? They’ll go hungry
 - 3) What about those who are laughing NOW? Won’t be later.
 3. Does this remind us of parable of Rich Man and Lazarus (**Luke 16**)
 - a. Poor hungry beggar wanted to eat crumbs from rich man table
 - 1) Now he’s at Abraham’s table; rich man asks to dip his finger...
 - 2) One who was rich... isn’t. The one who was laughing... isn’t.
 - b. Point of parable is NOT to flesh out all the details of hades/hell
 - 1) That story is to teach us a kind of cosmic *“turning of the tables”*
 - 2) Those who are wealthy in this life have no advantage in the next

- B. We're all thinking at this point, "*What's does Jesus REALLY mean here?*"
1. Surely, this is parable, metaphor or figure of speech for something?
 - a. No, this is one of those times Jesus means exactly what he says
 - b. Those that are poor or hungry receive some sort of special blessing
 - 1) It not that they are more spiritual– they just have less baggage
 - 2) Sometimes being poor brings baggage of its own (**Prov 30:8-9**)
 - 3) But most us have way, way more than just our daily bread
 - c. Having too much material stuff can get in way of trusting in God
 - d. If that's true, being poor can be something of a spiritual blessing
 2. This should make us think of camels, needles and Rich Young Rulers
 - a. In **Luke 18**, he ask Jesus what he needs to do to inherit eternal life
 - b. He could not have expected to hear what he heard! (**Luke 18:22**)
 - 1) What we hear? "*Give away all you stuff*" Pretty radical to be sure
 - 2) We should also hear, "*Give it to the poor*" Jesus cares for the poor
 - 3) Whole point is to set up what comes next, "*Come and follow me*"
 - c. The man's material wealth was keeping him from following Jesus
 3. That's the teachable moment Jesus has for us as well (**Luke 18:24-25**)
 - a. What that sounds like is being rich is a real spiritual handicap
 - b. Rich tend to focus more on the stuff that they hold in their hands
 - 1) The poor have their handy empty– so they can reach up to God
 - 2) Poor find it easier to depend on God because He is all they have
 - c. If an easy, comfortable life is your goal, money is pretty important
 - d. If God is your ultimate goal, sometimes money can get in the way

III. Conclusion

- A. What is the point? This really is hard for us because it goes against grain
1. The poor have a spiritual head start; the rich have a spiritual burden
 - a. **Point:** Most of us aren't young; we'll need 12 inches to make a ruler
 - b. But we ARE rich. In any reasonable accounting, most of us are rich
 2. Grandma talked about "*those old people...*" Just a bit older than she was
 - a. That's how we want to think about of rich people– bit richer than we
 - b. We may be "*comfortable*" or even "*well off*" but never quite rich

- B. We are all rich, that that's hard when reading a text that blesses the poor
1. We have to fight the tendency to think God loves us BECAUSE...
 - a. We're American, educated, attractive, rich, white, black, republican
 - b. Well, God does love you, but it is despite everything, not because
 - c. **Old Saying:** *"God loves the poor; He made so much more of them!"*
 - 1) No, God loves everyone. He is *"no respecter of persons"* (KJV)
 - 2) Mark adds interesting twist to rich young ruler (**Mark 10:21**)
 2. If Jesus loved him, why does he insist that he give always his stuff?
 - a. That's why he insisted that he give away all his material stuff
 - b. Jesus loved him, and he wanted him to see the kingdom and God
 - 1) His material stuff was keeping him from seeing kingdom of God
 - 2) What is keeping you from seeing the kingdom of God today?
- C. How can we know if our stuff is getting in the way of us seeing God?
1. Paul speaks to rich Christians (and that's us) in **1 Timothy 6:17**
 - a. We are NOT to be arrogant; having stuff doesn't make you better
 - b. We are NOT to trust in stuff in stuff (seen the stock market lately)
 - c. We ARE to enjoy the stuff we have because that's what God intends
 2. But our enjoyment is not the only reason we are blessed (**1 Tim 6:18**)
 - a. We are not to be selfish with our stuff but to be "rich in good deeds"
 - b. Here a good gauge of how much a stumbling block your stuff is
 - 1) How much time and resources do you spend blessing others?
 - 2) If all of your blessing are spent on us– they're getting in the way
 - 3) That's why Jesus told the rich young ruler to give them all away
 3. Paul tell us rich folks to send our wealth on to heaven (**1 Tim 6:19**)
 - a. The only blessing you will get to keep are ones you send to heaven
 - b. How you send cash-or-talent-or-time ahead to heaven? Give it away
- D. OK, rich person, is your wealth keeping you from seeing kingdom of God?