

Who is “you?” Jesus says, “*Blessed are you*” in one place in our text, but “*Woe to you*” in another. There are four blessings and four woes. It seems as if we have a fifty-fifty chance of being one or the other. But Jesus does help us out by describing the you who is blessed, and the you who is cursed. “*Blessed are you who are poor,*” He says, “*who are hungry now, who weep now, who are hated, excluded, reviled, and so on.*” “*But woe to you,*” He says, “*who are rich, who are full now, who laugh now, and woe to you when all people speak well of you.*” So again, who is you?

If we take these words purely in a physical sense, we would be checking our balance at the bank, evaluating how full we feel from breakfast, considering whether we are having a good day, and whether most people like us or not. And while the physical sense of these words cannot be completely ignored, it is obvious that we must see them in a spiritual way. Not everyone who is physically poor is in the kingdom of God. And not everyone who is rich is on the outside of the kingdom of God. The key to who it is that is blessed lies with Jesus words: “*on account of (Me).*” And so, it might be helpful if we, at this time, take a look at His parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus.

In Luke 16 we hear of the rich man who fits perfectly every woe here in our text. He is rich. He fills his belly with sumptuous food every single day. He has no reason to weep, having only comforts. And he obviously is well liked by all. Four out of four woes.

Lazarus, however, fits every blessing. He is poor, having nothing but painful sores. That’s one. He is given nothing to eat. That’s two. His whole life is one of weeping. Three. And he is despised and excluded. Four out of four.

Yet Lazarus is one who is blessed not because he is poor, starving, and despised, but on account of his trust in the Lord. His name means: God is my help. The rich man is no help to him as he lies outside his gate. But God is. At death, Lazarus is blessed forever in heaven. But understand this: He is one who is blessed not just when he arrives in heaven, but throughout his misery here on earth. Because all the joys that come to Jesus’ blessed ones belong to us right now even when life is at its worst.

And so, with you, you may, or may not be rich. You may, or may not be full, having your physical needs met. You may, or may not be holding back tears of weeping. And you may, or may not have a good reputation with others who know you. But on account of Jesus, you are blessed. And I’m going to show you why. Here is the difference between you and the rich man. Not your physical wealth. Not the needs you have met. Not the number of people who speak well of you. It’s this: The rich man had little to no use for the Word of God, but you do. He had no regard for the Holy Scriptures, for “*Moses and the Prophets,*” as Abraham put it to him. But you come to Jesus, just like the people in our text, as it says: “*to hear Him and to be healed.*”

You come to hear God’s Word. And this word, hear in the Greek, includes the meaning, “to hear with faith.” To believe what you hear, and to put it into practice in your life. As Jesus says:

*“Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it.”* You’re not here for the coffee and cookies, although these don’t hurt. You come here to Jesus to hear, and to live what you hear in your life.

And friend, because you fail in this, as do I, you come here to Jesus, like the people in our text, not just to hear, but to be healed. If you were to always put God’s Word that you hear into practice perfectly in your life, you would have nothing in need of healing. But, as with me, you are a sinful failure. And so, you need to be healed of your brokenness. This is where your weeping is seen most clearly. *“Blessed are you who weep now,”* says Jesus, *“for you shall laugh.”*

This is where you are different from the rich man. His life was one of laughter, not weeping. But *“woe to you who laugh now,”* says Jesus, *“for you shall mourn and weep.”* The rich man had no desire to repent of his sinful life. This is what Jesus means by weeping. To weep over our sins. To mourn over the fact that we sin against God, the very God who loves us. Our heart weeps because we do the very sins we hate and try to avoid.

But not the rich man. We see him in hell in Luke 16 not because he is rich and enjoys life with his friends. We see him in hell because he despises the Word of God, the very Word of God that calls sinners to weep over their sins.

*“Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.”* This is joyful laughter. The joy, the laughter you will have in heaven. Yet this laughter is yours now. For in repenting of your sins, your pastor has the joy of announcing to you that God forgives you, He heals you. And hearing this word of forgiveness, God turns your weeping into laughter.

Even more than describing poor Lazarus, each of the blessed describes our Lord. Poor, having none of His needs met, a life of sorrow, hated, excluded, reviled, spurned as evil, fit only to die on a cross.

Consider what this means for you. The most Blessed One of all became the One who was the most accursed of all. Jesus took your woes and gives you His blessings. So, if you are doing poorly, if you have needs that are not being met, if you deal with much sorrow in your life, and feel excluded, you’re in good company, because you’re with Jesus, and He is with you.

And since you are baptized into the true Blessed One who takes all your sins and woes, you have a life worth living, for you are one who is blessed by God.

Even if you don’t feel blessed, you are. Even if you don’t feel forgiven, you are forgiven. Even if your life turns into the miserable life that Lazarus lived, you are blessed as he was. And not just when you arrive in heaven. You are blessed now. And friend, it’s on account of Jesus. Amen.